



Alliance for
Taxpayer Access



American
Association of
Law Libraries



American Library
Association



Association of College
& Research Libraries



Association of
Research Libraries



Greater Western
Library Alliance



Public
Knowledge



Public Library of
Science



SPARC



Special
Libraries
Association

Public Access to the Published Results of Publicly Funded Research Will Benefit the Economy, Science, and Health

Every year, the federal government funds tens of billions of dollars in basic and applied research with the expectation that the results will accelerate the pace of scientific discovery, stimulate innovation, and improve the public good. These research results typically are reported in articles published in a wide variety of academic journals. However, the high cost of journal subscriptions and restrictive licensing terms severely limits public access to these articles.

Because U.S. taxpayers underwrite this research, they have a right to expect its dissemination and use will be maximized. The Internet has revolutionized information sharing and has made it possible to make the latest advances promptly available to every scientist, physician, educator, business owner and citizen at his or her home, school, or library. If this information is shared with all potential users via the Internet, it will advance science, spur innovation, and improve the welfare of U.S. citizens.

Public Access is an Economic Stimulus

Expanding access to the universe of publicly funded scientific research in the U.S. offers the potential for downstream economic stimulus. The accelerated and expanded exchange of credible scientific results will lead to growth in patentable discoveries and their commercial application. New jobs may be supported within the research sector, including industries that support medical research, such as manufacturing of lab equipment, instrumentation, and chemical analysis.

Broader Access to Knowledge Fuels Accelerated Use and Innovation

Open sharing of scientific data has already revolutionized life science research and helped establish new fields such as genomics and proteomics. For example, GenBank, the publicly accessible database of DNA sequences operated by NIH, has played a critical role in the genomics revolution. Public access and cooperative sharing played a key role in the sequencing of the SARS virus in just seven days, expediting the development of diagnostic tests to identify the virus. A broader public access policy will hasten progress in all scientific fields. An accelerated pace of discovery in climate change research, the search for sustainable energy sources and hundreds of other critical areas will directly benefit the public.

Peer-reviewed articles reporting the results of scientific research funded by U.S. tax dollars should be made publicly available online no later than six months after publication. Additionally, articles written by scientists and researchers employed by the U.S. government should be placed online simultaneously to publication.

One U.S. agency has taken the lead in successfully implementing such a policy and serves as an excellent benchmark. After careful examination of the issues and extensive consultation with stakeholders, the National Institutes of Health implemented a reasoned policy that appropriately balances the interests of all stakeholders, requiring that the results of the \$29 billion in research that it funds annually be made freely accessible to the public in its online database. The policy will lead to new and increased usage by millions of physicians, public health officials, patients, students, teachers, and scientists.

For more information, visit <http://www.arl.org/sparc/advocacy/oawg.shtml> or contact:

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