

From: Paul Krombholz

Subject: Availability of taxpayer-funded research papers

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I feel very strongly that, if the taxpayers (that is all U.S. Citizens) funded the research, the resulting papers should be available on the internet for download at no cost.

When I was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, I browsed happily in the library for research articles. There was never an article that I couldn't get. A lot of my library research was based on my research project, but by no means all of it. Often I looked up articles just because they were interesting. That kind of free-browsing has supplied me with a lot of information that I use in teaching to this day, more than 40 years later.

Now I am teaching at a small private college that can not afford more than a few journals in its library. Journal costs have gone up even faster than medical costs and many libraries, even those of large state institutions can no longer afford to subscribe to everything they used to be able to afford. My school can not afford expensive reference journals such as Science Citation Index or Bio Abstracts, but Google Scholar is getting pretty good as a reference site. However, when I find an interesting article, all I can get is the abstract. If I want to see the article I have to pay \$20 to \$40 to download it. I can't do that.

I have read recently that there is a revolt at the University of California system over the costs of Nature Publishing Group journals being raised in one step by 400%. (<http://chronicle.com/article/U-of-California-Tries-Just/65823/>) Science publishers charge the author heavy page costs, and then they charge the libraries prohibitively high subscription rates. Science publishers have become the troll under the bridge.

There is no competition between publishers; each publisher is a monopoly selling access to its journals at prices as high as the market can bear. This is analogous to the government paying for the extracting and refining of oil, and then giving it to a single, unregulated monopoly to retail it.

There is a lot of hand-wringing these days about how badly educated American citizens are in the sciences, about how easily they are being misled by anti-science propaganda denying global warming, denying evolution, denying vaccination, promoting alternative medicine, promoting astrology, promoting witchcraft, alien visitation and any kind of woo woo nonsense. The Bush Administration prevented the launch of a satellite that would accurately measure the heat budget of the earth and answer the question whether or not global warming is occurring. Congress dismantled the Office of Technology Assessment about 10 years ago because they didn't want any advice from scientists any more. There are strong and well-funded anti-science movements in this country. Perhaps if our citizens had more access to science, they might vote for more sensible people to represent them.