

**Subject: RFI on Public Access to Scholarly Publications**

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Dear Sirs:

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From:

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I would like to comment on some of the questions raised by the Task Force.

Comment 1. I think that the current model of both open-access and publisher-financed publications meets the needs of many scientific researchers. In some ways, "open-access" is a misnomer; it really should be called "author-pay". Most open access publishers require the author (or his/her grant or home institution) to pay the costs of reviewing, editing and publishing the article on-line. However, in these days of a scarcity of funds (especially from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health), such money is often not available. I myself, working with a very minimal NSF grant, do not even consider publishing in an open-access journal; the money could be better used to buy chemicals or pay for instrument repairs. I realize that some people refer to the publisher-financed journals as "reader-pay". While this is true, the cost is spread over many readers and many libraries and many funding sources.

The analysis of information from the exploding number of on-line journals presents a serious problem for the future. Often, the articles published in some of these journals have been rejected by one or more publisher-financed journals. There are already web sites that purport to mine all publications on a given topic and collate the data, presumably without any attempt to assess the validity of the results. If researchers begin to rely on such summaries, the scientific enterprise will suffer.

One helpful step in improving access to the scientific literature would be for all publishers to allow free access to specific articles in their back-files, without opening the whole archive to data mining. Some, but not all, publishers do this already. However, it is possible that various university libraries must pay for this privilege.

Comment 3. The problem with centralized access to the scientific literature is the continual need to update the method of incorporating and accessing the articles in the archive, depending on hardware and software used at the moment. One advantage of paper copies kept in a central location is that the articles can be scanned at any time in the future and made available to the public. Already, with the rise of the internet and automated searching technologies is that information published before ~1970 is almost completely lost to the scientific community. Notable exceptions are the journals published by some of the scientific societies, which have been scanned back to the original volumes and made available to the public.

Comment 7. Peer-reviewed publications such as book chapters and conference symposia should be covered by public access policies. At the present time, book chapters almost never can be accessed without the investigator buying the book; most university libraries have almost stopped buying books to concentrate their limited funds on scholarly journals. As a result, many investigators (myself included) no longer write book chapters, because any new summaries or insights are lost to the scientific community.

Comment 8. To me, a one year delay before an article published in the open literature seems reasonable.