

Subject: Request for Information: Public Access to Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Publications Resulting From Federally Funded Research

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Comment 1

I interpret this question to relate to the broader economic impacts of Federal policies that affect the availability of peer-reviewed publications that result from federally funded scientific research. Current restrictions on access to these publications limits their value to other academic and scientific researchers for whom they are a key input in further knowledge creation. As such it is desirable to make these results more readily available to the public. In addition such availability will likely stimulate new online services that provide ways of combining, accessing and analyzing such content. This is illustrated by the ways in which for example services combining GIS map data and other information have been developed, and in the value that out of copyright books scanned by Google has created.

Agency policies that require free access to scholarship produced with federal support appears generally to be a desirable characteristic, at least on the margin.

Comment 2

Development of common and commonly accepted templates for specifying intellectual property rights perhaps through a collaborative standard setting process would be helpful. Such templates would simplify the process of assigning copyright, for example, by insuring that publishers all adhere to the same guidelines and processes and that there is uniformity in the definition of Intellectual Property rights.

Comment 3

Pros of centralized management would include consistent treatment and ease of access. Cons are the likely reduction in innovation that would come from creating a single entity to manage these publications. Competition would tend to encourage improvements in interface, access, storage and other desirable characteristics. There are perhaps also issues of redundancy that would be better served by a more decentralized system.

Comment 4

University sponsored repositories, Google Scholar, and a number of ventures sponsored by scholarly societies could be interpreted as possible models of the provision of access to scholarly information.

More generally, the Internet, the federal highway system and most other modern infrastructure provide models that may be relevant to the issues at hand here. Specifically, the development of electronic access radically alters the costs of scholarly communication and creates a situation in which the processes of scholarly communication – viewed in total – are ripe for changes. The model of peer-reviewed science disseminated through print journals is under stress, and experiments to develop better ways of validating and evaluating the importance and worth of

scholarship as well as making new knowledge accessible are needed.

Viewed in aggregate a significant amount of resources are invested to support this system including subscription fees paid by university libraries, and the costs of faculty time devoted to editing and reviewing articles. It is reasonable to ask if the current mixed-model of major commercial vendors plus university presses and academic societies remains the most efficient way to manage this system or if other arrangements might achieve better results at lower costs.

Following the model of earlier investments, it would be valuable for Federal Agencies to support developing the infrastructure for new models of scientific communication. Exactly what these will be is not yet obvious, so investments in multiple competing models is desirable. These investments might well be made in partnership with existing private enterprises involved in the business of scholarly communication—including university presses, for profit publishers and scientific societies.

Comment 5

This is a technical question to which I cannot respond substantively, Federal agencies could facilitate the formation of appropriate standards-setting bodies to examine these issues and make recommendations.

Comment 6

Federal Agencies should acknowledge that science requires not just research, but the communication and curation of the results of that research. Supporting robust systems of scholarly communication and curation of research results seems to be an important implication.

Comment 7

It is not clear to me why one would distinguish between different modes of publication in developing policies for public access.

Comment 8

This is a good question, and seems to require further research

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