

December 20, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine and a working scientist in a commercial enterprise. I am writing to respond to the request for public comment by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on the important issue of access to the published results of our nation's investment in science and technology. I wish to express my whole-hearted support for the expansion of the successful public-access policy of the National Institutes of Health across federal science and technology agencies.

Scientific research and the use of scientific findings are increasingly conducted in a digital world. Our nation has invested heavily in ensuring that digital content is available via the internet and there has never been a greater need for policies to ensure that new research tools and techniques can be fully exploited. The removal of access barriers and the enabling of the expanded use of research findings is already transforming biomedicine. It has the potential to do the same for climate change, energy research and a myriad of other applications. Having witnessed the effect of open access on my own research area I would urge you to support timely public access to the results of all research, irrespective of discipline, that is funded with taxpayer dollars. My own research interests extend beyond medical applications and increasingly interdisciplinary work is becoming the key to progress.

I believe that Open Access should be immediate and free and should include the rights to use and re-use all published material without hindrance. I do not favor any embargo periods on such use since they impose unacceptable delays on my ability to keep up with the cutting edge of research and hinder my ability to build on those results in a timely fashion.

The open availability of federally funded research for broad public use in open online archives is a crucial building block in laying a strong national foundation to support accelerated discovery and innovation. It encourages broader participation in the scientific process by providing equitable access to high-quality research results to researchers at higher education institutions of all kinds – from research-intensive universities to community colleges alike. It can empower more members of the public to become engaged in citizen science efforts in areas that pique their imagination. It will equip entrepreneurs and small business owners with the very latest research developments, allowing them to compete more effectively in the development of new technologies and innovations. Open availability of this research will expand the worldwide visibility of the research conducted in the U.S. and increase the impact of our collective investment in research. Furthermore, it will encourage the adoption of such policies in all countries and show our recognition that scientific research knows no national boundaries.

I urge you to establish a firm policy to require that the results of the U.S. investment in science and technology be made openly available immediately upon publication.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. J. Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

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