

Subject: Public access to federally funded research

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To whom it may concern,

With respect to "ensuring long-term stewardship and broad public access to peer-reviewed scholarly publications that result from federally funded scientific research," we and other college libraries, representing the interests of our users, academic researchers, believe that unregulated, commercial publishers have done a disservice to the scholarly community in recent years. These publishers' unreasonably high book and subscription pricing have already severely limited access for scientists and others at all but the largest and richest institutions, with obvious, unfortunate consequences for academic practice in particular and the public welfare more broadly. Inasmuch as these publishers (Elsevier, Wiley, Springer, etc.) do rely heavily on federally subsidized research for their content, it seems only fair that they be required to enable broader access through reduced subscription prices and/or that alternative, cheaper sorts of publishing venues be encouraged by federal policy.

Let me briefly outline one less-recognized implication for libraries of this recent development in publishing. Even at a relatively wealthy institution like mine, Amherst College, our library holdings, and so our users' access to information, have been increasingly limited by the unconscionably huge price rises demanded year after year by commercial scientific publishers; journal pricing has been the most burdensome, but book pricing in the sciences is also out of line with publishing in other areas. We have had to pick and choose what we can afford to make available, and as we necessarily devote larger percentages of our budgets to purchase access to material our scientists consider critical for their research and teaching - which is to say scientific journal literature largely - we're shifting resources that heretofore supported other disciplines, in the humanities and social sciences, thereby shrinking access for scholars in those fields as well. In 1990, the Amherst College Library spent around 50% of our annual materials budget on serials, with approximately 60% of *that* going to the sciences; currently, we have to devote 70% of our total annual expenditures to journals, mostly in the sciences. So, not only are publishers unfairly abridging scholars' and the general public's entitlement to access federally-funded research, they've upset the delicate multidisciplinary ecology of academia, and the damage they're doing will only increase if the government doesn't step in.

Yours respectfully,

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