Dear OSTP,

I would like to submit a comment on the question of public access to research.
My name is Aram Harrow and I am a Research Assistant Professor of
Computer Science & Engineering at the University of Washington, but my
views are my own and don't represent my employer.
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My research is on quantum computing, a fast-moving field at the intersection of physics,
computer science, mathematics and electrical engineering. In my field, most papers
appear in preprint form at the site arxiv.org. From my perspective, journals add very little
value, apart from the refereeing process. And since associate editors and referees are
academics who earn no additional salary from their efforts, their work does not seem to
be inherently tied to the journal format.

Thus, in evaluating the demands of different stakeholders, I would urge you to be
skeptical of the demands from the for-profit publishing industry. The profitability of that
sector has little to do with the advance of science, and reflects rather their ability to raise
rents from the use of journal articles as credentials.

In my experience, arxiv.org meets almost all of my scientific needs, except for peer
review. In particular, as a scientist, I have no use for intellectual property rights in the
papers I write, and would be happy with e.g. a Creative Commons license. The best-
case scenario I see for publishing is that peer review is done in a way that does not
require giving up copyright to publishers. It would be amazing and wonderful if the
government could help effect this change.

Of course, whatever policies you adopt should permit innovation in the publishing
sector. I think the right way to do this is to require all federally-funded research to be
available for free in a repository like arxiv.org. There should be unique identifiers and
properly formatted metadata for each paper, so that third parties (government, non-profit
or for-profit) can write their own front ends or other utilities. The system should also
facilitate mirrors, e.g. the way arxiv.org is mirrored around the world. In this way,
innovations (such as google scholar) can be decoupled from holding copyright.
Facilitating mirrors will also help to encourage archival.

Thanks for considering these comments, and good luck in your work.

Sincerely,
Aram Harrow