

**From:** Alton Dooley

**Subject:** Public access to taxpayer-funded research

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**To:** [publicaccess@ostp.gov](mailto:publicaccess@ostp.gov)

Dear Science and Technology Policy Office,

Science thrives on the open exchange of information. Efforts to restrict the dissemination of scientific information will, at best, make progress in science much less efficient. As a result any policies concerning the dissemination of scientific information should err on the side of greater accessibility. This is especially true of publicly funded research; I think it is indisputable that the funders of research should always have unfettered access to the results. It is impossible to imagine, for example, a pharmaceutical company paying for research, but then being denied access to the results unless they paid again. Why should the standard be any different if the funders happen to be the taxpayers?

The ability to distribute literature by electronic means has removed most of the technical obstacles that once limited dissemination of research, and federally funded research groups should be required to make full use of this opportunity. Ideally, the federal government should provide hosting and archival services to accommodate these works; PubMed Central provides an excellent model that could be extended to other disciplines.

Some federally funded research is published in for-profit journals printed by academic publishers. While the publishers incur some costs that need to be recovered, their contributions to scientific endeavors should not be overstated. Academic publishers make a much smaller contribution to the production of scientific works than in many other fields. In the case of almost all scientific works, the underlying research, writing, figure production, basic editing, peer review, and acceptance/rejection decisions are all done by scientists who are not compensated for their work by the publisher.

The contribution of publishers is largely limited to typesetting, issuing press releases (also often written by the researchers), and in some instances web hosting. The minor contributions of the publishing companies to research in no way justifies the restriction of accessibility of taxpayer-funded research. Again, PubMed Central offers a useful model for dealing with these competing interests, by placing a one-year embargo on commercially published manuscripts before they become freely available.

It should be noted that the general public is not the only group adversely affected by restrictions on dissemination. The exorbitant fees charged by some publishers for access to their journals places these work completely beyond the financial means of many smaller colleges, museums that are not affiliated with universities, public high schools, and other groups that may need access to particular studies.

In short, there is a substantial public interest in ensuring that the result of publicly funded research be easily and freely available to any interested party.

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