

Subject: The RWA would make research at small colleges more difficult

Date: January 9, 2012 1:47:05 PM EST

Dear Science and Technology Policy Office,

I would like to comment on the RWA from a point of view that I'm not sure you're getting a lot of- that of an active researcher at a university with a mostly-teaching mission. Places like ours do not have the research or library budgets of the large research universities. Thus any piece of legislation that, even as a side effect, prevents or reduces rates of publication of scientific work in open-access journals effectively makes it more difficult for people like me to get ahold of literature sources. This is particularly true for new articles and those in popular multidisciplinary journals (Science-Nature-PNAS), as these are often 'firewalled' by for-profit journals for six months or a year, if they allow access to non-subscribers at all. Since my University simply can't afford an institutional subscription for these very expensive journals, keeping current with the research in these journals becomes difficult (begging reprints from colleagues?... yeah, that's fun and dignified). Open access journals are extremely helpful in my situation.

While the proliferation of public databases and the wide availability of powerful computers for analysis makes it possible to do cutting-edge work at small and medium sized colleges, control and distribution of completed scientific work by for-profit journals slows us down. This makes research slower, and more expensive overall. Open access is one thing that lets me do R1-level research at a Master's-level university, something that would have been much more difficult 10 years ago, before the open access movement began. For-profit journals are an unworthy sink for public funds, if they keep publicly-funded research out of the hands of the public.

Sincerely,
Dr. Joseph Spagna

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