

**Dear Science and Technology Policy Office,**

I just learned about the Research Works Act and about the letter that Michael Taylor sent to you (I have pasted it below). After reading it carefully, I fully endorse Mike's statements. I would like to point out that I am Chief Editor of an Elsevier journal, the *Comptes Rendus Palevol* ([http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws\\_home/623404/description#description](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/623404/description#description)), and that indeed, most of the work is done by the authors, referees, and Editors. Authors usually have their salary paid by public money. Editors and referees are not paid for their work (except in exceptional circumstances; some publishers pay book editors, for instance), although after seeing the huge profits that Elsevier has made recently, I think that this should change! This process, entirely paid by governmental or university money, results in papers that just need to be formatted to meet the journal's style, a small technical step for which they charge a lot, apparently.

I think that Science's interests are best served by Open Access publications because scientists write for the general progress and other scientists of all countries need to have access to the results. Thus, I certainly hope that publishers will make rates to do this more affordable, as many charge over 800\$US to publish a paper in Open Access. I have made a point of publishing some of my recent papers Open Access journals (where all articles are automatically Open Access), such as *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica* (<http://www.app.pan.pl/issue.html?issue=forthcoming>) and *Contributions to Zoology* (<http://dpc.uba.uva.nl/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ctz;cc=ctz;sid=c96a561c070a0a72fe3d3dae14372c8a;tpl=home.tpl>), and I have recently accepted to serve as a specialty Associate Editor of an open access journal, *Frontiers in Evolutionary and Population Genetics*, a specialty section of *Frontiers in Genetics* ([http://www.frontiersin.org/evolutionary\\_and\\_population\\_genetics/about](http://www.frontiersin.org/evolutionary_and_population_genetics/about)).

If you want to learn more about me and the various journals that I am involved with, just follow the link to my home page ([http://tolweb.org/notes/?note\\_id=3669](http://tolweb.org/notes/?note_id=3669)) or my online CV ([http://tolweb.org/notes/?note\\_id=3671](http://tolweb.org/notes/?note_id=3671)).

Best wishes,

**Michel Laurin**

Mike Taylor's letter:

Thank you for extending the deadline for comments on Public Access to Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Publications Resulting From Federally Funded Research. The Research Works Act has only very recently come to the notice of scientists, and it is because of this extraordinary proposal that it is now apparent to us that we need to reaffirm what we thought was settled: that OF COURSE scientific work funded by the public should be freely accessible to the public. I do not understand how this can even

be a matter for discussion. The public pays: the public should benefit in every way possible.

The language in the RWA is highly misleading, attributing to publishers far more input into the scientific process than they really have. The truth is that scientists (often funded by public money) provide the underlying research, the writing and the figure preparation that result in a manuscript submitted for publication. Other scientists then provide the editorial services and (contra publishers' claims, as can be easily verified) the peer review. Publishers' contributions are limited essentially to typesetting, the provision of web hosting, and sometimes a very limited amount of compensation for senior editors only (usually not the handling editors who actually deal with authors' works). The notion that such a minor contribution should suffice to hand publishers, rather than the public, the right to determine how, where and under what regime the resulting works are disseminated, is ludicrous. It would be laughable if it were not so iniquitous.

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