THE ENDOCRINE SOCIETY

8401 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, SUITE 900 + CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND + 20815-5817 + TELEPHONE 301.941.0200 + FAX 301.941.0259 + www.endo-society.org

PUBLIC ACCESS POLICIES FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FUNDING AGENCIES ACROSS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Endocrine Society Response to the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the White House

January 19, 2010

The Endocrine Society appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Office of Science and Technology Policy regarding enhancing public access to archived publications resulting from research funded by federal science and technology agencies. Under The Endocrine Society's current policy, articles containing research sponsored by federal funding are deposited in PubMed Central for authors in accordance with the guidelines outlined by the National Institutes of Health. These articles – as well as all other articles - are opened to the public 12 months after the date of publication. The Endocrine Society, in general, is supportive of other organizations who have articulated the value that a scholarly publisher contributes to the peer review and dissemination of scientific information and echoes the need for the publisher to exercise control over the business aspects of their publishing activities. We provide the following responses to your December 9, 2009 request for comments.

What characteristics of a public access policy would best accommodate the needs and interests of authors, primary and secondary publishers, libraries, universities, the federal government, users of scientific literature, and the public?

A successful public access policy would recognize the value added by both publisher-driven peer-review and manuscript production.

The authority added by peer-review benefits all parties by ensuring that only the most reliable information is disseminated. Without peer-review, users of scientific literature would have to determine the reliability of the material individually.

Also, the best public access policy would recognize the primacy of the final published version of a manuscript and the publisher's prerogative to determine when that version is available to the public.

Who are the users of peer-reviewed publications arising from federal research? How do they access and use these papers now, and how might they if these papers were more accessible? Would others use these papers if they were more accessible and for what purpose?

Users of peer-reviewed publications that are produced by The Endocrine Society are primarily researchers. Most researchers gain access through Society memberships or institutional subscriptions; very little content is of general public interest. The Society's current policy adheres to the 12-month model established by the National Institutes of Health.

How best could federal agencies enhance public access to the peer-reviewed papers that arise from their research funds? What measures could agencies use to gauge whether there is increased return on federal investment gained by expanded access?
Federal agencies should consider how the materials that are produced from their research funds are currently used, as well as how the publishers of the manuscripts containing that research support the entire field. Since information is evaluated, distributed, absorbed, and archived differently for each field, this individual approach is most important if the introduction of a public access policy is to act as an enhancement to the field instead of a burden.

What features does a public access policy need to have to ensure compliance?
To ensure compliance, it is vital that a public access policy allow the publisher some control over access so they can adopt a business model that will enable them to continue to provide the benefits essential to publication of high-quality content.

What version of the paper should be made public under a public access policy (e.g., the author's peer reviewed manuscript or the final published version)? What are the relative advantages and disadvantages to different versions of a scientific paper?
It is of vitally importance in the clinical sciences that only the final published version of a manuscript be made available. The author's accepted-but-unedited version could contain errors that are catastrophic for patient care. Considering the importance of published information to the immediate welfare of patients, the publisher's ability to retract a paper is important to ensure the validity of the literature. Even in a basic science field, manuscripts are subjected to copyediting and editorial review that enhances the quality and value of the content. Making available unedited, unformatted versions of the original manuscripts also erodes version control and leads to confusion in the literature. If several versions of a manuscript are distributed among a multitude of repositories, then it will be impossible to correct the literature.

In the biosciences, there is no advantage to publishing anything but the final published version of a manuscript.

At what point in time should peer-reviewed papers be made public via a public access policy relative to the date a publisher releases the final version? Are there empirical data to support an optimal length of time? Should the delay period be the same or vary for levels of access (e.g., final peer reviewed manuscript or final published article, access under fair use versus alternative license), for federal agencies and scientific disciplines?
Peer-reviewed papers should be made available to the public in the form of the final version of record (the published version) at a time that is consistent with the needs of the publisher / professional organization that created the content.

How should peer-reviewed papers arising from federal investment be made publicly available? In what format should the data be submitted in order to make it easy to search, find, and retrieve and to make it easy for others to link to it? Are there existing digital standards for archiving and interoperability to maximize public benefit? How are these anticipated to change?
The peer-reviewed papers arising from federal investment should be made publicly available in the formats provided by the publisher. One important contribution made by publishers is that

they push the boundaries of current digital standards to find technologies that are efficient, cost-effective, and robust. These features enhance archiving and migration capabilities.

Access demands not only availability, but also meaningful usability. How can the federal government make its collections of peer-reviewed papers more useful to the American public? By what metrics (e.g., number of articles or visitors) should the federal government measure success of its public access collections? What are the best examples of usability in the private sector (both domestic and international)? And, what makes them exceptional? Should those who access papers be given the opportunity to comment or provide feedback?

In the biomedical sciences, the federal government can track a peer-reviewed paper's citation rate through Thomson Reuter's Web of Science. Also, PubMed Central can provide usage data.

The Endocrine Society, a not-for-profit professional organization, provides an excellent example of usability with its four journals, currently housed on the HighWire Press platform. The Society's current policy is that all articles are made available to the public at 12 months; all articles receiving federal funding are deposited with PubMed Central on behalf of the authors; and patients who request articles are provided with free PDFs of manuscripts even if they are not yet open to the public.

Founded in 1916, The Endocrine Society is the world's oldest, largest, and most active organization devoted to research on hormones and the clinical practice of endocrinology. Today, The Endocrine Society's membership consists of over 14,000 scientists, physicians, educators, nurses and students in more than 80 countries. Together, these members represent all basic, applied, and clinical interests in endocrinology.