



September 22, 2006

Senator John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

The undersigned senior academic officers write to express our concerns about S.2695, the “Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006.”

We agree that the broadest dissemination of scientific literature is good for research. However, mandating a six-month public release of journal articles would have negative unintended consequences for the academic community. The free posting of unedited author manuscripts by government agencies threatens the integrity of the scientific record, potentially undermines the publisher peer review process, and is not a smart use of funds that could be better used for research.

Scientific publishers, in collaboration with academic institutions, scientists, and libraries, have been at the forefront of innovations that have improved and continue to improve access to research information. As a result, more scientific papers are now available to more people than at any time in history.

Even when federal funds support the research reported in journal articles, these funds do not cover the costs associated with turning raw data into archived scientific manuscripts. The cost of peer review, copy editing, formatting, printing, online publication, search engine development, and permanent archiving ranges from \$2,500 - \$10,000 per article.

At present, publishers cover these publication costs through the sale of subscriptions. A Federal policy mandating public access after six months would threaten the financial viability of many of these journals through the loss of subscription revenues, forcing them to identify other means to cover costs.

One such means is to shift the costs to the scientists/authors. This is the business model currently used by the Public Library of Science, for example, which recently increased fees to \$2,500 per manuscript. These fees either come from the author’s Federal research grant—thereby decreasing the amount available for research—or from the university, which could ultimately lead to higher institutional costs than those needed for journal subscriptions.

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In fact, some studies have already shown that research intensive universities would have to pay considerably more to gain access to the same amount of research under an author- pays model than a subscription model.

Mandating free dissemination of scientific manuscripts within six months would significantly limit the ability of non-profit and commercial publishers to cover the upfront reviewing, editing, and production costs of creating these manuscripts. Some journals would simply cease to exist. Others would be much less able to support innovation in scientific publishing and archiving. Ultimately, this could lead to a system in which NIH and other federal agencies must sustain a significant portion of the research publishing enterprise, maintaining 100+ years of archival journals, as well as producing new research articles.

As a member of the Senate Budget Committee, you are certainly sensitive to the various forces that shape and reshape the Federal budget from year to year. Recently, for example, we learned that the Biomolecular Interaction Network Database—the world’s largest free repository for proteomic data—lost its funding and curtailed its curation efforts. As leaders in our respective academic institutions, we are profoundly concerned that one unintended consequence of S. 2695 would be to put both our current research publications *and* our research archives in jeopardy.

Given the widespread access to the scientific literature that already exists and the negative unintended consequences this bill will have on the academic community, we urge you to reconsider whether S.2695 is needed.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely yours,

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