



**Professional & Scholarly
Publishing (PSP) Division
Executive Council 2006-2007**

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PSP Publishers Urge Congress to Oppose Mandated, Expanded NIH Public Access Policy

AAP's Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division has written to the Senate and House Appropriations Committees expressing deep concern over moves to mandate the NIH public access policy and to shorten the time-frame within which authors must submit manuscripts. At present the NIH policy, which is voluntary, calls for medical researchers who receive NIH funding to make their findings available to the general public by submitting their articles for posting to the NIH PubMed Central database within twelve months of publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Earlier this year, in response to a request from Congress, NIH issued a report indicating that only four percent of NIH-funded authors have complied with its public access policy in the nine months since its inception. In January, AAP/PSP, in cooperation with publishing associations in the U.K. and Europe, conducted its own survey of 1,128 scientific and medical authors which revealed a low level of understanding of the NIH public access policy, showing that authors fail to post their articles to PubMed Central because they do not identify clear personal benefits from posting and have a limited understanding of the benefits of the NIH policy for the scientific research community, the public, or existing journals.

The PSP letter to Congress was submitted in anticipation of appropriations hearings in April at which NIH Director Elias Zerhouni, in line with recommendations made by his Public Access Working Group, is expected to push for making submission of NIH-funded research to PubMed Central mandatory rather than voluntary and for shortening the required time frame for submission from twelve to six months.

Speaking for the 130 professional societies, commercial publishers, and university presses that comprise PSP membership, the letter from PSP Executive Council Chairman Brian Crawford (American Chemical Society) states: "Full public access to scientific articles has always been central to our mission because competition demands it and because timely access to quality peer-reviewed journals is fundamental to scientific progress. The real question is whether the government should dictate how much time a publisher has to recoup its costs before mandating free access to articles based on federal research—and whether the promised public benefits of such an approach are worth the long-term costs." The letter goes on to say that: "This hasty request to modify the current policy will clearly harm publishers and its long-term impact on scientific quality, non-profit missions and federal spending has yet to be evaluated." In addition to PSP, the letter was signed by members of the DC Principles Coalition, a group of not-for-profit medical and scientific societies.

In addition to the proposed changes in the NIH public access policy, PSP publishers are concerned about how NIH is using the deposited articles. Among the questionable practices that have occurred are removal of publishers' copyright notices and publishers' brands, changes in bibliographic and DOI (Digital Object Identifier) information, and processing the publishers' version through PDF converters labeled "author version."

PSP publishers are also concerned about draft legislation being prepared for introduction by Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) which would extend the NIH policy to all federal agencies.

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