

Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing

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Summary of the April 11, 2003, Meeting on Open Access Publishing

The following statements of principle were drafted during a one-day meeting held on April 11, 2003 at the headquarters of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland. The purpose of this document is to stimulate discussion within the biomedical research community on how to proceed, as rapidly as possible, to the widely held goal of providing open access to the primary scientific literature. Our goal was to agree on significant, concrete steps that all relevant parties —the organizations that foster and support scientific research, the scientists that generate the research results, the publishers who facilitate the peer-review and distribution of results of the research, and the scientists, librarians and other who depend on access to this knowledge— can take to promote the rapid and efficient transition to open access publishing.

A list of the attendees is given following the statements of principle; they participated as individuals and not necessarily as representatives of their institutions. Thus, this statement, while reflecting the group consensus, should not be interpreted as carrying the unqualified endorsement of each participant or any position by their institutions.

Our intention is to reconvene an expanded group in a few months to draft a final set of principles that we will then seek to have formally endorsed by funding agencies, scientific societies, publishers, librarians, research institutions and individual scientists as the accepted standard for publication of peer-reviewed reports of original research in the biomedical sciences.

The document is divided into four sections: The first is a working definition of open access publication. This is followed by the reports of three working groups.

Definition of Open Access Publication

An Open Access Publication¹ is one that meets the following two conditions:

1. The author(s) and copyright holder(s) grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, perpetual right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship², as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use.
2. A complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in a suitable standard electronic format is deposited immediately upon initial publication in at least one online repository that is supported by an academic institution, scholarly society, government agency, or other well-established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, interoperability, and long-term archiving (for the biomedical sciences, PubMed Central is such a repository).

¹ Open access is a property of individual works, not necessarily journals or publishers.

² Community standards, rather than copyright law, will continue to provide the mechanism for enforcement of proper attribution and responsible use of the published work, as they do now.

Statement of the Institutions and Funding Agencies Working Group

Our organizations sponsor and nurture scientific research to promote the creation and dissemination of new ideas and knowledge for the public benefit. We recognize that publication of results is an essential part of scientific research and the costs of publication are part of the cost of doing research. We already expect that our faculty and grantees share their ideas and discoveries through publication. This mission is only half-completed if the work is not made as widely available and as useful to society as possible. The Internet has fundamentally changed the practical and economic realities of distributing published scientific knowledge and makes possible substantially increased access.

To realize the benefits of this change requires a corresponding fundamental change in our policies regarding publication by our grantees and faculty:

1. We encourage our faculty/grant recipients to publish their work according to the principles of the open access model, to maximize the access and benefit to scientists, scholars and the public throughout the world.
2. We realize that moving to open and free access, though probably decreasing total costs, may displace some costs to the individual researcher through page charges, or to publishers through decreased revenues, and we pledge to help defray these costs. To this end we agree to help fund the necessary expenses of publication under the open access model of individual papers in peer-reviewed journals (subject to reasonable limits based on market conditions and services provided).
3. We reaffirm the principle that only the intrinsic merit of the work, and not the title of the journal in which a candidate's work is published, will be considered in appointments, promotions, merit awards or grants.
4. We will regard a record of open access publication as evidence of service to the community, in evaluation of applications for faculty appointments, promotions and grants.

We adopt these policies in the expectation that the publishers of scientific works share our desire to maximize public benefit from scientific knowledge and will view these new policies as they are intended—an opportunity to work together for the benefit of the scientific community and the public.

Statement of the Libraries & Publishers Working Group

We believe that open access will be an essential component of scientific publishing in the future and that works reporting the results of current scientific research should be as openly accessible and freely useable as possible. Libraries and publishers should make every effort to hasten this transition in a fashion that does not disrupt the orderly dissemination of scientific information.

Libraries propose to:

1. Develop and support mechanisms to make the transition to open access publishing and to provide examples of these mechanisms to the community.
2. In our education and outreach activities, give high priority to teaching our users about the benefits of open access publishing and open access journals.
3. List and highlight open access journals in our catalogs and other relevant databases.

Journal publishers propose to:

1. Commit to providing an open access option for any research article published in any of the journals they publish.
2. Declare a specific timetable for transition of journals to open access models.
3. Work with other publishers of open access works and interested parties to develop tools for authors and publishers to facilitate publication of manuscripts in standard electronic formats suitable for archival storage and efficient searching.
4. Ensure that open access models requiring author fees lower barriers to researchers at demonstrated financial disadvantage, particularly those from developing countries.

Statement of Scientists and Scientific Societies Working Group

Scientific research is an interdependent process whereby each experiment is informed by the results of others. The scientists who perform research and the professional societies that represent them have a great interest in ensuring that research results are disseminated as immediately, broadly and effectively as possible. Electronic publication of research results offers the opportunity and the obligation to share research results, ideas and discoveries freely with the scientific community and the public.

Therefore:

1. We endorse the principles of the open access model.
2. We recognize that publishing is a fundamental part of the research process, and the costs of publishing are a fundamental cost of doing research.
3. Scientific societies agree to affirm their strong support for the open access model and their commitment to ultimately achieve open access for all the works they publish. They will share information on the steps they are taking to achieve open access with the community they serve and with others who might benefit from their experience.
4. Scientists agree to manifest their support for open access by selectively publishing in, reviewing for and editing for open access journals and journals that are effectively making the transition to open access.
5. Scientists agree to advocate changes in promotion and tenure evaluation in order to recognize the community contribution of open access publishing and to recognize the intrinsic merit of individual articles without regard to the titles of the journals in which they appear.
6. Scientists and societies agree that education is an indispensable part of achieving open access, and commit to educate their colleagues, members and the public about the importance of open access and why they support it.

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