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November 5, 2004

Dr. Elias Zerhouni

Director

National Institutes of Health

Bethesda, Maryland

Email: Public Access@nih.gov

Re: Federal Register Notice of September 17, 2004: Enhanced Public
Access to National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research Information

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

The Biophysical Society welcomes this opportunity to express our full support for the concept that scientific research information should be made freely accessible to the public in a timely manner. As publisher of the non-profit *Biophysical Journal*, we already immediately make accessible online all manuscripts approved for publication, with the final redacted version available online freely after one year. We also have provided back issues of the Journal to PubMed Central for posting. While we agree with the principles outlined in the proposed rules, we have concerns about some details of the policy because of the issues outlined below.

While a six month delay in releasing the authors' unredacted manuscripts for public access is acceptable for our journal, since we already make them freely available with no delay, we feel that the primary reference to the work by other authors must be to our journal, whether it is the authors' final manuscript or the published redacted article. We believe that it is extremely important that there be a single organization assuring the integrity of the published work, and that this responsibility remain with the Biophysical Society for articles appearing in our journal. Moreover, we believe that there will be real costs associated with implementing the proposed guidelines and that those costs have not yet been accurately evaluated. Whatever the ultimate costs are, however, we would be unable to undertake any part of the burden of depositing researchers' manuscripts or data in a central depository, and believe that this responsibility should reside with the individual grantees. It would be highly inappropriate for the Biophysical Society to act as intermediary between the grantees and the NIH.

Initiation of this centralized depository raises many other as yet unanswered issues important for a basic science journal, such as ours, related to assuring and monitoring the quality and integrity of our journal. How useful is an archive of unedited manuscripts for the public? How will readers learn of addenda or corrections to articles? How will the proposed model be funded? At what cost? Why is simply linking to publishers' web sites, rather than mandatory deposition at PubMed Central, not acceptable? It would certainly be a more efficient, less costly way to achieve the desired increased access.

The Biophysical Society has the same objective as the NIH – to make peer-reviewed scientific information as widely available as possible. We are confident that issues involved in creating better public access to the scientific literature can be resolved best by working openly together to develop a plan acceptable to all, without damaging the successful individual publishing enterprises. The proposed plan has serious faults and requires improvements before it is enacted. We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with the NIH to develop a truly viable plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen C. Harvey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.

Stephen C. Harvey
President