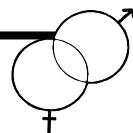


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Elias Zerhouni, M.D., Director

National Institutes of Health

9000 Rockville Pike

Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Society for the Study of Reproduction, which is a not-for-profit scientific society that publishes *Biology of Reproduction*, the top-rated research journal in the area of reproductive biology. This letter is in response to the NIH proposal on open access.

The publication and dissemination of the results of scientific investigation are an essential part of research. Not-for-profit scientific societies have played a pivotal role in this function by arranging state-of-the-art scientific meetings and developing high quality scientific journals. These societies played a critical role in establishing standards of publication to ensure quality of data published, along with ethical standards, to ensure scientific integrity. Rigorous peer and editorial review are mandatory for acceptance for publication.

With the goal of making scientific data available with free access to meet the needs of the Society, most journals started publishing the electronic version of the journal in addition to the print version as soon as the technology became available. This was followed by introduction of "Papers in Press" in which the author's PDF of accepted papers were put online with free access to everyone regardless of whether they subscribed to the journal or not. This information remains online indefinitely for the rapid transmission and dissemination of new scientific information. In addition, after a very short period of access control for the edited and formatted version of the manuscript, the back issues of the journal are made freely available. It should be emphasized that even during the period of access control, it is only the formatted version of the paper and not the scientific information contained therein that is under access control. The scientific information is always available in the form of the author's PDF. Most journals are also rapidly converting the formerly only print versions of the journal to online versions to make the data more accessible to the public. These steps were taken voluntarily by not-for-profit scientific societies to meet the current needs. The Society for the Study of Reproduction was also a co-signatory of the Washington DC

Principles with a strong commitment to free access. Thus, to date, the total number of scientific articles available on open access in PubMed Central is only a small fraction of the articles made available free of charge by publishers using Highwire Press.

During the several years of existence of PubMed Central and a relatively shorter existence of PLoS, it is clear that the majority of authors prefer to continue publication of their research in well-established scientific journals of high quality. It would indeed be unfortunate if the financial stability of these journals that are committed to free access is weakened by loss of subscription. Similarly, it would be unfortunate if the author's ability to select appropriate journals for his or her publications were restricted through governmental regulations.

Specifically, in answer to the proposals made:

- a) In view of the publication of "Papers in Press" in *Biology of Reproduction* within a week of its acceptance, the paper is available to PubMed Central through the literature. This availability is not restricted only to papers funded through NIH grants and shows the progress in the field worldwide. Thus all recommendations for free access are fully met.
- b) For manuscripts supported by NIH, submission of a copy of the accepted manuscript to PubMed Central would only cause confusion leading to a duplicate posting because the manuscript would already be available via a link from PubMed Central through the literature.
- c) Currently, the copyedited and formatted version of papers published in *Biology of Reproduction* is under controlled access for a period of 12 months. This is considered to be the shortest period of access control that would not erode the subscription base and threaten the financial stability and thereby the existence of the journal. However, various journals published by Highwire Press are conducting experiments to determine if the period of access control can be reduced below the 12-month period for journals published monthly without endangering the subscription base. The scientific societies should be allowed this period to do their own experiments related to the access period. The Federal Government should not be imposing a time frame on publishers. It is dependent on the publisher's business model.
- d) There is no need for NIH to incur additional costs on an archive when the funds could be better spent on biomedical research. Publishers, including those working with HighWire Press, are working on archival solutions at no extra cost to the Federal Government. All NIH will need to do is to provide links from PubMed Central to the actual article.

Elias Zerhouni, M.D.
September 17, 2004
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In summary, the Society for the Study of Reproduction, publisher of *Biology of Reproduction*, has fully met the needs of scientific and public audiences in providing free and rapid access to the results of scientific advances in the area, on a voluntary basis, and strongly opposes duplicate publication of its papers in press and final manuscripts in PubMed Central.

Sincerely yours,



Joy L. Pate, Ph.D.
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