

OPENING STATEMENT

The Honorable Andy Harris (R-MD), Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight

“Federally Funded Research: Examining Public Access and Scholarly Publication Interests”

March 29, 2012

The formal review and communication of research findings dates back several centuries. Over this time, it has certainly served society well. Scholars can argue over whether the existing structure, including peer review, is sufficient or if more can be done to ensure quality, but one thing is certain, society has greatly benefited from it.

This structure and process, however, is organic and ever changing. As we progress through the digital age, expectations of access to scientific findings are increasing, specifically research funded by taxpayers. Just as the Internet has challenged entrenched interests in other mediums such as news and music, so too has it affected scholarly publishing. The academic community and scholarly publishing interests must be flexible enough to adapt to our ever-changing times.

Society’s expectations of transparency are clearly increasing. Couple this trend with the fact that taxpayers rightfully expect access to research they have funded, and you quickly realize that we all must work together to ensure that the various interests involved are treated fairly, and that ultimately science and research are not harmed.

This is no small matter. There are more than 25,000 peer-reviewed journals, produced by over 2,000 publishers. These journals publish more than 1.5 million articles a year, and earn revenues between \$8 and \$10 billion dollars from their subscribers. This revenue funds over 100,000 jobs worldwide – 30,000 in the U.S. alone.

I have a lot of questions about how we should meet the challenges of expanding access to research without compromising the quality of the product, or the rights of those involved in the process.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) public access policy provides a good opportunity for Congress to review the effectiveness of increased transparency on certain fields of research, as well as its impact on publishers. We must be mindful, however, that what works or does not work for NIH and biomedical research, may not be appropriate for other agencies and scientific fields. Is there a one-size-fits-all policy that can cover the entire federal government, or do specific agencies and disciplines require different approaches? What does the taxpayer have a right to access – the manuscript that is produced by the researcher, or the final product that is peer reviewed? How does copyright law affect each of these? How long after release of a paper should the public have access? Immediately? Six months? A year? Does this change depending on the discipline or the agency? Should all information and data associated with that

research be made public? Is this reasonable or even possible? Should limitations be placed on access to prevent misuse? How should that be decided, and who should decide it?

I'm also curious about how public access has impacted the quality of research. Has increased access impacted the number of citations and references, and is this even a valuable metric to determine effectiveness? Has greater access spurred additional inquiries or novel research? How has public access affected innovation and commercialization? How do varying funding models for peer-review impact how researchers and agencies fund research? Are journals capable of adapting to meet new challenges presented by the digital age, transparency demands, and competitor models?

As you can see I have a lot of questions, but I think one thing is clear. Any effort to fundamentally change the way in which federal research is reviewed, vetted, transmitted, and communicated should benefit from the Science, Space, and Technology Committee's input. We have been involved in investigating issues surrounding public access for a number of years, and are uniquely qualified to evaluate the impacts on research and federal agencies. Rep. Gordon, the former Committee Chairman, brought together a number of stakeholders in 2009 in order to find common ground, and in 2010 the "Scholarly Publishing Roundtable" issued a report containing several recommendations. We also tasked the Office of Science and Technology Policy to address this issue in the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 and expect their results soon. Today's hearing is an extension of this longstanding engagement.

I look forward to working with all of the interested parties, and want to thank our witnesses for appearing today.