March, 2012


Denise Troll Covey, Carnegie Mellon University
Gloriana St. Clair, Carnegie Mellon University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/denise_troll_covey/66/
March 1, 2012

The Honorable Mike Doyle
401 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

On behalf of Carnegie Mellon and the roughly 4,000 faculty and staff we represent, I am writing to thank you for introducing **H.R.4004, the Federal Research Public Access Act of 2012 (FRPAA)**. The FRPAA will ensure that all researchers and other U.S. taxpayers have prompt, free access to peer-reviewed manuscripts reporting on federally funded research. Widespread access to this information is an essential component of the United States’ investment in science. Advances in information technology and cyber-infrastructure make widespread access not only possible, but affordable.

The report recently published by the Committee for Economic Development (CED)\(^1\) provides ample evidence that public access to research results enables access by a greater diversity of researchers, encourages exploration and experimentation, accelerates science, increases citations, heightens the return on investment in research, stimulates application and commercialization in new products and services (growing new markets and creating jobs), and offers the transparency needed to improve administration and evaluation of federally funded research. The report also provides ample refutation of the claims that federal public access policies will harm traditional subscription-based journal publishers, and that delays of twelve months or more – between publication of journal articles and publicly available copies of author manuscripts – are needed to sustain the publishing industry.

Carnegie Mellon is a private research university with a stellar reputation in many disciplines. We are among the world’s leaders in interdisciplinary collaboration and research. Our 2011 financial statement reports that 38.4% of our total revenue was from sponsored projects, totaling $360.9 million. Federally funded projects account for $317.59 million (88%) of this revenue.\(^2\) Our researchers want their peer-reviewed work to be publicly available. And they want public access to the peer-reviewed work of other researchers. Like many universities, our faculty and students do not have sufficient access to the published literature because our library budget cannot keep pace with escalating journal prices. The time has come to provide open access to peer-reviewed, federally funded research. Access to this work is essential to everyone who wishes to apply or build upon it. Furthermore access to this work should be a public right, given that taxpayers underwrite the funding.

---

The FRPAA 2012 balances the needs of all stakeholders. The inclusion of a six-month embargo period provides a limited, exclusive distribution option for publishers that want to maintain a subscription model for access. Requiring deposit of peer-reviewed author manuscripts enables publishers to continue to market a product with value-added enhancements. Allowing each federal agency to determine its own strategy for establishing a digital repository, subject to basic requirements of public access, interoperability, and long-term preservation, provides needed flexibility.

The FRPAA reflects the growing trend by funding agencies and higher education institutions worldwide to maximize access to research results. It advances the progress made by the NIH Public Access Policy, which makes available in PubMed Central each month roughly 10,000 new manuscripts reporting on NIH-funded research. A mandate was required to achieve this. Under the NIH voluntary submission policy, only 7% of the manuscripts reporting on NIH-funded research were deposited in PubMed Central. Under the mandatory policy, the compliance rate is now 73%. The 500,000 unique users of material in PubMed Central each weekday demonstrate the high public demand for biomedical information.

Information in other critical areas, from climate change to renewable energy, should be made just as readily accessible. The FRPAA is aligned with the demonstrated interests of President Obama’s open-government initiative. The Office of Science and Technology Policy’s (OSTP) recent request for information on public access to scholarly publications arising from federally funded research reflects the administration’s growing commitment to ensure maximum return on the public investment in research.

According to the CED report, openness, such as public access to federally funded research results, adds value to America’s scientific, technological, and commercial activities. The net societal benefits of public access far outweigh the limited cost of public access. “Public-access policies should be judged by their impact on the society and the development and dissemination of high-quality scientific research and not by the impact on proprietary publishers, open-access publishers (publishers that rely on author payments rather than subscriptions), digital repositories or any particular means of disseminating knowledge.”3 The report repeats the caution that it would not be prudent to rely exclusively on private archiving efforts to maintain access to federally funded research findings.4

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to let me know how Carnegie Mellon can help you build support for the FRPAA. We look forward to working with you to secure its passage.

Sincerely,

Gloriana St. Clair,
Dean of University Libraries

Denise Troll Covey
Principal Librarian for Special Projects

cc: The Honorable Kevin Yoder
    The Honorable Wm. Lacy Clay

3 The Future of Taxpayer-Funded Research: Who Will Control Access to the Results?, p. 5.
4 The Future of Taxpayer-Funded Research: Who Will Control Access to the Results?, pp. 17, 35.