



The NIH Public Access Policy Advances Science and Promotes Healthy People

The Medical Library Association (MLA) and Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) support the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Public Access Policy that guarantees taxpayer access to the published reports of federally funded research. We consider these published reports to be among the critical components of the nation's healthcare infrastructure that must be readily accessible to all.

MLA and AAHSL have long maintained that access to timely, relevant, and accurate health information is vital to a healthy nation. We understand the importance of a health literate population and the furtherance of the nation's biomedical education and research programs. The NIH Public Access Policy significantly improves access to the scientific literature by researchers, health care providers, students, educators, and the public, and ensures that published information remains available for years to come. Both of these provisions are critical components in support of medical research and discovery, the development of new therapies and treatments, and delivery of high quality effective health care. Further, patient access to up-to-date quality medical information plays a key role in positive health outcomes and helps reduce health care costs.

Finally, MLA and AAHSL support the conclusion of NIH legal counsel that the NIH Public Access Policy respects existing copyright law and does not intrude upon the rights of publishers or authors as claimed by the publishing community. As librarians, we support protection of intellectual property through copyright, including the exclusive rights that copyright holders enjoy related to the distribution and use of published materials. However, NIH-funded research represents a unique situation, where, in exchange for public funds, investigators are expected to make the published reports resulting from those funds publicly available. We believe that the NIH Public Access Policy allows investigators to build on cutting-edge discoveries more quickly, promotes the free flow of ideas among researchers without barriers, adds transparency and further accountability to a previously ambiguous area of federal spending, and speeds up the process of translation of federally funded scientific discovery to better clinical care from which the entire nation benefits. The current NIH policy has shown great promise in accomplishing these tasks, and in a manner that is completely consistent with copyright law.

As you may be aware, there is presently an effort to turn-back-the-clock on the advancements made through public access by returning to the previous, arbitrary standard. Considering the overwhelming benefit to public health and the overall legality of the policy itself, we hope the incoming administration will adamantly support public access at NIH by vocally opposing any effort to undo the 12 month mandatory deposit requirement for the results of tax dollar funded medical research. Furthermore, we hope the incoming administration will encourage NIH to adopt a 6 month mandatory deposit requirement—which would be consistent with international norms and the protocols of many privately funded medical research ventures. Please consider

MLA and AAHSL a resource on these types of issues moving forward as we are looking forward to working closely with you to continue to improve health outcomes for all Americans.

MLA is a nonprofit, educational organization, comprised of health sciences information professionals and institutions with more than 4,000 members worldwide. Through its programs and services, MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public.

AAHSL is composed of the directors of the libraries of 142 accredited U. S. and Canadian medical schools that belong to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). AAHSL's goals are to promote excellence in academic health sciences libraries and to ensure that the next generation of health practitioners is trained in information seeking skills that enhance the quality of healthcare delivery.