

First US Public Access Policy Made Permanent

2009 Consolidated Appropriations Act ensures NIH public access policy will persist

Washington, D.C. – March 12, 2009

President Obama yesterday signed into law the 2009 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which includes a provision making the National Institutes' of Health (NIH) Public Access Policy permanent. The NIH *Revised Policy on Enhancing Public Access* requires eligible NIH-funded researchers to deposit electronic copies of their peer-reviewed manuscripts into the National Library of Medicine's online archive, PubMed Central (PMC). Full texts of the articles are made publicly available and searchable online in PMC no later than 12 months after publication in a journal.

The NIH policy was previously implemented with a provision that was subject to annual renewal. Since the implementation of the revised policy the percentage of eligible manuscripts deposited into PMC has increased significantly, with over 3,000 new manuscripts being deposited each month. The PubMed Central database is a part of a valuable set of public database resources at the NIH, which are accessed by more than 2 million users each day.

The new provision reads in full:

The Director of the National Institutes of Health shall require *in the current fiscal year and thereafter* that all investigators funded by the NIH submit or have submitted for them to the National Library of Medicine's PubMed Central an electronic version of their final, peer-reviewed manuscripts upon acceptance for publication to be made publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication: *Provided*, That the NIH shall implement the public access policy in a manner consistent with copyright law.

“This is a significant moment for all of us in the health community, and for efforts in health reform. With free access to health research, individuals are empowered with the knowledge necessary to understand the health threats they and their families face,” said Sharon Terry, President and CEO of Genetic Alliance. “Congress recognizes the incredible power of technology and innovation in enabling new solutions for the proactive management of health, consumer-driven healthcare, and novel partnerships and collaborations in research. Congratulations to us all.”

The NIH Public Access Policy addresses the public's growing need for high-quality health information and promotes accelerated scientific advancement in the biomedical sciences.

"Public access to publicly funded research contributes directly to the mission of higher education," said David Shulenburg, Vice President for Academic Affairs at NASULGC (the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges). "Improved access will enable universities to maximize their own investment in research, and widen the potential for discovery as the results are more readily available for others to build upon."

Heather Joseph, spokesperson for the Alliance for Taxpayer Access noted, “Thanks to the work of a wide coalition of patients, libraries, researchers, publishers, students, and taxpayers, the results of NIH-funded research can be accessed – and used - in ways never before possible. The successful implementation of this policy will unlock the potential of this research to benefit the public as a whole. ”

For more information, and a timeline detailing the evolution of the NIH Public Access Policy beginning May 2004, visit the ATA Web site at <http://www.taxpayeraccess.org>.

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