



June 3, 2016

The Vice President
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President,

SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) is an international alliance of more than 800 academic and research libraries dedicated to making “open” the default for research and education. SPARC is committed to the faster and wider sharing of research outputs and educational materials to increase the impact of research, fuel the advancement of knowledge, and increase our collective return on research and education investments – and to improve the public good.

The entire SPARC community is deeply grateful to you for your commitment to accelerate progress towards treatments – and ultimately, cures – for cancer through your leadership of the Administration’s Cancer Moonshot. We applaud your focus on systematically identifying and removing unnecessary barriers at every phase of the research and discovery process. We are particularly supportive of the idea of incentivizing fast, open sharing of research data and articles, which you spoke about to wide acclaim in recent speeches to the American Association for Cancer Research and at Health Datapalooza.

Each year, U.S. taxpayers fund more than \$60 billion of basic and applied research. Yet, too often, the data and articles resulting from that research remains locked behind pay walls or siloed in proprietary computer systems. In order to unleash the power of this information and truly accelerate discovery in the cancer arena, we need to ensure that it is made immediately available to the global public, and that they are fully empowered to use it in new and innovative ways.

The ability to move seamlessly between articles and data, to explore semantic connections, and to apply new and cutting-edge computational tools and techniques to this digital information will give researchers an unprecedented opportunity to unlock its full value. In a world where interdisciplinary research is increasingly the norm, providing our scientists with tools to comprehensively access and use this digital information is key to accelerating the pace of scientific discovery and speeding returns to the public.

Like you, we firmly believe that taking down the barriers to the access and use of research outputs and incentivizing their wide and fast sharing will help us reach the Moonshot’s goal of making a decade’s worth of advances in cancer treatment in half that time.

We truly appreciate your outreach to stakeholders across all sectors, and your request for suggestions on how to remove the barriers that are currently blocking progress in science, research and development. To that end, we offer three recommendations for actions that can be taken immediately:

- **Enable free, immediate access to all U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI) funded research articles.** The free and *immediate* access to all NCI-funded research articles would put a wealth of information about the latest discoveries, trends and insights about cancer research into the hands of scientists and researchers who need it *today*. Any delay in the availability of this research is a potential barrier to innovation, and unnecessarily restricts competent and creative individuals from contributing to the discovery process.
- **Make the research data reported on in these articles immediately available upon publication.** This would allow researchers to quickly verify the claims made in papers, substantially cutting down time spent on misleading information or dead ends. It also empowers the community to innovate by conducting new and different analysis of this crucial digital information.
- **Reward researchers for sharing their research articles and data freely and quickly.** Right now, researchers are not incentivized to share their research outputs quickly. Rather, they are rewarded for holding onto their data, and for publishing articles in so-called “high impact” journals that take months (and in some cases, years) to approve papers for publication. We need to realign incentives for the sharing of research outputs that support the public’s interest – and that interest includes accelerating treatments and cures for cancer. U.S. federal agencies funding cancer research should incentivize researchers to share data and articles widely by actively rewarding this behavior in their promotion and funding processes.

Vice President Biden, thank you again for your work on behalf of the Cancer Moonshot, and in particular, for your public support and encouragement of the fast, open sharing of research data and articles. We would be honored to assist you with this effort, and would be happy to provide you with more in-depth information on these recommendations – as well as others – as the process unfolds. I can be reached at heather@sparcopen.org should you, or the appropriate staff person, wish to discuss it further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Joseph". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Heather Joseph
Executive Director