

January 17, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We, the undersigned organizations, represent leading publishers and non-profit scientific and scholarly societies registered in the United States, or with employees in the United States. We write to you in support of the proposed Administration policy that would mandate immediate open distribution of peer-reviewed journal articles reporting on federally-funded research. We also write to call into question some of the points made in the letter from the Association of American Publishers (AAP) dated December 18, 2019, and to make clear that not all American publishers support the position of this AAP letter.

As organizations involved in the coordination, organization, enhancement, and dissemination of peer-reviewed research, we work in close collaboration with the stakeholders funding research, the stakeholders performing research, and the stakeholders reading research. All of these groups have a say in how scientific publishing should work, and all of these groups include the U.S. Federal Government and the researchers it funds.

Our business interests are important, but must be considered in the context of this nation's collaborative research industry and community. If an important change that benefits the American taxpaying public emerges, it is up to stakeholders to support it, even if it includes some change and some risk. This is one of the pillars of the American work ethic — innovation and perseverance during change.

We the undersigned all operate, or partner with, successful publishing businesses which have pioneered, or are transitioning to, the new open publishing paradigm. We all consider the immediate and open dissemination of federally-funded research a priority, and we enable it via effective business models. There is nothing about the immediate availability of research that precludes publishing companies — commercial or nonprofit — from continuing to do business if they work hard, innovate, and collaborate. In fact, the immediate and open availability of research is an important prerequisite to another Administration priority — the Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness of federally-funded research to maintain and “drive growth of the United States economy, enhance our economic and national security, and improve our quality of life.”

The Federal Government has long funded research that triggers further innovation and economic development when it can be built upon. The entrepreneurial ecosystem enabled by opening access to this research far outweighs its economic value as intellectual property of selected publishing companies and societies. Therefore we take issue with the notion from the AAP letter that it is the business success of a group of publishers that best showcases the strength of American science and research. As the AAP letter states, “the role of the publisher is to advance scholarship and innovation, fostering the American leadership in science that drives our economy and global competitiveness.” However, our approach will serve this agenda more fully. The U.S. will best lead the world by

showcasing its research for everyone, including the Americans taxpayers who have funded it, to learn from and build on. You cannot showcase the quality of federally-funded research to its full potential by limiting access to it.

Additionally, the value and benefits of opening up research to be read and built upon should by now be self-evident: consider doctors dealing with disease outbreaks needing the most up-to-date information possible; patients making informed healthcare choices; teachers and students, wherever they are, accessing the wealth of US-funded knowledge; small business owners accessing the cutting edge of technology; farmers understanding the most recent research on crops. These are, as a reminder, also the people who have funded the research with their tax dollars.

A peer-reviewed article, whether published via an AAP signatory, or a signatory of this letter, is ultimately authored and peer-reviewed by the same research community. There is nothing, therefore, contained in your proposed policy that jeopardizes the quality and integrity of American research. This research will continue to be performed and peer-reviewed by the same people, to the same high standards as before — it will simply be disseminated for the benefit of the American people and the entire research community more cost-effectively, immediately, and openly.

Such executive orders or policies do not “undermine” the marketplace. The Federal Government, as a funder and participant in the American research community, is an integral part of this marketplace and is free to state its priorities. We, the undersigned, look forward to continued collaboration with the Federal Government, and researchers supported by it, and to continuing to disseminate the outcomes of this world-class activity as openly as possible.

We support this policy and urge you to put the needs and rights of the research community and American taxpaying public first, and help us serve this community in the way it clearly wishes to be served.

Respectfully,

Association for Research in Personality Executive Board
California Digital Library - eScholarship Publishing
eLife Sciences Publications Ltd.

F1000 Research Ltd.

Frontiers Media Inc.

The MIT Press

PeerJ

PLOS

Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science Executive Committee

Ubiquity Press

cc: Mick Mulvaney, Acting White House Chief of Staff and Director, Office of
Management and Budget
Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy