



February 12, 2008

The Honorable Senator Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

On behalf of eight national organizations, collectively representing over 140,000 libraries in the United States and employing over 350,000 librarians and other personnel, I want to thank you for your strong support of open and timely Internet access to articles stemming from biomedical research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Our organizations enthusiastically welcome the revised Public Access Policy (NOT-OD-08-033) developed by NIH in response to Congressional direction (Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008, PL 110-161, Division G, Title II, Section 218).

As you know, the policy options have been thoroughly discussed and weighed since at least 2004 in Congress, at NIH, in the scientific community, and in public fora. Although support for public access has been broad and opposition has been limited to a relative handful of publishers, NIH has taken a thoughtful, conservative approach, embracing a mandatory policy only after the failure of a voluntary approach. NIH Director Zerhouni has gone to great lengths to consult with the range of interested parties and the resulting policy fairly balances their preferences with the public interest.

However, special interests must not be allowed to further stall NIH public access. The time for hesitation is past; the benefits of public access are clear. Prompt NIH action to implement the newly announced policy will ensure that NIH-funded research findings are available to all. Any delay will only hold back scientific advancement and impede the public's access to high-quality health information. The April 7, 2008 implementation date announced by NIH must not be held up.

Particularly in the current, difficult economic climate, taxpayers have a right to expect that they are getting their money's worth from the federal investment in research. Universal access to NIH research will unlock the full health, economic, and social benefits that motivate NIH appropriations. Any delay will reduce the return on public investment.

We thank you for your leadership in delivering public access to publicly funded research.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries
www.aallnet.org
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American Library Association
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Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries

www.aahsl.org

Contact: Karen Butter (415) 476-8293

Association of College & Research Libraries

www.ala.org/acrl

Contact: Kara Malenfant (312-280-2510)

Association of Research Libraries

www.arl.org

Contact: Karla Hahn or Prudence Adler (202-296-2296)

Greater Western Library Alliance

www.gwla.org

Contact: Joni Blake (816-926-8765)

SPARC (Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition)

www.arl.org/sparc

Contact: Heather Joseph (202-296-2296)

Special Libraries Association

www.sla.org

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