

# ALA American Library Association

November 1, 2004

Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

This letter provides comments on the draft NIH policy, Enhanced Public Access to NIH Research Information (NOT-OD-04-064, September 3, 2004).

The American Library Association (ALA) is a nonprofit educational organization of over 65,000 librarians, library trustees, and other friends of libraries dedicated to improving library services and promoting the public interest in a free and open information society.

As you are aware, the vast majority of research funded with public funds today is available only through increasingly costly journal subscriptions. As in past years, we anticipate that the cost of subscribing to these journals will rise next year in excess of the growth of the budgets of even large research libraries. As a result, many libraries will likely be forced once again to cancel journals needed by their faculty and students. In addition to the costs, we note that restrictive licensing terms and conditions imposed by publishers severely limit the amount and type of access that many libraries are able to provide to users.

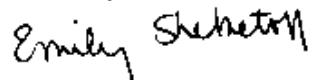
The current prevailing system of journal publication, which limits access to research, is a growing impediment to the dissemination and use of research that has been paid for with public funds. The system slows the flow of knowledge and pace of discovery, and it subverts the public investment in science. Such a system fails to utilize the potential of the Internet to enhance, expand, and increase the efficiency of scientific communication.

ALA commends both the concept and the implementation plan described in the NIH notice, "Enhanced Public Access to NIH Research Information" (NOT-OD-04-064). The plan is a measured step that effectively balances the interests of publishers and users of biomedical research. Although the plan will not solve the "journals crisis"

faced by libraries (we doubt it will directly result in savings through journal cancellations by libraries), the plan does offer a way for faculty to get access to some of the research published in journals that libraries long ago cancelled. Moreover, the plan reaches out to many users who are not otherwise served by our libraries.

Thank you for having the vision and courage to bring forward this constructive proposal. The NIH plan offers substantial benefits for researchers and the general public alike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Sheketoff". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Emily Sheketoff  
Executive Director, Washington Office  
American Library Association