

STM Publishers clarify position on authors' rights

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The debate on the rights that authors have (or indeed it is claimed inaccurately, *do not* have) over their published works continues to rage, and much coverage has been given to purportedly restrictive practices or policies, when in fact they do not exist for the majority of publishers.

The most recent examples surround the vote of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard for university ownership and distribution of research papers (February 2008). One advocate of the Harvard policy claims that this step was taken because "...the scholarly publishing system has become far more restrictive than it need be [... m]any publishers will not even allow scholars to use and distribute their own work" (See <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2008/02.14/99-fasvote.html>). This is not only an inaccurate perception of the role of publishers and copyright, but also means that advocating authors to modify existing journal publishing agreements with "copyright addenda" is simply a call for needless bureaucracy.

In order to provide clarity to the debate and to clear up misunderstandings, STM, the International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers, has today released an evidence-based "Statement on Journal Publishing Agreements and Copyright 'Addenda' (See <http://www.stm-assoc.org/documents-statements-public-co/>)

STM publishers invariably allow the authors of journal articles to use their published papers in their own teaching and for educational purposes generally within their institutions. Most journals have policies that permit authors to provide copies of their papers to research colleagues, and to re-use portions of their papers in further works or books. Although some news-oriented science and medical magazines have a few restrictions on pre-publication posting, almost all research journals permit the posting by the author or the author's institution of some version of the paper on the Internet.

Michael Mabe, CEO of STM commented: "Many of the usage policies we describe have been in place for many years. Our industry regularly reviews the needs and interests expressed by scholars, researchers and educators, and responds directly to these. Changes reflecting the needs of pre-print servers and institutional repositories are a case in point. Policy debate should be well-informed and based on evidence and consultation."

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STM is an international trade association of about 100 scientific, technical, medical and scholarly publishers, collectively responsible for more than 60% of the global annual output of research articles, 55% of the active research journals and the publication of tens of thousands of print and electronic books, reference works and databases. It is the only international trade association equally representing all types of STM publishers - large and small companies, not for profit organisations, learned societies, traditional, primary, secondary publishers and new entrants to global publishing.

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