

Comments of YS Chi to the “Scholarly Publishing Roundtable” delegates:

I would like to thank the House Science and Technology Committee (HSTC) for the opportunity and honor to have participated as a delegate in the “Scholarly Publishing Roundtable”. It has been an enriching experience to engage in meaningful discussions on scholarly communications with such a distinguished group of thought leaders and experts. And I have a deep respect for the sincerity of the diverse viewpoints that were shared and discussed.

I would like to also thank the Roundtable report’s editorial team for the copious amount of time and effort that they have given to craft it. The task of producing a document that focuses on such complex issues that affect so many different stakeholders and constituencies is a significant challenge.

The report has identified many positive points of consensus that I believe will help the discussions on scholarly communications to progress, and in particular for them to be conducted with greater civility. I strongly endorse the set of “shared principles” that reinforce the critical role of peer review, the need for sustainable publishing business models, the goal of even broader access, the need for the sustainable preservation of the scientific record, and the benefits of interoperable standards. I believe that these principles form a very stable foundation of mutual agreement for future discussions.

I would also endorse those recommendations as well as the many positive statements in the report that are aimed at encouraging sustainable public-private partnership in the richly diverse scholarly communication ecosystem.

However, in spite of my support for many aspects of the Roundtable’s work, I cannot endorse all of the recommendations of the report. Since the charge from the HSTC to the Roundtable was to “develop an appropriate consensus regarding access to and preservation of federally funded research information that addresses the needs of all interested parties,” Roundtable members have been asked to either agree to or decline to sign the current draft of the report in its totality. I therefore regret that I cannot be a signatory.

Primarily, I have a fundamental concern that the report supports an overly expansive role of government and advocates approaches to the business of scholarly publishing that I believe are overly prescriptive. My view is that there is a clear distinction between research findings that result from government funding and the publication of such findings that result from private sector investments in publishing. I express all of my views consistent with my willingness to participate in the Roundtable as a knowledgeable and concerned citizen and not as a representative of my employer.

Let me emphasize again that I feel that much of this report will help move discussions on scholarly communications forward in a positive direction. In addition to the five shared principles noted above, I endorse much of the thoughtful research and analysis that resulted in the recommendations. I am prepared to continue this fruitful evidence-based discussion and remain hopeful that some of the gaps that remain will be resolved through the recommended path of “full and open consultations with all stakeholders”, “voluntary collaboration with non-government stakeholders”, and “establish(ment of)...an advisory committee.”

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