

Statement from Mark Patterson: Why PLoS has not signed the Report of the Scholarly Publishing Roundtable

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in the Roundtable on Scholarly Publishing convened by the Committee on Science and Technology of the US House of Representatives. I enjoyed the spirited and important discussions. I also appreciated the contributions of all who participated in the Roundtable, under the expert chairmanship of John Vaughn (Executive Vice President, Association of American Universities).

I have not signed the Roundtable Report, though my Public Library of Science (PLoS) colleagues and I support many of the principles and goals it endorses: comprehensive public access to federally funded research; interoperability and freedom to reuse published works creatively to maximize their utility for research and education; and the importance of regulation and legislation in development and coordination of a multiagency public access program. An example of such legislation is the Federal Research Public Access Act, currently under consideration at the US Congress, which calls for public access to all federally funded research results no later than six months after publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Despite these positive attributes, however, the Report does not represent a view of science publishing that PLoS can endorse. It is a consensus statement that reflects the different interest groups involved in the discussions. The result is a set of recommendations that will significantly improve the currently limited access to federally funded research, but stops far short of recognizing and endorsing the opportunities to unleash the full potential of online communication to transform access to and use of scholarly literature.

PLoS and other open-access publishers have shown that immediate open access can be achieved. Each year, PLoS now publishes thousands of open-access articles, and has established journals that rank in the top flight of scientific and medical publishing. With the success of PLoS and open-access publishers such as Biomed Central, Hindawi Publishing Corporation and others, open-access publishing is now firmly part of the publishing landscape. Moreover, the advent of successful open-access publishing creates opportunities for even more profound changes in the ways scientists work and communicate with each other and the public.

Now is the time to develop policies that both mandate and support open-access publishing and achieve what citizens want and deserve: comprehensive public access to the research that they paid for, with no delay and no restrictions on reuse. To be sure, there are challenges that need to be overcome in order to realize this goal. But we have the opportunity to ensure that anyone – scientists, other professionals, teachers, students, and the general public – anywhere in the world can access, use and build on the work of others. We should settle for nothing less.