

Press Release: 6 January 2011

STM responds to signing into law of America COMPETES Act Public Access Provision

STM applauds the efforts of US legislators in crafting the charter of the Interagency Public Access Committee (the “Committee”) established in the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 just signed into law by President Obama. The Committee is charged with coordinating Federal agency policies concerning stewardship and dissemination of the results of research, including digital data and peer-reviewed scholarly publications, supported by funding from the Federal science agencies.

Key provisions of the Committee’s charter call for it to identify specific objectives and public interests that need to be addressed by any policies considered and solicit input from, and collaborate with, non-Federal stakeholders such as publishers. The charter also directs the Committee to take into account key factors such as the economic impact of public access policies on science and engineering stakeholders, as well as the role that scientific publishers play in ensuring the integrity of the scientific record – including the investments and added value that they contribute. The Charter further recognizes the inherent differences among Federal science agencies and scientific disciplines. The Act also notes important areas of inquiry such as the distinctions between data and scholarly publications and practices and procedures with respect to research reports.

The Act specifically directs that nothing in its charge to the Committee shall undermine any rights under copyright.

The legislation requires the Committee to report back to Congress on the specific objectives and public interest that need to be addressed by any government policies considered by the Committee; the impact that they have had on science and engineering stakeholders, including the financial impact on research budgets; and how any policies developed or being developed incorporate input from non-Federal stakeholders.

“Taken together these provisions demonstrate a clear call for U.S. Federal agencies to craft archiving and public access policies with appropriate care for the concerns of all stakeholders and the dangers of ‘unintended’ consequences.” said Michael Mabe, Chief Executive Officer of STM. “They avoid the pitfalls of unfunded mandates and ‘one size fits all’ policies and call for US officials to clearly identify the specific goals they are trying to achieve and how they have incorporated input from key stakeholders like publishers. Hopefully, these provisions will guide agencies to develop policies that will fully take into account the difference between research funded by the government and peer-reviewed journal articles about that research that are funded by private sector non-profit and commercial publishers.”

Mabe noted that the issue of free public availability of peer-reviewed articles on research and scholarly communication is being investigated by the European Commission-supported PEER research project, which STM is coordinating with the active collaboration of the other key stakeholders (funders, repositories, learned societies and the scholarly community).

STM is an international association of over 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. We are the only international trade association equally representing all types of STM publishers - large and small companies, not for profit organizations, learned societies, traditional, primary, secondary publishers and new entrants to global publishing.

www.stm-assoc.org

PEER (Publishing and the Ecology of European Research), supported by the EC eContentplus programme, is a research project investigating the effects of the large-scale, systematic depositing of authors' final peer-reviewed manuscripts (so called Green Open Access or stage-two research output) on reader access, author visibility, and journal viability, as well as on the broader ecology of European research. The project is a collaboration between publishers, repositories and researchers and will last from September 2008 to May 2012. www.peerproject.eu

Contact:

For further information, contact Kim Beadle, STM, Prama House,
267 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7HT, UK

tel: +44 1865 339324/fax: +44 1865 339325

e-mail <mailto:beadle@stm-assoc.org>