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Dear Dr Madhan Mohan

STM Comments on the revised Open Access policy of Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST)

The International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers ("STM") is the leading global trade association for academic and professional publishers. It has over 120 members in 21 countries, including some with offices in India, who each year collectively publish nearly 66% of all journal articles, the majority of the world's English-language open access articles, and thousands of monographs and reference works. STM members include learned societies, university presses, private companies, new starts and established players.

STM welcomes the opportunity to make a contribution to the consultation on the second draft of the DBT/DST Open Access policy. As key stakeholders in the scholarly communications process, our publisher members support the efforts of the DBT and DST to revise the first draft and we offer the following comments to assist in its further refinement.

First, we continue to believe that there is an opportunity to expand and clarify the policy with regard to "gold" open access, which provides immediate access to the final published article, the "Version of Record", funded by an Article Publication Charge (APC). The revised policy states "...DBT and DST will not underwrite article-processing charges to make these articles open access as levied by some journals." It is unclear whether this means (1) that APCs of some journals are eligible for underwriting while APCs of other journals are not, or (2) that no articles are eligible regardless of where they are published. Regardless, we encourage DBT/DST to join policymakers globally in working with publishers to find ways to include and fund the APC option in their Open Access Policy.

Second, STM applauds the recognition that researchers have a right to publish their work in journals of their choice and that "*It is not the intent of this policy to violate copyright or other agreements entered into by the researcher, institution or funding agency.*" In STM's view the freedom of authors to choose where to publish their research and in what form is, and should continue to be, paramount for all actors in the information chain. Only by maintaining this fundamental freedom may the tradition of academic freedom and independent assessment of research be ensured in the long-term. All actors should thus avoid outcomes that limit this freedom or its practical relevance, whether de facto, through an implicit or explicit policy, by contract or by law. We support the policy's acknowledgement that Indian law and IP policies have a role to play in public access. We would like to see the policy acknowledge that India's obligations under the Berne Convention are also relevant here.

Third, we appreciate that the policy does not require a single embargo period. We applaud this recognition that flexible embargoes should be the rule for the self-archiving/"green" open access approach currently described in the policy. However, we caution against recommending any specific cap on embargoes. Instead, we strongly urge that the policy support an evidence-based process for

determining embargo periods that takes into account the differing usage patterns and practices of different scientific fields. Usage, evidenced by online article usage statistics, is a key metric used by librarians worldwide to make purchasing decisions and omitting it from consideration in establishing embargo periods could have serious, harmful, and long term consequences. We further recommend that language which appears to advise authors to make articles publicly available during the embargo period (by use of a "Request Button") be withdrawn. We believe that this material could be misinterpreted as encouragement to systematically evade the embargo periods supported by the policy.

Fourth, we note with appreciation that the policy has allowed authors greater flexibility over when accepted manuscripts should be deposited into repositories. However, two weeks instead of one remains insufficient. We continue to believe that the public interest would be better served by basing the time of deposit on the time of publication rather than the time of acceptance. Articles at the acceptance stage lack key elements such as metadata and other identifiers that increase their usefulness to the scholarly community and the public. For many, if not all, articles this information will not be available until publication.

Fifth, we believe BDT/DST is wise not to require that each institution that receives core funding from DST and DBT to have its own IR. This may well create a significant additional financial and organisational burden for those institutions. We would like to offer the evidence from a major research project into this topic, PEER (Publishing and Ecology of European Research)¹ PEER was a large scale EU-funded project that investigated the effects of systematic depositing of 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. PEER was a collaboration between publishers, repositories and researchers that ran from 2008 to 2012. PEER showed that building a large-scale repository infrastructure is organisationally and technically challenging. It also demonstrated that the level of 'green OA' deposits in repositories rises exponentially if publishers are involved, but within a climate of acceptable embargo periods.

Finally, STM members exist to provide access to scholarly articles and have as their mission not only to ensure that articles are widely read and used, but also that they are preserved with integrity for the long term. STM supports any access and re-use policies that are consistent with these goals. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments in greater depth with DBT/DST and other key stakeholders to collaboratively develop the important elements of a well-functioning open access environment.

Respectfully submitted



Michael Mabe
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STM

¹ <http://www.peerproject.eu/>