

August 17, 2023

Office of the Chief Scientist  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Washington, DC 20546-0001

Submitted via electronic form (hq-publicaccess@mail.nasa.gov)

Re: RFI for NASA Public Access Plan (Agency Docket Number 23-051)

The Association of American Publishers (AAP) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Request for Information on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Public Access Plan. AAP represents over 80 Professional and Scholarly Publishers, including dozens of scholarly societies representing over 750,000 scientists, engineers, researchers, and other members of the academy. A full list of [AAP members](https://www.publishers.org/aap-members) may be found on our website: [publishers.org](https://www.publishers.org).

Scientific publishing has been a critical part of the scholarly communication ecosystem throughout the history of the U.S. AAP members take deep pride in their contributions to advancing science and engineering, economic prosperity, and public welfare. We are often the first line of defense in protecting scientific integrity and ensuring the public trust in science. Many of the advancements enabling open science are a direct result of the domestic publishing industry's commitment and investment in a free, competitive marketplace, including online publication, rigorous standards, pre-print servers, archiving, persistent identifiers, and metadata. These enhancements were the result of our ongoing passion to innovate in the development, discovery and dissemination of high quality, trusted reports about research for a global audience. We believe a free, competitive marketplace drives progress and innovation to ensure dissemination of high quality, trusted research for the benefit of authors, funders, the scientific community, and society at large.

The Office of Science and Technology Policy recognized the importance of publishers' investments in adding value to scholarly articles by seeking post-publisher peer review article versions to satisfy open access requirements in its August 2022 OSTP immediate open access memo. We encourage NASA to recognize two important elements as it updates the draft proposal.

First, the essential services provided by publishers that NASA, OSTP, and other federal agencies value so highly have costs, and these costs must be funded. Currently, the investments by publishers are recouped via a broad array of business models, including most prominently, the pay-to-read (subscription) model, and the pay-to-publish (gold open access) model. The 2013 OSTP open access memo supported the subscription model and acknowledged the need for a sustainable approach by endorsing a one-year period for subscriptions before free online access occurred, a position NASA supported in its 2015 open science policy. This affords several options for disseminating scientific and technical information, including no or low-cost choices for researchers and funders.

There is no viable way for scholarly societies and other publishers to continue to produce trustworthy, high quality open access publications without any means to recoup the significant investments and expenses required for them to do so. We understand the motivation behind OSTP's actions to adjust public access rules and as publishers, we will work to address the new requirements. However, we are

concerned about potential long-term effects of the new policy on the scholarly communication ecosystem. One area of particular concern is its call for immediate and free access to accepted peer reviewed manuscripts and other research outputs benefiting from publishers' value-added investments. Immediate Green open access, whereby a researcher deposits the Accepted Manuscript (AM) to a repository for free public availability immediately upon publication, undermines the subscription, read-and-publish, subscribe to open, or similar licensing agreements that enable publishers to invest in ensuring the quality, integrity, and preservation of the scientific record. Unfortunately, there is ample evidence of subscription cancellation domestically and abroad using programs such as Unsub.org and Unpaywall.org, as well as blogs tracking publisher-library negotiations. These resources to evaluate and cancel subscriptions undermine the funds needed to continue producing trusted high-quality publications to advance human health and welfare, job creation and economic growth.

Second, open science policies should center and empower the researcher, enabling them to pursue their passion and knowledge, and to publish in the venue of their choice for maximum impact, without unfunded mandates that create financial barriers to publication or burdensome compliance regimes. Researchers should be able to decide how, when, and where they publish their findings and interact with their community and the broader public. We support broad immediate public access as an important goal, but it should be achieved in a way that places fewer restrictions on researchers, as opposed to burdening them with further mandates. This includes ensuring their freedom of choice in publication outlets and the licenses that apply to their work.

### ***Empowering Sustainable and Equitable Open Science Communication***

AAP believes the best method for addressing issues of equity in publication and reader access is through a vibrant, competitive, and diverse marketplace with a broad array of publishers and options for authors, including non-profit scholarly societies, university, and technical presses, and specialized open science publishers. By encouraging and financially supporting researchers to work closely with the publishing community, NASA can both expand access to, and maintain the quality of, scholarly communications.

AAP would like to address a specific clause on Page 13, Part B: Peer Review Publications, 2.0 Scope:

*The scope of applicability of this plan includes all peer-reviewed scientific research publications authored or co-authored by researchers receiving NASA-appropriated funds. This includes both civil servant and non-civil servant researchers, both intramural and extramural researchers.*

AAP does not believe this clause accurately captures NASA's intent. As currently written, it could be understood to mean NASA's mandate applies to reports about research not funded by NASA if an author has received NASA funding at any point during their career. AAP strongly recommends this section be updated to bring NASA's policy in line with the guidance expressed in the 2022 OSTP memo.

Where researchers are required to make versions of articles including added value from publishers freely and immediately available upon publication, sustainable publication models will be necessary to enable publishers to continue article selection, curation, editorial and peer review, integrity, and quality checks, as well as dissemination and preservation services in the long term. Potential models include

gold open access/transformative agreements, read and publish arrangements, subscribe to open, as well as new and evolving models for supporting open science.

The subscription model risks being unsustainable for publishers if free substitutes for subscription articles are made immediately available, including via the rights retention/restriction strategy. Helping researchers understand and budget for costs associated with publishing is the best way to ensure authors have a wide array of options to communicate their research findings. To ensure equity in the options researchers have to make their articles available immediately in their journal of choice, it is critical NASA's grantees are provided with clear and consistent guidance to understand and include potential publication costs when applying for and budgeting grants.

Preprints may also offer a path to achieving open science goals. While the Version of Record (VoR) is the authoritative and continually updated version of the article, preprints are a possible low-cost avenue for researchers to advance open science. Preprints do not benefit from added value from publishers and most publishers allow and often encourage researchers to share their preprint immediately. Many publishers host and manage pre-print servers, encouraging discourse within the scientific community. We would welcome discussion with NASA about this and other options to meet open science goals.

Underfunding publication could potentially devastate the many U.S. engineering and scientific societies that play a critical role in publishing and supporting their scientific communities. These societies rely on publishing revenues to help them support their communities and fund operations such as pre-print services, conferences, and equity work, particularly in support of early career researchers. In recent decades, this funding source has become more important to their work as dues have struggled to keep pace with costs.

### ***Supporting Equity and Accessibility for Readers and Authors***

A financially robust scholarly publishing enterprise is well positioned to expand reader access. Assistive and interactive technologies can be brought to bear to empower scientists and researchers. AAP members are interested in continuing to partner with NASA to explore the many ways we can support the STEM community and achieve broad equity. Publishers already fund resources in this area, like the [Access Text Network](#), and a sustainable scholarly publishing system will be able to build upon these efforts and expand accessibility.

As part of efforts to boost reader equity, it is important the agency center and empower researchers by allowing them to choose the license which best meets their needs. Broad open licenses, for example Creative Commons (CC-BY), may make sense for some researchers, while others may be concerned about inappropriate modification, misinterpretation, or commercialization of their publication. Researchers need the ability to choose the best license for their publication, including non-commercial, non-derivative versions (e.g., CC-BY-NC-ND) and we note an irrevocable open license (CC-BY or CC0) is not necessary to use the ideas presented in scholarly communication.

AAP opposes policies granting agencies rights in downstream copyrighted works that were the result of private sector investment in the selection, peer review, editing, and publication process. We believe

authors should have the freedom to decide how they assign their copyright, free from interference. Rights retention/restriction mandates limit author options in communicating their research findings and will not eliminate or reduce the cost of publication but instead jeopardize the quality and integrity of peer reviewed publications and the scientific process.

### ***Monitoring Impacts on Affected Communities***

For readers, access to articles is only part of discovery and scientific advancement; the quality, integrity, accessibility, and dissemination of research in context, are also vital, and these are all research qualities publishers' investments and innovations ensure. As competitors in an open market, publishers price fairly as they seek to promote the most informative and innovative science. Authors should have the ability to choose the journal and license under which they communicate their findings, free from interference. Most publishers publicly list Article Publishing Charges on their websites as a matter of transparency.

We encourage NASA to develop programs to specifically fund traditionally marginalized and under-resourced communities and early career researchers to ensure they can bring their unique and important voices into the scholarly discourse.

### ***Increasing the Findability and Transparency of Research***

Improving the discoverability of outputs of federally funded research is central to making open science accessible to funders and readers. AAP members have long been champions of findability in the overall publication process. Publishers founded Crossref to make research objects easy to find, cite, link, assess, and reuse. Findability and transparency are also supported through effective use of metadata and persistent identifiers (PIDs). For example, the use of researcher provided identifiers from grant applications through to publication, either ORCID or ISNI (or both), will enhance the tracking of research outcomes based on the grant. Other PIDs include organization tracking IDs, funder reference, grant IDs, etc. AAP recommends NASA encourage researchers to attach Persistent Identifiers (PIDs), while remaining flexible as to the individual PID.

Ultimately, creating a seamless user experience for the reader will aid discovery of the published article, as well as associated data, metadata, and other material to provide important context and ensure comprehensive understanding of research findings. Linking to the authoritative VoR on the publisher website from any public database or agency library will ensure readers are directed to the best version of an article that is also subject to any post-publication updates, as well as other potentially affiliated material, e.g., linked research data and related publications.

AAP and the publishing community look forward to continuing to work with NASA on this and other issues.

With Regards,

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Vice President, Public Policy