

NSF announces open-access policy

The National Science Foundation (NSF) – one of the biggest funders of research in the US – has released a plan to increase public access to published papers of research funded by the agency. The initiative will require all recipients of NSF grants to make their peer-reviewed articles freely available within no more than a year of publication. Journal publishers – including the Institute of Physics, which publishes *Physics World* – have welcomed the move. However, some advocates of open access have complained that the NSF's plan does not go far enough in ensuring timely public access to government-funded research.

The NSF's plan, which will enter into force in January 2016, comes some two years after the US Office and Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) ordered government agencies that spend more than \$100m annually to create public-access policies. It will not, however, retroactively cover grants made before that date. The NSF's plan follows the Department of Energy (DOE),



Opening up
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which announced its own policy in August. H Frederick Dylla, executive director and chief executive of the American Institute of Physics, calls it an "important milestone". "With the DOE and NSF together, you're looking at more than \$10bn in research funding," he says.

The NSF plan will rely on collaboration with the DOE's Office of Scientific and Technical Information to develop a system for depositing papers "that will make them available to the public as well as to third-

party search engines, and will also provide long-term preservation". For each paper, the repository will contain the abstract, authors' names, journal issue number and other metadata. Then, within 12 months of publication, it will provide a link to the full text of the paper on the publisher's website or to a PDF of the final manuscript in a separate DOE repository. The approach contrasts with that of the National Institute of Health, whose PubMed Central repository, set up in 2008, contains full-text articles.

Heather Joseph, executive director of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, complains that the NSF/DOE repository makes text and data mining unnecessarily hard by forcing researchers to locate articles on lots of different websites. Dylla, however, does not see that as a significant problem, adding that PubMed Central has in any case only 15% of the world's medical literature. The NSF announcement states that the agency also wants to work with repository systems belonging to other government agencies, publishers and academic libraries to improve access to papers.

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