

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STM comments on U. S. National Institutes of Health Unfunded Mandate

OXFORD, UK, 4 JANUARY 2008 - STM today expressed disappointment with the recent passage of legislation in the United States. This legislation (the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2007 (H.R. 2764)) includes provisions directing the National Institutes of Health to mandate that investigators who are supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health must deposit their manuscripts directly into the National Library of Medicine's PubMed Central database no later than 12 months after the official date of publication.

The legislation neither provides compensation for the added-value of services that these manuscripts have received from publishers nor does it earmark funds to ensure the economic sustainability of the broad and systematic archiving this sort of project requires. It also undermines a key intellectual property right known as copyright – long a cornerstone used to foster creativity and innovation.

STM believes that this legislation establishes an unfunded government mandate with an unknown impact on the advancement of science and puts at risk a system which has enabled more research to be available to more scientists in more countries than at any point in the history of science.

STM CEO Michael Mabe commented “Other governmental bodies, such as the European Commission, have recognized the unique role and extensive investments made by scientific publishers in the organization of peer review, the management of publication processes, the production, access, distribution, preservation and digitization of scientific knowledge. They have called for an evidence-based approach toward questions like the broad and systematic archiving of scientific manuscripts to ensure that the current system of scientific publishing is not destabilized without reason. Regrettably, neither the acknowledgement of the key role that publishers play in the advancement of science, nor the commitment toward an evidence-based approach, nor the funding to support this broad mandate seems present in the current U.S. legislation.”

Mabe continued “STM publishers will, of course, comply with the laws of the nations in which they operate. At the same time, in order to fulfill their primary mission of maximizing the dissemination of knowledge through economically self-sustaining business models, they will continue a vigorous engagement with appropriate stakeholders on issues such as this where legislative change seems necessary or desirable.”

STM is an international association of about 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.

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