

Email: iap@twas.org
secretariat@iappartnership.org

Twitter: @IAPartnership

Website: www.interacademies.org



the interacademy partnership

IAP Statement on Access to Scientific Information

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The truth that knowledge is power is particularly emphasized in today's world.

Science is the most successful means of knowledge creation. Because it deals exclusively with arguments based on evidence that can be independently confirmed by others, science is by its very nature an endeavour that requires openness, and it thrives on a complete and honest public reporting of results. Access to the vast and varied literature that has been generated by scientific research, and to the numerical data that are being collected in public research endeavours, is essential to advances in human health, improvements in agriculture, and the preservation of the natural environment that sustains our life. It is also critical for the creation of new technologies that benefit humankind. In addition, scientific knowledge facilitates our understanding of our place in the universe.

Yet most scientists and research laboratories in developing countries cannot afford the journal subscriptions, or have to pay for access to the databases that exist in more economically advanced nations. All nations must have access to the accumulation of scientific knowledge in order to work toward a better future for all people.

In an era in which global dissemination of the published results of scientific research is increasingly accomplished electronically, it is possible to give access to this body of knowledge to scientists worldwide, allowing them to participate in the scientific process and advance the scientific enterprise. Access to current, high quality, scientific databases and literature allows scientists in developing countries to base their own work on up-to-date advancements in their field and to strengthen the scientific infrastructure of their own countries. Unfortunately, however, scientists and research institutions in the developing world can rarely afford the high cost of these knowledge resources.

The InterAcademy Panel on International Issues (IAP), recognizing that many efforts in this regard are under way worldwide and that the business models of scientific publishers need to be taken into consideration, recommends that:

1. electronic access to journal content be made available worldwide without cost as soon as possible, within one year or less of publication for scientists in industrialized nations, and immediately upon publication for scientists in developing countries;
2. journal content and, to the extent possible, data

upon which research is based, be prepared and presented in a standard format for electronic distribution to facilitate ease of use;

3. journal content be archived collectively, either by private or government organizations;
4. governments and publishers work together to raise awareness, in the scientific community, of the availability of free electronic access to scientific journals;
5. scientific databases obtained by intergovernmental organizations (for example in meteorology and epidemiology) be made available without cost or restrictions on reuse.

For both the publishers of scientific journals and the intergovernmental organizations, providing free content to developing countries will have a minimal financial impact. Sales to these countries are small compared to the revenue generated from sales to more developed countries. Moreover, the cost of implementing the technology for custom web access for selected countries is low (for details, see: http://www.nap.edu/info/free_ip.html).

We, the undersigned science academies throughout the world, members of the IAP, are convinced that, with the support of international authorities, the backing of the ministries concerned, and the cooperation of scientific publishers, worldwide dissemination of scientific knowledge can be achieved; and that the benefits to the global scientific community, and to developing countries in particular, will be immense.

Access to Scientific Information: Signatories

Latin American Academy of Sciences
Third World Academy of Sciences
Albanian Academy of Sciences
National Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences, Argentina
Australian Academy of Science
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Bangladesh Academy of Sciences
The Royal Academies for Science and the Arts of Belgium
Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Brazilian Academy of Sciences
Cameroon Academy of Sciences
The Royal Society of Canada
Academia Chilena de Ciencias

Chinese Academy of Sciences
Academia Sinica, China, Taiwan
Colombian Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences
Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences
Cuban Academy of Sciences
Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, Egypt
Estonian Academy of Sciences
The Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters
Académie des Sciences, France
Georgian Academy of Sciences
Union of German Academies of Sciences and Humanities
Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences
Academy of Athens, Greece
Academia de Ciencias Medicas, Fisicas y Naturales de Guatemala
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Indian National Science Academy
Indonesian Academy of Sciences
Royal Irish Academy (Acadamh Ríoga na héireann)
Kenya National Academy of Sciences
Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Italy
Science Council of Japan
Royal Scientific Society of Jordan
African Academy of Sciences
Latvian Academy of Sciences
Lithuanian Academy of Sciences
Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Akademi Sains Malaysia
Academia Mexicana de Ciencias
Academy of Sciences of Moldova
Mongolian Academy of Sciences
The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
Academy Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand
Nigerian Academy of Sciences
Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters
Pakistan Academy of Sciences
Palestine Academy for Science and Technology
Academia Nacional de Ciencias del Peru
National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines
Russian Academy of Sciences
Académie des Sciences et Techniques du Sénégal
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Academy of Science of South Africa
Royal Academy of Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences of Spain
National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka
Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
Council of the Swiss Scientific Academies
Academy of Sciences, Republic of Tajikistan
The Caribbean Academy of Sciences
Turkish Academy of Sciences
The Royal Society, United Kingdom
US National Academy of Sciences
Academia de Ciencias Físicas, Matemáticas y Naturales de Venezuela

IAP Science and IAP Health Secretariat: ICTP Campus, c/o TWAS, Strada Costiera 11, 34151 Trieste, Italy. Email: iap@twas.org

IAP Policy Secretariat: c/o The U.S. NASEM, 500 Fifth St. NW, Washington, DC 20001, United States. Email: secretariat@iappartnership.org

Twitter: @IAPPartnership

Website: www.interacademies.org