July 30, 2010

The Honorable William “Lacy” Clay, Jr.                                           The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Chairman, Information Policy, Census,                                              Ranking Member, Information Policy,
and National Archives Subcommittee                                                  Census and National Archives Subcommittee
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform                                         Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
B-349 C Rayburn House Office Building                                              B-350 A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515                                                              Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Clay and Ranking Member McHenry,

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments on behalf of the Scholarly Publishing Roundtable to the Subcommittee for inclusion in the hearing record of the hearing held July 29, 2010, entitled “Public Access to Federally-Funded Research.” Members of the Roundtable are also available to meet with the Subcommittee and its staff and to provide testimony at any subsequent hearings the Subcommittee may schedule to consider legislation on this subject.

In June, 2009, the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology in collaboration with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy convened a group of librarians, publishers, university administrators, and scholars to examine the scholarly publishing and seek consensus recommendations for expanding public access to scholarly journal articles. The Roundtable members worked together over an eight-month period to develop a set of recommendations that sought to balance the needs and interests of scholarly publishing stakeholders. In January, 2010, the Roundtable issued a report with recommendations.

Our core recommendation was that the results of scientific research funded by the federal government should be made freely available to the public “as soon as possible after those results have been published in a peer-reviewed journal.” In our report, we stressed the importance of seeking “to balance the need for and potential of increased access to scholarly articles with the need to preserve the essential functions of the scholarly publishing enterprise."

The Roundtable unanimously agreed to a set of principles viewed as essential to a healthy scholarly publishing system: the need to preserve peer review, the necessity of adaptable publishing business models, the benefits of broader public access, the importance of archiving, and the interoperability of online content.
To implement its core recommendation for public access, the Roundtable report recommended the following:

- Agencies should work in full and open consultation with all stakeholders, as well as with OSTP, to develop their public access policies.
- Agencies should establish specific embargo periods between publication and public access.
- Policies should be guided by the need to foster interoperability.
- Every effort should be made to have the Version of Record as the version to which free access is provided.
- Government agencies should extend the reach of their public access policies through voluntary collaborations with non-governmental stakeholders.
- Policies should foster innovation in the research and educational use of scholarly publications.
- Government public access policies should address the need to resolve the challenges of long-term digital preservation.
- OSTP should establish a public access advisory committee to facilitate communication among government and nongovernment stakeholders.

We also urged all parties to move forward, beyond "the too-often acrimonious" debate over access issues towards a collaborative framework wherein federal funding agencies can build "an interdependent system of scholarly publishing that expands public access and enhances the broad, intelligent use of the results of federally funded research."

Many of the Roundtable recommendations are encompassed in the House and Senate COMPETES Act reauthorization bills (H.R. 5325 and S.3605). Of central importance is that the public access language in the COMPETES Act reauthorization bills would continue the collaborative and inclusive process used by the Roundtable of including all of the key stakeholders in the development and subsequent implementation of public access policies.

We urge the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to support the legislative pathway that has been launched by the COMPETES Act reauthorization bills for the effective expansion of public access to the results of federally funded research.

Sincerely,

John Vaughn
Chairman, Scholarly Publishing Roundtable
Executive Vice President
Association of American Universities