

Here is the press release on the UK inquiry into scientific publication. It represents a significant endorsement of open access.

The UK's Select Committee on Science and Technology final report on "Scientific Publications: Free for all?" is now available.

Links to the summary

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmsctech/399/39903.htm>)

and the whole report

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmsctech/399/39902.htm>)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESS NOTICE

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PUBLICATION OF REPORT

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS: FREE FOR ALL?

The Science and Technology Committee today publishes its Tenth Report of Session 2003-04, Scientific Publications: Free for all? (HC 399-I).

The Committee concludes that the current model for scientific publishing is unsatisfactory. An increase in the volume of research output, rising prices and static library budgets mean that libraries are struggling to purchase subscriptions to all the scientific journals needed by their users.

The Report recommends that all UK higher education institutions establish institutional repositories on which their published output can be stored and from which it can be read, free of charge, online. It also recommends that Research Councils and other Government funders mandate their funded researchers to deposit a copy of all of their articles in this way.

The Committee concludes that the creation of institutional repositories is an important first step towards a more radical change in the way that scientific papers are published. Early indications suggest that the author-pays publishing model could be viable and the Committee remains unconvinced by many of the arguments mounted against it. Nonetheless, this Report concludes that further experimentation is necessary, particularly to establish the impact that a change of publishing models would have on learned societies and in respect of the "free rider" problem. In order to encourage such experimentation the Report recommends that the Research Councils each establish a fund

to which their funded researchers can apply should they wish to pay to publish.

The Report criticises the UK Government for failing to respond to issues surrounding scientific publications in a coherent manner. The Committee is not convinced that it would be ready to deal with any changes to the publishing model and calls for the formulation of a strategy as a matter of urgency.

The preservation of digital material is an expensive process that poses a significant technical challenge. The Report recommends that the British Library receives sufficient funding to enable it to carry out this work. Government needs to start work on new regulations for the legal deposit of non-print publications immediately.

The market for scientific publications is international. The UK cannot act alone. For this reason the Committee recommends that the UK Government act as a proponent for change on the international stage and lead by example. This will ultimately benefit researchers across the globe.

Chairman of the Committee, Dr Ian Gibson, said "Publishers are feathering their nests with big profits whilst scientific journals are becoming less and less affordable. Government has its head in the sand: it's about time that it landed in the in-tray of the Ministers in question. Instead of bashing all the alternatives, commercial publishers should be asked to justify the current publishing process they use. The Open Access movement needs to iron out the teething problems with the author-pays model. It's public money that oils the cogs of the publishing machine and we want to make sure that it's well spent."

Hard copies of the Report can be obtained from TSO outlets and from the Parliamentary Bookshop, 12 Bridge Street, Parliament Square, London SW1A 2JX (020 7219 3890) by quoting HC 399-I. The text of the Report will also be available via the Committee(s) internet homepage: [www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/s&thome.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/s&thome.htm)

Further information on the work of the Committee can be obtained from Committee staff on 020 7219 2793/4. Previous press notices and publications are available on our website.

#### Notes for Editors

1. Under the terms of Standing Order No. 152 the Committee is empowered to examine the "expenditure, policy and administration of the Office of Science and Technology and its associated public bodies". The Committee was appointed on 12 November 2001.
2. The Committee's inquiry was announced on 10 December 2003 in Press Notice 3 of Session 2003-04.
3. The Committee took evidence from Blackwell Publishing, John Wiley & Sons, Nature

Publishing Group and Reed Elsevier on 1 March 2004; Oxford University Press, the Institute of Physics Publishing, the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, BioMed Central, Public Library of Science and Axiope on 8 March 2004; the British Library, the Joint Information Systems Committee, Cambridge University Library, the University of Hertfordshire and a panel of academics on 21 April 2004; and the Department of Trade and Industry/the Office of Science and Technology, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and Research Councils UK on 5 May 2004.

Membership of the Committee is as follows:

Dr Ian Gibson (Chairman) (Lab, Norwich North)  
Paul Farrelly (Lab, Newcastle-under-Lyme)  
Dr Evan Harris (Lib Dem, Oxford West and Abingdon)  
Kate Hoey (Lab, Vauxhall)  
Dr Brian Iddon (Lab, Bolton South East)

Mr Robert Key (Con, Salisbury)  
Mr Tony McWalter (Lab, Hemel Hempstead)  
Dr Andrew Murrison (Con, Westbury)  
Geraldine Smith (Lab, Morecambe and Lunesdale)  
Bob Spink (Con, Castle Point)  
Dr Desmond Turner (Lab, Brighton Kemptown)