Federal Mandates for Open Access

Cover Story

A growing number of entities have established mandates requiring authors to open access to their scholarly work. Again, the focus is on work that is done without expectation of direct financial compensation.

Some of the sources of these mandates include author institutions and funding agencies. Within the context of the former, more has occurred at institutions outside the United States. One notable exception to this is the policy established by Harvard University mandating open access for articles by their faculty (with some caveats).

Wellcome Trust was one of the first grant offering groups to mandate open access. That is now the case also for researchers receiving grants via the the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The estimated 65,000 annual journal articles resulting from NIH grants must be uploaded to the freely accessible PubMed database within 12 months of publication.

Current, proposed legislation would expand this mandate to recipients of grants from 11 U.S. government agencies. The Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPAA) requires that the manuscript be available within 6 months of publication and would apply to grants made by NIH, the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy and others.

SPARC and other groups continue to advocate for the passage of FRPAA.