

### 2007 open access legislation

In the January issue of *C&RL News*, this column covered the subject of open access to research, and how it was to be handled in the 110th Congress. Since that column, there has been progress in several areas of open access.

### NIH Public Access Policy

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) strongly supports the goal of public access to research and has instituted a voluntary system intended to make scientific research more broadly available for use. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, that system is not working.

Libraries are supporting a request by NIH that Congress include language in the fiscal year (FY) 2008 Labor/HHS appropriations bill to make the program mandatory. The House of Representatives included such language in last year's appropriations bill, but due to the way the appropriations process concluded, that language did not become law.

The House is expected to mark up the FY 2008 Labor/HHS Appropriations Bill on June 7. The bill will then move to the full Appropriations committee (tentatively scheduled for June 14). (The Senate Appropriations Committee-Labor/HHS Subcommittee is expected to review its version of appropriations bills later.)

### FRPAA

In the 109th Congress, a Senate bill—the Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006 (S. 2695)—would have required Internet access to articles reporting on federally funded research. We expect to see the bill reintroduced in the Senate as well as a House version introduced in the 110th Congress. Libraries strongly support this legislation and are continuing to work on its introduction and passage through the coalition, Alliance for Taxpayer Access.

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### Background

The increased number of publishing house mergers in the last 20 years has been accompanied by a significant rise in the cost of scientific, technical, and medical (STM) and legal serial publications. Increased subscription costs have become a crushing budgetary burden for many libraries and institutions. The most troublesome consequence to these economic realities is that more and more important scientific and technical information is becoming less available for students and researchers as libraries often must forego expensive subscriptions.

We are now seeing a reversal of that trend that may signal a revolutionary shift in the way that scientific information will be made available in the future: the introduction of new legislation, the recent opening of the Public Library of Science, and the formation of the Information Access Alliance.

Every year, the federal government funds billions of dollars in scientific research. U.S. taxpayers underwrite this research and they have a right to expect that its dissemination and use will be maximized, and also that they themselves will have access to it. ALA is a member of the Open Access Working Group, promoting broad and rapid dissemination of new knowledge and unrestricted access to the results of scholarship and research.

That effort was given a boost in 2004 when our organizations joined with others (including ACRL) to form the Alliance for Taxpayer Access (ATA, [www.taxpayeraccess.org](http://www.taxpayeraccess.org)), a coalition of more than 60 library, nonprofit, and patient advocacy groups. Through ATA, we are working on various aspects of improving open access.

Open access to research is one of the most important issues for academic and research librarians. Increased access to federally funded research accelerates the pace of discovery and innovation and fosters economic growth, and it is critical that this new research be readily available to physicians, researchers, innovators, small businesses, and members of the public. *▮*