

3 Aug 2004

Dear [Publications Council member]:

I write to encourage the Publications Council to recommend to the Governing Board that all articles published in ESA journals be made freely accessible on the Internet two years after publication. Articles older than two years would be included to the extent that the PDF files are available--i.e., 1999 forward.

#### BACKGROUND

At its December 1999 meetings, the ESA Governing Board passed these two motions:

Motion #30. Moved that ESA supports the concept of providing free web access on PubMed Central to all articles in its traditionally published journals two years after publication, subject to evaluation of PubMed Central after it becomes functional. Yes 13, No 0.

Motion #42. Moved that ESA staff investigate the means and costs of making back issues, two years or older, of ESA journals freely web accessible and report its findings to the President's special publication committee by February 1, 2000. Based on these findings, the committee may opt to spend all or part of \$3,000 for a pilot test of making back issues freely web accessible. [The \$3,000 has been offered for this purpose by anonymous donors.] Options to be investigated should include (1) posting on PubMed Central, (2) posting on a library's web server (e.g., that of the Florida Center for Library Automation), and (3) posting on Cadmus Journal Service's server. Yes 14, No 0.

In June 2000, on the recommendation of its Publications Enterprise Committee, the Governing Board voted to adopt a policy to provide as quickly as fiscally feasible unlimited, free online access to back issues of journals two years old and older.

More than four years later, no significant progress has been made in implementing these Governing Board actions. In the meanwhile, many society-published journals have started making all articles freely accessible after embargo periods of 6 to 24 months. For example, of the 362 journals published by Highwire Press, back issues of approximately half are freely accessible in 24 months or less (<http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freeart.dtl>).

#### BENEFITS

Making back issues of ESA journals freely accessible after a 24-month embargo will--

- (1) increase the usage of articles in ESA journals to the benefit of their authors and of science,
- (2) increase the usage of articles in ESA journals to the benefit of the reputation of its journals as measured by the Institute of Scientific Information's Journal Citation Reports,
- (3) complement open access reprints without jeopardizing their sale, and
- (4) please ESA members, potential members, and authors (not to mention all others who would like free, convenient access to the articles).

#### COSTS

Making back issues freely accessible after a 24-month embargo period will--

- (1) reduce revenues from sales of access to articles (but not during their first 24 months),

(2) reduce revenues from sales of back issues (but not during their first 24 months and not to libraries who wish to replace lost issues prior to binding issues into volumes).

(3) require a means of making the PDF files of affected articles freely and permanently web accessible. (This cost could probably be avoided if ESA were willing to let Florida Center for Library Automation or similar institution post the files.)

Total costs are apt to be low and perhaps could be covered by a portion of the net revenues from sales of open access reprints. Those revenues were approximately \$53,000 in 2003 (see <http://tjwalker.ifas.ufl.edu/esaepub.htm>). If necessary, the price of open access reprints could be increased to cover the costs. ESA's current price for open access by the article is substantially lower than the prices charged by other publishers (see <http://www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/13.html>).

If you need more details about any of the above, I will be pleased to supply it.

If you would like for me to take part in a meeting of the Publications Council when this issue is discussed, please invite me.

Respectfully,  
Tom Walker

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