

By

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New taxpayer-funded research must be made available to the public free of charge within a year of its publication, the Obama administration [said Friday](#).

The president's Office of Science and Technology Policy [told federal agencies](#) to work on plans to release federally funded studies to the public. The policy applies to future unclassified research by agencies with research budgets of \$100 million or more.

"Americans should have easy access to the results of research they help support," said John Holdren, the director of OSTP, in a response to a petition urging the public release of taxpayer-funded studies.

Advocates of open access to research hailed the decision.

The Association of American Publishers, which has strongly opposed other efforts to make free the work its members publish and charge for, called the White House directive "[reasonable](#)."

The United States planned to spend about \$66 billion on nondefense research and development in the 2012 budget year, [according to the Congressional Research Service](#). Nearly half of that is research funded by the National Institutes of Health, which is already making public [the results of the research it funds](#).

The NIH's openness is now the default across the federal government, said Heather Joseph, the executive director of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, or [SPARC](#), a group that advocates open access to government-funded research. SPARC's members include research libraries that pay for costly access to academic journals.

"We're pretty thrilled about the whole thing because, first and foremost, I think it means the White House has validated the concept that the public is entitled to access to the results of research their tax dollars fund," Joseph said.

Joseph said the White House directive covers about 15 new agencies, including the National Science Foundation, the Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, the Department of Transportation, the United States Agency for International Development, the Smithsonian, the Department of Energy and the Department of the Interior.

Journal publishers and federal agencies had been facing a bill in Congress that would have given them even less time with exclusive access to federally funded research. The [Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act](#), which is still pending, would have made federally funded studies free after six months.

Just two weeks ago, the [publishers criticized the bill](#) as a "boondoggle," among other things.

On Friday, the publishers quickly praised the White House's directive in a statement.

"In stark contrast to angry rhetoric and unreasonable legislation offered by some, the OSTP takes a fair path that would enhance access for the public, acknowledge differences among agencies and scientific disciplines and recognize the critical role publishers play in vetting, producing, establishing and preserving the integrity of scientific works," publishing group President and CEO Tom Allen said in the statement.

The administration's decision allows the publishers to have exclusive access to the research for a longer

period but also allows agencies to request lengthier embargoes on research before it is made public, if the agencies can justify the request.

Peter Suber, the director of the [Harvard Open Access Project](#), said he has not yet seen data that would justify longer embargoes.

"Publishers claim to have this evidence, but they haven't really made it public," Suber, who supports embargoes shorter than a year, said.

The White House directive gives agencies six months to come up with a plan for making studies public, but does not make clear when the public will actually begin to have access to the information.

The directive does not apply retroactively to previously funded research.

The forum for the public to access the information is not yet clear, either. The NIH, for instance, hosts its own warehouse of public research, but the White House directive allows publishers to partner with government agencies to create online databases. That's a provision the publishers said "encourages across-the-board public-private partnerships."

Suber said health-related agencies may use the NIH's own PubMed database, while other agencies will create their own database using the NIH's software platform and still other agencies will come up with some other solution.

The White House's directive also has an important provision for researchers that will allow more data-mining of the research, Joseph said. She said even users of the NIH website can't download collections of articles. The directive would allow mass downloading, something that would make it easier for researchers to text-mine papers.

Suber said the government will also require agencies to post metadata that include important information about each study. This will allow search engines to easily search across all the research funded by the agencies, even if the research itself is stored on different websites.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/02/25/white-house-pushes-open-access-taxpayer-funded-research#ixzz2PMBfkOOK>

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