Scholarly Communications Corner

NIH Public Access Policy

By Sandy De Groote

The NIH (National Institutes of Health) Public Access Policy became mandatory on April 7, 2008. The purpose of the NIH Public Access Policy is to ensure that “the public has access to the published results of NIH funded research” as stated in the NIH Overview. As such, the policy requires that all articles submitted to peer-reviewed journals be publicly accessible in order to “advance science and improve human health”.

The NIH Public Access Policy has been in effect for over 2 years, but there are still some questions about the policy requirements. Two things to remember about the policy are:

1) peer-reviewed manuscripts must be publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication;

2) the manuscripts must be submitted to PubMed Central (PMC) in electronic format UPON acceptance for publication.

Authors can submit peer-reviewed articles to the journal of their choice, so long as the publisher of the journal will allow the author to comply with the NIH Policy. There are essentially four different methods for ensuring journal articles are deposited in PMC – for some journals, the journal publisher will deposit the article on behalf of the author and in other cases, the author will be responsible for submitting the manuscript to PMC. More information about the policy and submission methods can be found on the UIC Library’s Guide for the NIH Public Access Policy.

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