



August 31, 2004

Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

We write on behalf of the Association of Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Libraries, the American Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association in strong support of the NIH proposal to provide freely available online access to NIH-funded manuscripts via PubMedCentral. We believe that the public has a right to the information that results from research funded by their tax dollars. Our organizations represent more than 90,000 librarians, information specialists, library trustees, and friends of libraries. This proposed initiative will vastly expand and improve public access to much needed medical literature.

At a time when a single journal subscription can cost thousands or tens of thousands of dollars per year -- and library users need access to thousands of journals -- not even the largest research libraries can provide the research needed by scientists and other users. Despite the promise of the Internet and information technologies, the situation is deteriorating with each passing year. In 2001, for example, U.S. research libraries spent three times more money for journal subscriptions than in 1986 -- yet received 5 percent *fewer* titles. During the same period, the Consumer Price Index rose just 62 percent. Clearly, such costs limit what libraries can make available to the research and education communities and the public. Finally, it is important to note that restrictive licensing terms and conditions imposed by publishers severely limit the amount and type of access that many libraries are able to provide to users.

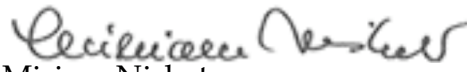
Our organizations believe that the NIH proposal balances the public interest in having enhanced access to federally-funded NIH research while allowing publishers sufficient market protections and time to implement new economic publishing models. In addition, this initiative is consonant with the market models that many publishers have adopted that place short-term embargoes on access to scientific literature.

Timely access to the results of NIH-funded research is critical to maintaining the vitality of our Nation's investment in research and education. Such access is also critically important to taxpayers seeking needed information -- information that they have supported through their tax dollars -- concerning their health and welfare. We applaud your leadership and look forward to working with you as the initiative is implemented.

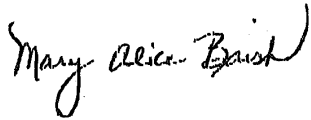
Sincerely yours,



Prudence S. Adler
Association of Research Libraries



Miriam Nisbet
American Library Association



Mary Alice Baish
American Association of Law Libraries



Doug Newcomb
Special Libraries Association