



Alan I. Leshner
Chief Executive Officer and
Executive Publisher, *Science*

Farida Shaheed
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights
United Nations
c/o OHCHR-UNOG
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

BY EMAIL: jeculturalrights@ohchr.org

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Dear Ms. Shaheed,

Since 2008, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest multidisciplinary scientific association and publisher of *Science*, has led efforts to bring the perspectives of the scientific community to the ongoing United Nations (UN) process of defining the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress. As such, we welcome the opportunity to provide input into the report you are preparing for the UN Human Rights Council on this right as it relates to open access to scientific publications. **The general position of AAAS is that while we support the goal of open access to scientific journals, in principle, further analysis needs to be done to determine how to achieve that goal while maintaining the value of scientific publishing for scientific advancement.**

The mission of AAAS is to advance science, engineering, and innovation throughout the world for the benefit of all people. Consistent with that mission is a goal of ensuring access to and effective communication of scientific information as a crucial element of public engagement to enhance the understanding of science and/or to inform public policy. As such, **AAAS supports translation of and access for the general public to scientific information vital to health, well-being and engagement in public discourse.**

Access to scientific information must be distinguished from access to research results in support of scientific progress. The primary target audience for technical research papers is the research community that uses the papers to replicate that study's results, reproduce the findings and expand on that knowledge base. The value to this audience of respected scientific journals is the rigorous peer-review, editing, image quality control, and production that occurs between when an article is submitted for review and its publication. There are significant costs associated with this process. Thus, **AAAS supports continued exploration of open access models for scientific publishing that take account of both the costs**


associated with producing quality scientific journals as well as the range of business models among publishers, including both non-profit and for-profit.

The movement towards open access is still relatively young and, therefore, any suggested approaches to achieving that goal are essentially experiments. What appears evident is that imposing new burdens and costs on stakeholders will be difficult to avoid. Therefore, in the consideration of business models for open access, **AAAS encourages a rigorous assessment of the equity issues raised by both the reader-pay and author-pay models, while encouraging the continued existence and increased participation of scientific publishers in programs aimed at addressing the financial barriers to accessing scientific journals among scientists in low-income countries (e.g., programs such as AGORA and HINARI).**

In addition to *Science*, the leading peer-reviewed scientific journal with a readership of about 1 million, AAAS also publishes *Science Signaling* and *Science Translational Medicine* and, in February of this year, announced the launch of a forthcoming journal, *Science Advances*, an open access journal that will be funded through author processing charges. We are cognizant of the financial barriers faced by some scientists in accessing scientific publications, which is why AAAS has long participated in various global efforts aimed at giving researchers in the world's poorest countries free access to peer-reviewed results, including participation in AGORA and HINARI. Furthermore, all of the research content of *Science* is freely accessible 12 months after publication and *Science* articles of importance to public health are freely posted online without restrictions.

AAAS is pleased that the United Nations has retained its interest in addressing the right to benefit from scientific progress and determining practical measures for its implementation. If the United Nations plans to explore further how that right relates to open access, we encourage you to ensure that the range of relevant stakeholder perspectives continue to be engaged. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Alan I. Leshner