

Editorial

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Following an overwhelming vote by the US House of Representatives urging the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop an Open Access strategy, the NIH has recently invited comment on its plans to enhance access to the research that it funds. Under the proposed scheme, NIH-funded researchers would have to provide electronic copies of the final accepted versions of each of their manuscripts, for archiving along with any supplementary information in PubMed Central [<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov>]. Six months after publication of the research in question - or sooner if the publisher agrees - the provisional copies would be made publicly available at no charge to readers.

Journal of Biology heartily supports the NIH proposal, which brings us one step closer to the immediate availability of all peer-reviewed research free of charge. Indeed, as Open Access pioneers, BioMed Central and *Journal of Biology* already provide PubMed Central with final full text and PDF versions of all published research articles immediately, and we encourage all publishers to follow suit. In an ideal future, the electronic version of each research article would be the final and definitive form - easily archived, centrally searchable and available at the click of a mouse to all who would read it, be they scientists or members of the public. Of course, print would still play an important role, but printed articles will no longer constitute the historic record of the work. And moving away from the printed article in

favor of its online incarnation makes sense for other reasons too: electronically, researchers can display all relevant data instead of an edited subset, and moving images and other web-only formats can be easily integrated. It will no longer be possible to represent a complete research article accurately on the printed page.

In keeping with this shift in emphasis, *Journal of Biology* is now presenting its printed articles in a new light. Since its inception, the journal has eschewed the rigidity of producing regular issues, instead producing collections of articles grouped by their focus on a key piece of research, not necessarily by publication date. Each printed collection serves to draw readers' attention to the definitive online content, which is freely available on the journal's website or in central archives such as PubMed Central. In recognition of the non-traditional way that *Journal of Biology* has always conceptually clustered its articles, the cover of the bound printed articles now sports a bold new design - do please look out for it in print and on the journal's website.

Since its launch in June 2002, nearly a million copies of *Journal of Biology* have been distributed in print to life scientists worldwide, entirely free of charge. But the journal and its publisher, BioMed Central, are committed to building a sustainable Open Access business model. This should primarily ensure that research articles are immediately and permanently available online without charge, as well as being deposited into permanent repositories -

both of which provide far more efficient ways of disseminating, retrieving, and searching for scientific information. For this reason, the journal has now changed its approach to print distribution. Some readers will continue receiving complimentary copies as before, either with *The Scientist* or individually, but for others who wish to receive articles in print, a modest annual subscription charge of \$50 (£30/€40) will be levied - see [<http://jbiol.com/subscribe>]. These funds will help to maintain the quality of the reprints and to cover mailing costs. The journal also offers special print rates to librarians and institutions, so please encourage your library or head of institute to sign up. Of course, all of the content of *Journal of Biology* will continue to be available free of charge online.

Journal of Biology urges other funding bodies and policy makers to follow the lead of the NIH, the UK Parliament, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, The Wellcome Trust and the signatories of the Berlin Declaration [<http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin>], and to encourage the researchers they fund to publish their results in a way that promotes public availability of scientific information. At the same time, it should be recognized that we still have a long way to go before every research article is free for anyone to read online on the day it is published. You can play a part in achieving this goal by submitting your next important article to *Journal of Biology*.

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