

Washington Insider

Government Organized Committee on Scholarly Publishing Issues Report

In June 2009, the House Science and Technology Committee, in coordination with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), organized a Scholarly Publishing Roundtable to discuss issues related to expanding public access to the journal articles arising from research funded by U.S. government agencies. The Roundtable group recently issued its report.

John Vaughan, Executive Vice President of the Association of American Universities, chaired the group. Among the participants on the 14 member panel was Richard McCarty, formerly Executive Director for Science at the American Psychological Association (APA) and now the Provost of Vanderbilt University. McCarty served on the COSSA Executive Committee during his tenure at APA.

The Roundtable members identified a set of principles which “should continue to inhere in scholarly publishing as it evolves.” These include: a commitment to peer review as critical in maintaining high quality and editorial integrity; the necessity for publishers to adapt their business models in “an evolving landscape”; more broadly accessible scholarly and scientific publications; sustained archiving and preservation; and maximization of the possibilities for creative reuse and interoperations of published research results on sites that host them.

These principles led to the group’s core recommendation that: “Each federal agency should expeditiously but carefully develop and implement an explicit public access policy that brings about free public access to the results of the research that it funds as soon as possible after those results have been published in a peer-reviewed journal.”

The Roundtable recognized that embargo periods between publication and public access are necessary and that some disciplines may require a longer time period. The report also stated that: “every effort should be made to have the version of record as the version to which free access is provided.” The group urged OSTP to facilitate interagency collaboration to develop interoperability standards for full texts and metadata, navigation tools, and other applications.

The report also recommended that government agencies extend the reach of their public access policies through voluntary collaborations with nongovernmental stakeholders. Any policies promulgated in this area should also foster innovation in the research and educational use of scholarly publications, according to the report. The Roundtable participants concluded that government public access policies should address the need to resolve the challenges of long-term digital preservations.

Finally, the report called for OSTP to establish a public access advisory committee to provide a mechanism for periodic assessment of the rapidly changing scholarly publishing landscape.

The House Science and Technology Committee will likely continue to examine this issue during 2010.

Bement to Leave NSF; Heads to Purdue to Direct Global Policy Institute

Arden L. Bement, director of the National Science Foundation

(NSF) since 2004, has announced that he will become the director of the Global Policy Research Institute (GPRI) at Purdue University starting on June 1.

The GPRI intends to offer faculty and student fellowships; nationally visible workshops, forums, and publications; a certificate in public policy for students; participation in an interdisciplinary internship program in public policy; and a master’s of science in public policy and public administration. Earlier in his career, Bement had served as head of Purdue’s School of Nuclear Engineering.

Trained as a metallurgical engineer, Bement was appointed by President George W. Bush to lead NSF in November 2004. He had served as acting director of NSF for the previous 10 months, while also holding down the position of director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Upon his appointment to head NSF, Bement was not a stranger to the Foundation, having served on the National Science Board from 1989–95. He was part of the Board that voted to approve the establishment of the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences directorate in 1991.

During his almost seven year tenure, Bement has led NSF through an increasing focus on interdisciplinary, cross-directorate initiatives and a national commitment to improving science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. With the enactment of the America COMPETES Act in 2007, NSF was put back on a budget-doubling track. The recently released President’s FY 2011 budget proposal gives NSF an 8% increase to maintain that doubling promise.

The current NSF Deputy Director is sociologist Cora Marrett, who presumably would become acting director when Bement leaves, if the administration cannot nominate and get the Senate to confirm a new director by June 1.

President Obama Nominates Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education

On February 24, 2010, the U.S. Senate received the nomination of Eduardo Ochoa of California to be Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education. Currently, Dr. Ochoa is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Sonoma State University where he has served since 2003. He is also a professor of economics.

According to the Sonoma State Web site, Dr. Ochoa has led strategic planning processes in the Division of Academic Affairs and (in collaboration with Vice President Furukawa-Schlereth) for the University. During his tenure, Ochoa implemented a new academic program review process that incorporated assessment of student learning; developed a pilot Freshman Year Experience course as a first step in reform of the general education curriculum; and adopted a number of administrative improvements in the areas of fiscal management, class scheduling, and resource allocation. His educational background includes a Ph.D. in economics, M.S. in nuclear science and engineering, and B.A. in physics and philosophy. ■

From the COSSA’s Washington Update (<http://www.cossa.org/communication/update.shtml>) and the National Coalition for History’s Washington Update (<http://historycoalition.org/archives/>).