

PRISM – lobbying against open access

Martin Fenner, Gobbledygook

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On August 23, the Partnership for Research Integrity in Science and Medicine or PRISM was announced. PRISM is a lobbying organisation created by the Professional & Scholarly Publishing Division (PSP) of the Association of American Publishers (AAP). The main purpose of PRISM appears to lobby legislators in Washington to not sign legislation that would require public access to all scientific papers within 12 months after publication.

While there are many good arguments for or against this change in legislation, and you would expect many AAP members to oppose this measure, PRISM is different in that it is a pure lobbying effort – e.g. read Myth vs. fact: Setting the Record Straight on Scholarly Journals. The two main arguments used are:

- open access undermines the peer review process
- requiring deposition in public repositories leads to government interference in scientific publishing

These “arguments” were obviously created in a PR department, as they don’t make sense to anybody involved in scientific publishing. The peer review process is not different in open access journals. And to call deposition of NIH-funded research papers in the NIH-managed PubMed Central “government interference” is difficult to understand.

PRISM might be successful in avoiding a change in U.S. legislation, but the strange logic used by PRISM could lead many scientists to think twice before submitting a paper to a journal that endorses the PRISM principles. Which in the end could be worse for the journal publisher than the proposed change in legislation.

Read more about PRISM in Peter Suber’s blog post. And read the blog post by Corie Lok about some background on the AAPs efforts against open access.