Director's Matters

By H. Frederick Dylla, Executive Director

Progress toward public access

With the community still engaged in heated exchange over the Research Works Act, another log was thrown into the fiery public access debate last week with introduction of the Federal Research Public Access Act. Calling for an extension of the NIH Public Access policy to eleven other agencies, this bill has made a perennial appearance in Congress and yet has not gained traction. For reasons I outlined in my January 23 column, Unnecessary inflammation of the Public Access debate, I reiterate, "New legislation is not needed at this time. The measured, imaginative discussions that have been spurred by the existing COMPETES law offer the surest route to success in broadening public access." In this column I illustrate the positive steps in policy development to increase public access in ways that the scholarly publishing enterprise can reasonably support.

The America COMPETES Act signed by President Obama last January compelled funding agencies, the research community, librarians, and publishers to explore diverse solutions to public access and the interrelated problems of linking the world’s scientific information, widely dispersed on both international public and private data platforms. Early last year, an ad hoc group of eight scientific publishers, including AIP, APS, and AAS, began serious discussions with senior staff from the two most important US federal agencies for the funding of the physical sciences: NSF and DOE. These two agencies fund more than $10 billion of scientific research. In addition, both agencies have a long history of consulting with the community through citizen scientific advisory committees.

We began by proposing a number of topics or pilot projects for potential ventures among the two agencies and publishers, and focused on areas of our unique expertise. Projected end results would enable the agency to preserve precious funding for research—an important goal given the current stress on our federal budgets. We identified areas of potential collaboration within three broad topics: (1) the establishment and promotion of universal identifiers in scholarly literature; (2) discovery tools and linking mechanisms among data platforms that would promote linking and data mining across public and private platforms; and (3) specific pilot projects that would demonstrate improved access or interoperability among publishing and data platforms.

After nearly a year of discussions and preparatory work, I was pleased to chair a panel session on February 2nd at the Professional Scholarly Publishing (PSP) Conference, where our colleagues from NSF and DOE outlined our collective progress. Topping our list for discussion was a project involving agencies, a half dozen publishers, and CrossRef to systematize how funding agency information is formally included within the standard metadata that is collected for every publication by CrossRef. Once this metadata becomes standard (pilot projects will start later this year), funding agencies will be
able to display on their public websites lists of articles that result from their funding. This is key public access information that is currently unavailable without extensive searching on multiple platforms. Once fully instituted, members of the research community or the public can link from unique identifiers on agency websites to the publisher’s platforms where the publisher maintains the official version of record.

The PSP panel also revealed a number of pilot projects, including a multi-publisher project that would link the DOE’s extensive collection of research reports on its science.gov platform with related publications on the publisher sites; an NSF project to promote universal identifiers for and links to data sets that underlie figures and tables in scientific publications; and preliminary discussions on an NSF pilot project to provide incentives for the open access business model for publications.

The participants in the partnerships and pilot projects outlined in the February PSP panel have vowed to work together to demonstrate measurable progress on these projects by next year. They have already demonstrated the fundamental tenet of a good partnership—each side brings to the table resources unavailable to the other side and the partnership’s results have mutual benefit. In the sphere of the public access debate, these projects will enable an entire range of results that improve access to reports, publications, and data derived from the public’s investment in research. The diversity of access solutions that are emerging from these partnerships is reflective of the diversity of sciences sponsored by these two important funding agencies and the hundreds of commercial and nonprofit scientific publishers that provides services to the research community funded by DOE and NSF.

This progress would not have been possible without the contributions of the dedicated public servants with whom we have collaborated. I thank Ed Seidel and Tom Statler from NSF’s Mathematics and Physical Science Directorate, and Walt Warnick and Sharon Jordan from DOE’s Office of Scientific and Technical Information. We are planning a special panel session at the 2012 Assembly of Society Officers on March 22 to discuss these efforts and our progress toward attainable public access solutions. It promises to be an important discussion.

**Publishing Matters**

**American Library Association Midwinter Meeting**

AIP Publishing set up shop at the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting once again this year, exhibiting at this annual conference of librarians from around the country. This year’s meeting, held in Dallas, Texas, January 20–24, attracted an attendance of nearly 10,000 from a diverse variety of sectors. AIP’s presence focused on the full collection of AIP and Member Society journals and magazines, with particular emphasis on renewals of 2012 content, digital archive products, and potential multisite licensing deals. Nearly 200 attendees stopped by our booth in the exhibit hall over the course of the meeting to say hello and find out about AIP content and offerings. The show attracts a diverse crowd, with many librarians from public libraries, bachelor’s-granting universities, and high schools in attendance, giving AIP staff the opportunity to discuss what product offerings might be appropriate for these markets.
The Puzzle Corner

Physicists are the greatest problem solvers in the world! Certainly, Sigma Pi Sigma (SPS) members like to think so. In each issue of Radiations magazine, the physics honor society now includes a "Puzzle Corner," with a physics-related crossword and other challenges. Prizes are offered to those who submit correct solutions. The long-time chair of the Development Committee, Chris Caren of The Ohio State University SPS chapter, first suggested the idea. President Diane Jacobs launched the feature in the Fall 2010 issue with a crossword on the 50th anniversary of optical lasers. Since then, AIP Education Division staff and alumni have penned additional brainteasers on the military-industrial complex, sports, NASA's space program, mirror images, and more.

Our sample puzzle (shown at the right) by Tom Olsen, assistant director of SPS/ΣΠΣ, celebrates the joys of shopping. It also calls for some visual thinking.

Most of us know that when two mirrors meet at 90°, you may observe three reflections of yourself: one to the right, one to the left, and one as you look directly into the vertex of the right angle. The image beyond the vertex is special. Unlike the other two, it does not appear to be right-left reversed—we see ourselves as others see us.

At what other angles between two mirrors would you see such an image as you look directly into the vertex?

Employees and friends of AIP are encouraged to submit solutions, and we welcome submissions of any interesting crosswords and puzzles you have to share with Sigma Pi Sigma alumni as well. Please email your ideas to Tom Olsen.

Around AIP

February is Black History Month

On February 21 the ACP Events Committee will show the documentary "African American Lives," which traces the ancestors of prominent African Americans in the US. Join your colleagues with a brown bag lunch from 12 – 1 pm in conference room A.
Tuesday, February 14
- ACP Board meeting (College Park, MD)

Wednesday, February 15
- AIP Member Society CEO's meeting (AGU headquarters, Washington, DC)
- Supervisor training for Halogen (Melville, NY)

Thursday, February 16
- Supervisor training for Halogen (College Park, MD)

Tuesday, February 21
- Investment Advisory Committee meeting (Phoenix, AZ)

February 27 – March 2
- APS March Meeting (Boston, MA)
  
  **Associated AIP Events:**

  - February 25 – *Journal of Chemical Physics* editors meeting
  - February 26 – AIP Journal Editors Spring Conference
  - February 27 – *Journal of Chemical Physics* Editorial Advisory Board dinner meeting
  - SPS-sponsored oral sessions for undergraduate research
  - Presentations of the Dannie Heineman Prize for Mathematical Physics and the Industrial Applications of Physics Prize (during the APS awards ceremony)
  - February 28 – *AIP Advances* Editorial Board meeting
  - SPS-sponsored oral and poster sessions for undergraduate research
  - SPS award presentations (during the APS student awards and networking reception)
  - AIP/APS Meet-the-Editors reception
  - February 29 – *RSI* Board luncheon and meeting
  - February 29 – *AIP Advances* birthday celebration