Finch report on public access

"Collaboration is key," sounded a voice from across the Atlantic last week with the publication of the Finch Commission report in the UK. The subject was the often-acrimonious debate on public access to scholarly publications. Similar to the effort in the US with the Scholarly Publishing Roundtable in 2009, David Willetts, the UK minister of state universities and science, commissioned a panel representing all parties that help produce or make use of scholarly publications: funding agencies, publishers, universities, librarians, and researchers. Chairperson Dame Janet Finch, a professor of sociology at the University of Manchester, led the group through a yearlong study of how to best provide wide-ranging access to publications that are underwritten by UK funding agencies. The public was obviously a target audience, as were other potentially underserved markets, such as small businesses.

Although the report differs somewhat from AIP's views, the effort should be applauded for its inclusivity, which led to the commission's united recommendations for a path forward. Among the commission's recommendations was this one: "A clear policy direction should be set towards support for publication in open-access or hybrid journals, funded by [article processing charges] as the main vehicle for the publication of research." This open-access business model enables immediate access to the final publication because the author or the author's sponsoring institution bears the costs of publication up front, through the article processing charge. The commission cautioned that a too-rapid transition could harm the enterprise of scholarly publishing, especially for niche journals or journals produced by smaller scientific societies. The present mixed array of business models, including subscriptions, embargoed release of content, and pay-per-view mechanisms, would need to be maintained throughout the transition.

In our highly polarized political environment, I found it a pleasure to see a group of stakeholders come together with their respective divergent viewpoints on this issue and produce a set of recommendations with a defined path for moving forward. The timing of this report will influence the ongoing deliberations in the US on how to expand access to scholarly publications and other research results from public funding to the widest possible audience. In a statement that AIP posted after publication of the Finch report, I noted connections between the commission's recommendations and US funding agency–publisher partnerships, which are currently underway to improve the identification, access, and interoperability of both public sector and private sector publication platforms. AIP believes that "governments should support and encourage access to scholarly publications via mutually beneficial partnerships with publishers, which would contribute to the economy and maximize the productivity of the scientific enterprise."
With some surprise, the press has hardly given any attention to the Finch report. Steve Corneliussen, media analyst and editor of Physics Today's Science and the Media department, calls attention to a few good, balanced responses printed in Nature, Science, and the Guardian. In my June 4th column, I posited that science drives economies, publications drive science, and an evolving Internet drives creative destruction within scientific publishing. Nature's article, "Britain aims for broad open access," draws attention to this concept within the Finch report, "The shift towards this 'gold' form of open access will create short-term financial burdens for research funders . . . but the economic and cultural benefits far outweigh the risks. Not everyone is convinced, however . . ." Indeed, this complex issue will continue to draw our careful attention as we work together to meet the interests all stakeholders and the public.

Publishing Matters

AIP Publishing visits China for green energy conference

AIP Publishing representatives attended a conference in China last month, the 7th International Green Energy Conference and the 1st Dalian National Laboratory (DNL) Conference on Clean Energy (IGEC-DCCE 2012) from May 28–30. The conference took place next door to the new energy building of the Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. AIP sponsored five "Best Poster" awards, and AIP Publishing was represented in a booth at the conference hall. Attendees enjoyed a series of events designed to give them a deeper understanding of clean energy development in China: for example, on a tour of Dalian Rongke Power Co., attendees saw a demonstration of redox-flow battery technology (a type of rechargeable battery). Participants say that IGEC 2012 was an exciting event, capped with a social gathering at a Chinese opera house, where all attendees joined together for dinner and watched the famous Chinese opera and a Chinese face-changing show. The Journal of Renewable and Sustainable Energy (JRSE) was the sponsoring publication for the conference; full papers presented at the meeting are invited to be submitted to JRSE.

Physics Resources Matters

Fields of study for physics bachelor's

After receiving a bachelor's in
physics, most new graduates either continue on to graduate school or enter the workforce. Sixty percent of the bachelor’s from the classes of 2009 and 2010 combined chose to immediately continue their education by enrolling in a graduate program. Of this group, the majority chose to study physics or astronomy. The remainder were spread across a variety of fields, with engineering being the second most pursued field. Physics bachelor's degree recipients have varied interests, and this is reflected by the graduate fields of study they choose.

The Statistical Research Center (SRC) has recently published a report: *focus on Physics Bachelor’s One Year Later*. This report presents findings from the SRC's annual follow-up survey of physics and astronomy bachelor’s. The report illustrates changes over time in what new graduates do after graduation, the highest degree they intended to receive, and the types of funding full-time enrolled graduate students receive. You can access this *focus on* free of charge through the SRC website.

**Coming Up**

June 25–28
- Workshop for new physics and astronomy faculty (AAPT/APS/AAS) (College Park, MD)

June 29
- SPS Executive Committee meeting (College Park, MD)

July 4
- Independence Day! AIP offices in Melville, NY and College Park, MD are closed.