

**In the
Final
Analysis**

“After 350 years in the slow-moving world of print, scientific publishing has been thrust into a fast-paced online realm of cloud computing and ubiquitous sharing. The result has been an era of ferment, as established practices are challenged by new ones—most notably, the open-access model.”

— *Nature*, March 28, 2013

On February 22, the White House’s John P. Holdren (who has the business-card-busting title of Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Co-Chair of the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology) issued the memorandum “Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research.” In it, he presents guidelines for assuring that the results of federally funded research are made freely available via the Internet within 12 months of publication. The thinking is that more eyes viewing these technical papers and associated digital data sets will spur growth in innovation, jobs, and the economy.

As a member of the general public, I think that sounds pretty good. As the executive director of a professional society that publishes scholarly journals and that serves many members likely to be impacted by this decision, my reaction is much more contemplative. I start to ask questions like, “What does this mean to our members? Our authors? Our peer reviewers and editors?” “What are our legal obligations and when do they kick in?” “What does this mean to our business enterprise?” And, “What can I, or should I, do about it?” Admittedly, asking questions that are hard to answer is my sole superpower.

Helpfully, the superjournal *Nature* explores some of these matters in a recent issue that gives a special emphasis to the pros and cons of “open access,” which is at the gravitational center of Holdren’s memo. It is all essential reading for the publication community’s stakeholders. That said, I realize that not all *JOM* readers concern themselves with the details of scholarly publishing and might be asking, “What exactly is open access?” The definition is evolving, but it nutshells as a journal’s articles are free on the web.

Anticipating an impending paradigm shift, last year TMS and its journal publishing partner Springer debuted a true open access journal—*Integrating Materials and Manufacturing Innovation* under the editorship of Charles Ward. *IMMI* focuses on accelerated advanced materials and manufacturing development efforts with an accent on allowing authors to supplement their papers with digital data. The journal enables all of the progressive ideas articulated by Holdren and essentially serves as the journal of record for the Materials Genome Initiative. Beyond a publication like *IMMI*, how the government directives play out with more traditional journals remains to be seen. The 12 month embargo window that supports traditional journal publication is a big help. I think that association publishers can work with that.

Ironically, while the Holdren memorandum covers the cutting edge of publishing, it is only available from the White House web site in PDF format. That’s so last decade. Still, they make up for it by also using the very-of-this-moment “We the People” White House web site. That’s the site where petitions are presented; some even earn a formal response from the Administration. Holdren’s petition “Require free access over the Internet to scientific journal articles arising from taxpayer-funded research” has 65,704 signatories as I write. Impressive. That’s almost twice the number of people who signed the “Secure resources and funding, and begin construction of a Death Star by 2016.” The White House famously declined that petition with, “the Administration does not support blowing up planets.”

Open access is certainly more timely and practical than a Death Star, although a Death Star would be waaaaay cooler. Need proof? *JOM* discussed how to build a Death Star in 2005. Check Google, because we open accessed it!

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