

Americans support free access to research

May 31 2006

In an online survey of public attitudes conducted recently and released today by Harris Interactive, 8 out of 10 (82%) adults polled said they believe that “if tax dollars pay for scientific research, people should have free access to the results of the research on the Internet.”

In addition, six out of 10 (62%) adults believe that if these research results are easily available (for free and online), it will help speed up finding potential cures for diseases.

These findings from the Harris Poll, one of the longest running independent opinion polls in the United States, underscore broad agreement among diverse sectors of the American public on the benefits of free access to research. The original survey findings are available at www.harrisinteractive.com/news/.

“This expression of support from the American public demonstrates that the demand for public access has reached a critical juncture,” said Heather Joseph, Executive Director of SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, an ATA founding member). “As scientists work to counter the Avian flu, develop energy alternatives, and grapple with climate change, public access to taxpayer-funded research is more important than ever. The public recognizes its stake in open sharing of research, and the Harris data gives voice to their stand.”

“The poll results show that research must be a collaborative, informed process between investigators and the public to be successful and increase trust,” said Robert Reinhard, community advisor to NIH's AIDS

vaccine trials. “Time and again the lesson is that improved knowledge in the community furthers the public health agenda.”

In another strong signal of broad support for public access, Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) recently introduced the Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006 (S.2695). The bill requires federal agencies that fund over \$100 million in annual external research to make electronic manuscripts of peer-reviewed journal articles stemming from their research publicly available via the Internet. ATA supports this measure and provides information and materials related to the legislation at www taxpayeraccess.org.

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