

Scholarly journal bill draws criticism

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A bill introduced in the U.S. Senate as a means to make scientific information more available is being criticized as opening data to misinterpretation.

The Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006 was introduced in the Senate last week by Sens. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., and John Cornyn, R-Texas. They say it would require 11 government agencies to publish, online, any articles involving research funded by federal dollars, The New York Times reported Monday. The bill would require the articles be made accessible within six months of their print publication.

"Not everybody has a library next door. I don't mean to be flippant about it, but this gives access to anybody," Donald Stewart, a spokesman for Cornyn, told the Times.

But some publishing industry officials criticize the proposal. Howard Garrison, director of public affairs for the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, told the Times the bill, if enacted, would weaken the connection between the journals and their readers and, in addition, journals could lose subscribers and ad revenue if articles were available online.

Other critics say the move could result in scientific data being misinterpreted.

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