



VIA EMAIL

March 15, 2021

The Rt. Hon Dr. Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SWH1 0ET

Re: UKRI Proposed Open Access Policy

Dear Secretary of State:

I am writing to express our very serious concerns about the open access policy reforms that we understand may be issued shortly by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). I am fortunate to serve as the President of [SIIA](#), the principal U.S. trade association for the software and digital content industries. With over 600 member companies, SIIA is the largest association of software and content publishers in the United States. Our members range from start-up firms to some of the largest and most recognizable corporations in the world.

Many of our members are scientific, technical and medical publishers who do business and have thousands of employees in both Britain and the United States. Their journals are peer-reviewed and relied upon by scientists, engineers and medical professionals around the world. Given the interconnectedness of the US and UK publishing sectors, any changes proposed in one country are likely to impact policies, and export revenues, in both countries.

Rather than allowing UKRI to make a drastic policy change, we hope that you will continue to support the strong level of collaboration between our two countries, based, in large part, on our collective belief in strong IP protections for creators, strong academic institutions and the preservation of the scientific method.

As we continue to face a global pandemic, reliable peer-reviewed information is more critical than ever. These publishers invest millions each year to ensure their publications are accurate, accessible and reliable. They have developed advanced digital publishing systems that ensure that the “version or record” is properly archived, and annotated if later research indicates other protocols or approaches to medicine, engineering or science are more meritorious. If UKRI is permitted to mandate that these publishers must make their articles available immediately for free, with no dedicated funding to cover the costs, the scientific, technical and medical journals ecosystem will be grievously damaged.

Our members have embraced open access publishing in a variety of forms, and believe, when done thoughtfully, it will improve the quality and availability of scientific research.

But we cannot endorse the adoption of a policy that would thrust private-sector and nonprofit publications into the public domain, with no compensation. Such an approach not only jeopardizes intellectual property rights, it poses a barrier to cooperation.

Therefore, we urge your department to oppose any policy issued by UKRI which would require that publications produced by the robust nonprofit and private sector, be made available for free without any compensation to the publishers. In addition to the impact such a drastic proposal would have in the UK, we believe it would also directly jeopardize the ability of American publishers to invest in high-quality journals, undermine IP rights and pose a new barrier to bilateral research collaboration.

We are also concerned that the proposed new requirements by UKRI will negatively impact the pending trade deal between the US and UK. Rather than creating trade barriers between our two nations, it is vital that we continue to take steps to improve enforcement of IP rights and unlock greater collaboration and innovation in areas like health care and climate change.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our concerns with you further, and we hope we can work together to build an even stronger bond between our nations.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Joseph

Jeff Joseph
President