

Elsevier Backs Off RWA Support; Still Opposes Mandated Open Access

February 27, 2012 By [Meredith Schwartz](#) 1 Comment

This article has been updated to include information on the bill's status and from ACRL.

Scientific journal publisher Elsevier today [withdrew its support](#) for the [Research Works Act](#) (RWA), a bill which would have prohibited open access mandates for federally funded research. The publisher had been the target of a [boycott among academics](#), as *LJ* reported. At press time, [7,486 researchers](#) had pledged not to publish, referee or do editorial work for Elsevier's journals. The Act was also opposed by the American Library Association ([ALA](#)) and the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition ([SPARC](#)), among [many others](#). Representative Mike Doyle recently introduced an opposing bill, the [Federal Research Public Access Act](#).

Just hours after Elsevier withdrew its support from the legislation, Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa and Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, RWA sponsor, issued a [joint statement](#) that the bill will not move forward, according to Alexander Howard, Washington correspondent, O'Reilly Media.

Peter Suber, open access projection director at [Public Knowledge](#), [said](#), "It shows that academic discontent — expressed in blogs, social media, conventional media, boycotts, and open letters to Congress — can defeat legislation supported by a determined and well-funded lobby."

In a [second statement](#), Elsevier offered further concessions to open access advocates. "We have made the archives of 14 core mathematics journals open, from four years after publication, back to 1995, the year when we started publishing digitally. All current and future papers featured in these journals will become free to read, for subscribers and non subscribers alike," the publisher said. "We will create a scientific council for mathematics, to ensure that we are working in tandem with the mathematics community to address feedback and to give greater control and transparency to the community."

Joyce L. Ogburn, president, Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) told *LJ*, "We think Elsevier is a very important publisher and we appreciate their listening to their community."

However the publisher made clear that it is not changing its tune altogether: "While we continue to oppose government mandates in this area, Elsevier is withdrawing support for the Research Work Act itself," the statement says, continuing, "while withdrawing support for the Research Works Act, we will ... oppose repeated efforts to extend mandates through legislation."

The Research Works Act would have not only prevented extending mandates, if passed, it would have effectively rolled back the existing mandate of the National Institute of Health, which requires that [NIH-funded papers](#) be accessible to the public on PubMed Central no later than 12 months after publication.

About Meredith Schwartz

Meredith Schwartz (mschwartz@mediasourceinc.com) is News Editor of *Library Journal*.