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# Free access to published papers funded by DBT, DST soon

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If implemented, this policy from India's reputed funding agencies, will surely be called a major reform in Indian science. The two leading agencies, the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) that are constituents within the Ministry of science and technology have prepared an open policy for unrestricted access to research papers published through their funding support.

The agencies intend to create a central repository for published papers to make them accessible and thus help maintain a database as well. Besides that, the much required clarity on funding norms can also become transparent due to high level scrunity of papers by the stakeholders.

As per the issued circular, the policy is open to public for comments by July 25, 2014. The collective statement of the agencies specifies that since all funds disbursed by them are public funds, it is important that the information and knowledge generated through the use of these funds are made publicly available as soon as possible. This surely is a historical staement in the context of the present circumtances in the country when public awareness is increasing at a rapid speed.

It would be mandatory to deposit the manuscript in the grantee's own institution's interoperable institutional repository (IR). If the institution does not yet have an IR of its own, then the paper should be deposited in the central repository. Unless the deposit ID is quoted in the project report as well as in future proposals for funding, the proposals will not be considered. In rare cases where the PI or head of the institution has some valid reasons for not complying with these requirements, they should give a suitable explanation in the final report.

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"The DBT/DST affirms the principle that the intrinsic merit of the work, and not the title of the journal in which an author's work is published, should be considered in making future funding decisions. DBT/DST does not recommend the use of journal impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions," said the circular issued last week.

Explaining the purpose behind this exercise, the circular mentioned, "The DBT/DST believes that maximizing the distribution of these publications by providing free online access by depositing them in a gratis open access repository is the most effective way of ensuring that the research it funds can be accessed, read and built upon. This, in turn, will foster a richer research culture."

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