

Harvard, APS Reconcile Copyright Policy

The American Physical Society and Harvard University announced in early April an agreement averting a potential conflict over copyrights. The agreement would allow the university to republish articles by its faculty appearing in APS journals, without violating any APS held copyrights.

In February of 2008, Harvard University adopted a new "open access" policy for articles appearing in scholarly journals by members of its faculty. Under its new policy, the university would post all articles published by its faculty available for free download. This policy, one of the first of its kind, raised eyebrows across the publishing world and sparked concerns about potential conflicts

with journal copyright policies.

APS, along with other journal publishers, soon began talking with the university to clarify the terms of such a policy. In the agreement worked out with APS, the first such understanding announced, Harvard and its faculty can republish articles featured in APS journals provided that Harvard link back to the original source article, and cannot charge for access to them.

APS has allowed individual authors to republish their own work on personal and employer website since 1996. The agreement with Harvard essentially extends that right from the authors to the university as policy. Up to now, authors could have individually published their works on a

Harvard website, but this new policy gives that right to reprint to the university as well.

"[W]e applaud the spirit of the new Harvard open access policies, which we recognize as sharing our fundamental goals for scientific communication, and we are delighted that we and our colleagues at Harvard have reconciled the differences in our policies, to the shared benefit of Harvard authors and of the wider scientific community," said Joseph Serene, Treasurer/Publisher of the American Physical Society.

Prior to this clarification, physicists working at Harvard had to get a waiver from the university excluding their APS published work from its open-access requirements.