

Immediate Access to Research

Purpose and Scope

This policy ensures that HHMI scientists promptly share their research as preprints with no restrictions on subsequent use of the publication. HHMI's 2022 Open Access to Publications policy has been successful in ensuring that nearly all published HHMI research is free to read and reuse. However, this has been accomplished through the traditional journal publication route, which is associated with opaque selection procedures, high open access fees, and lengthy publication delays. Shifting the focus to preprints addresses these challenges and encourages a more transparent scholarly ecosystem in which researchers have more control over dissemination of their scholarship.

In light of this shifted focus, the policy also defines how HHMI research budgets may be used to support manuscript-related services offered by scientific publishers.

This policy applies to the following HHMI employees: HHMI Investigators, Freeman Hrabowski Scholars, Janelia Group Leaders & Senior Group Leaders, Janelia Scientific Operation Managers, Theory Fellows, Principal Scientists, Janelia Fellows, AI Scientists, AI@HHMI Machine Learning Researchers, and Project Scientists.

Effective Date

This policy is effective for articles submitted for publication to preprint servers or journals on or after January 1, 2026. For articles submitted before that date, but not yet published in a journal, HHMI scientists subject to this policy can choose to comply either with the 2022 [Open Access to Publications Policy](#) or with the policy described here.

For HHMI scientists appointed after January 1, 2026, this policy is effective for articles submitted to preprint servers or journals on or after the date their HHMI employment starts.

Policy

Preprint and Open License Requirement

HHMI scientists subject to this policy must make original research articles that represent major contributions from their laboratories publicly available as initial and revised preprints (as defined in the Glossary of terms). These preprints must be deposited on a designated preprint server under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license.

For the purposes of HHMI internal evaluation processes (e.g., Investigator reviews, Freeman Hrabowski Scholar interim progress evaluations, and Janelia Group Leader reviews or transition reviews), the most recent preprint version will serve as the official version of the significant article - not any subsequent journal publication.

Use of HHMI Budget for Fees

Beginning January 1, 2026, HHMI budgets can no longer be used to pay article processing charges (APCs) at hybrid journals (definitions below). HHMI budgets can continue to pay APCs at fully open access journals but only through December 31, 2026. HHMI budgets can continue to pay APCs at fully open access journals until further notice. In the coming 1-2 years, HHMI will seek to replace APC payments from HHMI lab budgets with centralized support of publisher service fees, including transparent peer review services for preprints.

Definitions

Article Processing Charge (APC): a fee that journals charge to make a research article freely available to users immediately upon publication.

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) Public License: A license that ensures maximal accessibility, reuse, and distribution of the discovery with appropriate attribution. The following Creative Commons licenses are not compliant with HHMI's Immediate Access to Research Policy: CC BY-NC, CC BY-NC-SA, CC BY-ND, CC BY-NC-ND.

Designated preprint server: bioRxiv is the preferred designated preprint server for HHMI articles. Articles that are out of scope for bioRxiv can be published on medRxiv (clinical medicine), ChemRxiv, (chemistry) or arXiv (computer science and physics). Other preprint servers should not be used.

Fully open access journal: A journal in which all articles are made freely and permanently available online immediately upon publication, without any paywall barriers. To cover operational costs, fully open-access journals typically charge authors an article processing charge, but some use other funding models. The Directory of Open Access Journals ([DOAJ](#)) provides a list of all fully open access journals.

Hybrid journal: A traditional subscription-based journal that gives authors the option to make their individual articles freely available immediately upon publication—typically in exchange for an open access fee (also called an article processing charge (APC))—while the rest of the journal's content remains behind a paywall.

Initial preprint: A preprint that is published as the first formal communication of novel research findings. An initial preprint must be published no later than the date of submission to a journal, if applicable.

Major contribution: A contribution to a publication from an HHMI lab is considered major if an HHMI scientist subject to the policy or a member of their lab is listed as (co)-first, (co)-last, or (co)-corresponding author on the publication.

Original research article: An article describing original research findings or novel protocols and methods published on a preprint server or in a journal. This policy does not apply to review articles, reviews of existing protocols and methods, perspectives, commentaries, and other articles that are not focused on sharing original research findings or novel protocols and methods.

Revised preprint: An additional preprint version that is published when peer review feedback or new results or analysis warrant substantial revisions to the initial preprint.

Related Procedures, Forms and Policies

- [Open Access to Publications Policy](#) (effective through 12/31/2025)
- [Immediate Access to Research Policy Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) on Hughes Hub](#)
- [Sharing Published Materials/Responsibility of HHMI authors](#)
- [Nonexclusive License Agreement for Open Access to Publications](#)

Contact

Additional information that may be helpful in complying with this policy can be found on Hughes Hub under Open Science. Any questions about HHMI's expectations relating to the Immediate Access to Research policy should be submitted to oapolicy@hhmi.org.

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