Nobel prize winners join calls to open research to all

More than 12,000 academics including two Nobel laureates have signed a petition urging the European commission to make publicly funded academic research available for free on the internet.

A year ago the EC published an independent report showing the price of scientific journals rose 200-300% beyond inflation between 1975 and 1995. The market, the study said, was worth up to $1.1bn (£5.6bn) a year.

The report recommended that the European Union should follow the lead of many research funders, both public and charity, and allow articles in scholarly journals by the EU be available to the public shortly after publication.

Bevin P. Engelward and Andrew Roberts, Open Access Liverpool.

The Guardian, 10, 2007

What is going on?

Pressure is growing for academic publishers to put the fruits of publicly funded labour on the web.

"Ours is the best of businesses: we get our raw material for free and our customers pay us a year in advance," joked the publisher of an academic journal to a university researcher.

Perhaps not for much longer. Momentum is growing for publicly funded published academic research to be available free on the internet. So-called "open access" would mean anyone could view an article in a scholarly journal shortly after it was published.

Susan Hough, London Mathematical Society journals, says: "If all publicly funded research was made available free on the internet, publishers would all go bust and no one would manage the peer review,

Open access and the price of knowledge

There are some things which are so self-evidently right and good that it's hard to imagine how anyone could disagree with you. The "open access" academic journal movement is one of those things. It is a no-brainer.