



Publishers Licensing Society

REF2014

Press release

PLS working with publishers and HE funding bodies to provide free electronic access to publications for the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

27 January 2012

For immediate release

The Publishers Licensing Society (PLS) is working in partnership with the UK's four higher education funding bodies in an innovative approach to facilitating secure electronic access to up to 200,000 journal articles and other research outputs for assessment by some 800 panellists across 36 disciplines in the course of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014.

The REF, managed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of the UK's four higher education funding bodies, is the new system for assessing the quality of research and is critically important to the higher education sector as from 2015, the four UK funding bodies will use the results to inform the allocation of research funding, currently around £2 billion per year.

Publishers contacted so far have responded very positively to this call for support by agreeing to provide electronic access to their publications and to waive their fees, so enabling the REF team to overcome the logistical and financial challenges of an assessment on this scale. The REF 2014 has the support of the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) and the Publishers Association (PA) and of publishers in the UK and abroad.

In addition, PLS has brokered a royalty free licence between the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA), on behalf of PLS, the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) and the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), and the REF team to allow the materials so accessed to be used as required for the purpose of the REF 2014 assessment.

Sarah Faulder, CEO of PLS said: "PLS is proud to be co-ordinating and enabling electronic access to such a vast selection of journals and other research outputs in the interests of encouraging excellence in the quality of UK research."

Graeme Rosenberg, REF Manager said: "We are immensely grateful for the support of all those involved in this partnership. The REF is a significant logistical exercise and free electronic access to publications is a vital part of ensuring that the exercise is a success."

Notes for editors

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the new UK-wide system for assessing the quality of research in higher Education Institutions (HEIs), replacing the previous Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). During that exercise PLS negotiated with 200 publishers to enable fee-waived electronic access to content. The RAE 2008 reviewed 215,000 outputs of which 160,000 were journal articles.

Website: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>

The REF submission system is a web-based data-entry system developed by the REF team. It requires institutions to submit relevant metadata to enable specific outputs to be sourced by the REF team. The downloaded outputs will be stored on a dedicated file server within the HEFCE local area network (LAN) which has a firewall which blocks unauthorised external users from accessing the outputs directly. Access to the files stored on the file server will be restricted to HEFCE's IT staff and the members of the REF team. Panel members will receive access to the output through an encrypted website which requires the user to identify themselves with a user name and password. Once the assessment process has been completed and the results published, all files will be destroyed.

The Publishers Licensing Society (PLS) represents the interests of publishers in the collective licensing of photocopying and digital copying. Together with the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS), PLS owns and directs the Copyright Licensing Agency and works in partnership with the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS). PLS is owned by the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, the Professional Publishers Association, and the Publishers Association.

Website: www.pls.org.uk

The Copyright Licensing Agency Limited (CLA) was set up in 1983 and is owned by ALCS and PLS to perform collective licensing on their behalf. It also has an agency agreement with DACS that enables it to license the copying of artistic works on their behalf. The CLA licenses organisations to copy and re-use extracts from print and digital publications on behalf of the copyright owners – authors, publishers and visual artists.

Website: www.cla.co.uk

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. In doing so, it aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice.

Website: www.hefce.ac.uk

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