

Government Agencies *Can* Pay Page Charges

The Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific Research and Development of the Federal Government has studied the legal propriety and the practical desirability of payment by government agencies of page charges on the research reports submitted by their employees to scientific journals. A subcommittee report, accepted by the full Committee and transmitted by Chairman Alan Astin to the agencies, says in general that government agencies may and should pay such charges. This is especially interesting to physicists because the page-charge plan was initiated by the American Physical Society and later enlarged and developed by the American Institute of Physics. The report is published herewith, not only because of its general interest but also for the specific information of agencies and their contractors.

THIS report has been drawn up on the basis of discussion at a meeting of the Panel on October 19, 1953, to discuss problems in dissemination of scientific information raised by costs of publication of the results of scientific research. This meeting was attended by the following: Helen Brownson (National Science Foundation); Preston Cloud (Geological Survey); Howard Ennes (Public Health Service); J. H. McCormack (Department of Agriculture); and Alberto F. Thompson (Atomic Energy Commission), chairman.

There was general agreement by all present that publication costs should be considered a part of research costs and that research administrators should budget for the costs of publication when research budgets are drawn up.

There was general agreement that the most satisfactory dissemination of many types of research results is through the established scientific and technical journals maintained by the learned societies, since the subscription lists of these reflect quite automatically the audience best qualified to utilize the research information effectively. There was recognition also of the importance of Government-supported monographs for publication of the results of major long-term research programs, and it was noted that Government-supported

scientific periodicals have made places for themselves in certain instances. No instances of problems of financial support for such Government publications were cited.

Recognizing the significant role of journals supported by private technical societies, the group discussed problems raised where these attempt to solve their fiscal problems by sale of reprints or by levying page charges.

It was noted that the Comptroller General has ruled (7 Comp. Gen. 221) that purchase of reprints is procurement of printing where the material in the reprints is "official" in character. Such procurement of printing requires a GPO waiver. It was further noted that agencies like the Department of Agriculture and the Atomic Energy Commission have obtained blanket waivers covering an entire fiscal year to relieve them of the burden of securing individual waivers for each specific set of reprints purchased. There was general agreement that no serious obstacles to publication of research results are raised by Government regulations relative to reprints at present, although the cost of reprints must be recognized as an item in the research budget.

With reference to page charges levied by privately supported journals, it was brought out that the Atomic Energy Commission and the National Science Founda-

tion already have approved written policy statements providing for payment of such charges. A list of journals levying such charges is attached to this report.¹ The Comptroller General's ruling B-114593 of May 5, 1953, in reply to a letter from Mrs. Hobby of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare of April 6, 1953, seems to answer most questions that might be raised relative to such statements of policy. Of particular interest in this connection is the Comptroller's reference to his rulings 27, Comp. Dec. 842, 3 Comp. Gen. 785, holding that, where the *entire* cost of printing is not borne by the United States, or the printing is not *exclusively* for the Government, printing is not required by Title 44 U. S. Code 111 to be performed in the Government Printing Office nor on waiver of the Joint Committee on Printing. It was pointed out in this connection that page costs presently being levied represent only a fraction of the total costs of publication in private journals, and that a large part of the costs of printing such journals is borne by the journal concerned, even where page charges are levied to defray part of the costs.

It was noted, however, that the Comptroller General's ruling draws heavily on language supporting dissemination of research results in the Public Health Service Basic Act and in its appropriation legislation. Presumably similar language exists in the corresponding legislation of most agencies which are heavily engaged in research activities.

With reference to policy statements defining the desirable scope of arrangements Government agencies may want to make for meeting page costs levied by privately supported journals, the following were mentioned:

1. The Atomic Energy Commission has adopted the requirement that page costs may be reimbursed where these are levied by journals on all authors impartially and where the journals are not operated for profit.
2. The National Science Foundation has adopted a policy which authorizes payment of page costs for publication in privately supported journals.
3. The Public Health Service has under development a policy providing for payment of *excess* page charges, but not for payment of normal page costs.
4. The Department of Agriculture has in an advanced stage of development a policy which will provide for the payment of page charges under a number of policy safeguards. The criteria under discussion by the Department of Agriculture include the following:
 - a. The article must be brief.
 - b. The article will be subject to administrative review for content and suitability of presentation.
 - c. The illustrations in the article will be kept to a minimum.

¹ In addition to the technical journals of the American Institute of Physics, the list includes the following publications: *Journal of Geophysical Research*; *Meteorology*; *Journal of the American Meteorological Society*; *Transactions of the American Mathematical Society*; *Proceedings of the American Mathematical Society*; *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*; *American Journal of Tropical Medicine*; *Growth*; *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*; *Analytical Chemistry*; *Proceedings of the American Society for Horticultural Science*; and *Journal of Animal Science*.

- d. The article must represent a real contribution to scientific knowledge.
- e. The article must not be prepared for the author's personal advancement.
- f. The article must be certified as of value in the public interest.
- g. Cost of the program must be kept to a minimum.

All of those present agreed that it should be established that the journal involved divorces its editorial control completely from fiscal considerations. Ability to pay page costs should not be allowed to become a prerequisite for publication. In general, it seems to be true at present that payment is not a prerequisite for publication where journals have levied page charges.

There was considerable discussion by the Panel of the implications of the adoption by the Government as a whole of a policy of reimbursing journals for their cost of publication. With a larger and larger fraction of research being supported by the Government, this could mean that many journals will be more and more dependent upon the Government for support. Such Government support is held by some to be a first step towards Government control. It was agreed that Government control of scientific publication would be most unfortunate. On the other hand, it must be recognized that journals such as the *Physical Review*, which is unable to meet its normal costs of publication, and has been forced to levy page costs, will carry the results of Government research as an act of charity if Government agencies will not bear page charges. It is questionable whether the Government wishes to depend on private charity for dissemination of the results of its research.

On the basis of its discussion, the Panel proposes that the Subcommittee recommend a statement by the Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific Research and Development along the following lines:

1. Government agencies should look upon publication costs as a necessary part of research costs.
2. The Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific Research and Development knows of no legal obstacle to prevent administrators from paying part of the cost of publication, such as page charges of research papers in privately supported scientific journals. It recommends such action whenever appropriate and necessary.
3. Steps should be taken to acquaint Government research administrators with the ICSRD position on this matter; with the policy statements already in effect, such as those of AEC, NSF, and PHS; and with the appropriate rulings of the Comptroller General.
4. Where the cost of publication in privately supported journals is partially borne at Government expense, research administrators should consider the establishment of certain policy safeguards such as the following:
 - a. The journals involved should not be operated for profit.
 - b. The charges levied by the journals should be in accordance with established policy which applies to non-Government as well as Government authors.