

# GAO calls for open access to education research

**Peter Suber**

Published November 20, 2003

## **Citation**

Suber, P. (n.d.). In *Open Access News*. Open Access News. <https://doi.org/10.63485/xq8rk-8pw02>

## **Copyright**

Copyright © Peter Suber 2003. Distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## Open Access News

The US Government Accounting Office ([GAO](#)) issued a [report](#) on November 14 recommending "that the Department of Education [[ED](#)] post the final technical reports of the research it funds on its Web site." Moreover, the ED "agreed with the recommendation to post research results on its Web site."

I'm still reading the report, but haven't yet found a reason why it singles out the ED from all the other federal agencies that fund research. Nor does the ED site have a press release on the subject. However, the GAO report does offer a helpful table of Agencies That Post Research Results on Their Web Sites (bottom of page 10). The table lists the Departments of Agriculture (annual and final technical reports), Defense (final technical reports), and Energy (final technical reports), the National Center for Environmental Research (annual and final report summaries), and NASA (abstract of final technical reports). Another table on page 8 summarizes the policies of eight federal funding agencies on "disseminating research results".

The primary purpose of the GAO report is to urge all federal agencies that fund research to agree on a common policy for preventing financial conflicts of interest. It recommends open access to education research partly on the merits (the usual good reasons, p. 16) and partly as one among other tools for reducing conflicts of interest. But if open access is good for the usual reasons, and will also help reduce such conflicts, then why limit it to ED-funded research? For that side of the story, see Eugene Russo, [Uniform conflict rules needed](#), *The Scientist*, November 19, 2003. According to Russo, the report authors hesitated to make a general call for open access when they saw the "minefield of concerns" it raised. Excerpt: "On the issue of open access to government-funded data, report authors had a very negative reaction from biomedical researchers at Emory University when they proposed posting all results on the World Wide Web, Cheston said. Among the major concerns were protecting patentable information, avoiding rejections from prestigious journals as a result of premature data release, and ensuring that findings have been properly vetted by peer review so that neither researchers nor the public are misled. The GAO did recommend, however, that the Department of Education post the final technical reports of the research it funds on its Web site."