

President's opening speech  
for the Berlin Open Access Conference  
to mark the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Declaration  
Berlin, 19 November 2013

State Secretary Schütte,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Anniversary Conference of the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities! The Harnack-House where the now almost legendary first Berlin Conference was held 10 years ago is currently being renovated. Thus I am all the more pleased that this anniversary conference can take place at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and I thank Günther Stock for making it possible! Besides the Max Planck Society and the German Research Foundation, this academy was one of the 19 science organisations that laid a foundation for the Open Access Movement in the sciences, in 2003. Today, more than 460 institutions around the globe have signed the Berlin Declaration – an impressive development indeed! They included several renowned signatories, such as Harvard University, Yad Vashem, and CERN.

Life just wouldn't be the same today without Open Access. Allow me to run through a little scenario with you or "Gedankenesperiment": Imagine a world where the history of the media is quite different. In most respects, this world looks just like our own. There is television and radio, computers with all their applications, and the Internet. There, everyone has online access to peer-reviewed, scholarly research publications for reading and productive re-use, not impeded by any financial, organisational, legal or

technical barriers. The only thing missing in this parallel world is that printing has not been invented. Until someone has the idea in the early 21st century to print characters on paper, and to make books and journals out of it. Could you imagine a Print Publishing Movement evolving among scholars as a result? Where they promote scientific journals that are published on paper and can only be purchased with expensive subscriptions? Pretty unlikely, if everyone was used to publishing their findings electronically...

For the scientific world, this form of publication has simply too many advantages: Publications are significantly more visible to communities and to the public. They are easily accessible, they allow the use of multi media. Furthermore, Open Access stimulates the development of new and more powerful search strategies like indexing, linking or text mining. This applies not only to publications, but to the underlying data as well. As a result, interdisciplinary research and international collaboration receive a strong boost from Open Access. Ultimately, society gains opportunities for innovation, because Open Access promotes the transfer of knowledge. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, practicing psychologists, and many more also benefit.

Already, most of us cannot imagine life without universally accessible knowledge on the Internet. Nevertheless: in the sciences and in the humanities, the great potential of electronic publications and free access to them is not yet fully exploited. Only around 10% of the research articles published each year is currently accessible to the public. This is all the more surprising when we consider that science usually breaks down boundaries, rather than setting them up. Why has Open Access not achieved greater dissemination by now? In part, it's surely down to habit. As a biologist I know that the human brain is very resistant to change. It takes time to form new synapses! We prefer things to remain just as they ever were. Scholars are no different when it comes to routine workflows,

such as submitting a publication. That's why the culture of scientific publishing as it's been practiced for decades has remained very constant. As with any established culture, change does not come easy – particularly as scientists fear they may be disadvantaged. Who would freely want to give up the chance of having an article in a renowned journal, especially when future research funding often depends on prestigious publications? Yet at the same time I do understand the publishers' position: As long as it's essential for a research library to buy a subscription to their journal, the publishing houses will naturally carry on using the familiar business model and restrict access to scientific publications. If Open Access is to gain the kind of currency in academia that we would wish it to have, the financing model must fundamentally change. Resources from the existing subscription models must be transferred into publication budgets, from which scientific papers will then be financed. This is a fundamental paradigm shift, which is far more expensive than one might think. The review processes of high quality journals accept only about 5 % of the submitted manuscripts for publication. Therefore processing fees in journals like Cell, Nature and Science are around 10,000 Dollars per paper! These additional expenses must be covered by public research funding.

Not surprising, the paradigm shift will still need time, and above all, continued support. In the Max Planck Society we have implemented numerous initiatives in recent years with the aim of making our scientists' findings more accessible. We now "self-publish" several Open Access publications, such as the Living Reviews journals<sup>1</sup> and the Max Planck Research Library's Edition Open Access<sup>2</sup>. And together in conjunction with the Wellcome Trust and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute we have launched a new journal called eLife – a project with extremely high academic standards which is well on its way as discussed by Marl

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.livingreviews.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.edition-open-access.de/>

Patterson in the Satellite conference. Moreover, together with other research institutions we have already entered into negotiations with publishers in the world – with some success, I might add – to get established top journals transformed into Open Access journals in their entirety. One example is the SCOAP<sup>3</sup> Consortium in high energy physics.

However, no institution alone will be able to get Open Access widely accepted on a lasting basis. That is why it's so important to pool the strengths of as many partners as possible. Here in Germany, for example, the Alliance of German Science Organisations has launched a common initiative for digital information, in 2008. At the European level, more than 50 Member Organisations of Science Europe have adopted the "Principles for the Transition to Open Access to Research Publications". Together we can coordinate our activities and act in unison. But it's also important to win over politicians and make the case for Open Access. Being the source of funding, policymakers can make Open Access a condition of any research grant: Indeed, this is exactly how Great Britain and the European Union put it when they made Open Access a general principle, from 2014 onwards. It is in policymakers' hands to design the legal framework in a way that makes Open Access significantly easier. Regrettably, our German political parties have not yet taken sufficiently far-reaching steps in this direction. We hope that the ongoing coalition negotiations will also lead to advancements in this area.

We will be discussing these and other policy options in the first session of this Anniversary Conference. The British Minister of State for Universities and Science, officials of government ministries from Germany and France as well as a representative of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition from the US will present and discuss their political agenda. Vicepresident Kroes unfortunately had to have her foot operated today and thus could not come. Her speech will be read by Carl Christian Buhr. David Willetts had an emergency meeting today and will deliver his

speech tomorrow at 11:15 am. In the second session, scientists from Germany, UK and Belgium and the British technology writer Glyn Moody will be depicting where we currently stand in the Open Access Movement.

Tomorrow we will broaden the perspective and take a global look at models of how Open Access can be realised. The subsequent session concerns the future challenges, first and foremost the question of how Open Access can become the permanent standard in science. Our speakers from the European Research Council, from Stanford and from Arizona State University will address visionary themes and will identify topics and research communities which need more attention in the future. There will also be a talk by young scientists. Naturally, as digital natives they have different expectations of electronic publishing than those of our fellow scientists who wrote their first research paper with the typewriter. They also took part in the Satellite Conference, which we organised for the first time in the run-up to our Anniversary Conference. We did this because the change in the publication culture presents particular challenges to students and early stage researchers. At the same time, the satellite conference reflected the importance of students and early stage researchers as the next generation of scholars and the impact these groups are already having in opening up scholarly communication.

This year's Berlin Conference will come to a close with a dialog between Cameron Neylon from the Public Library of Science and Robert Schlögl, Director at the Fritz Haber Institute of the Max Planck Society. They will summarise the many diverse aspects of the Conference and will also take stock - maybe not without controversy. I would also like to invite you all to our reception and the Evening lecture, tonight. My gratitude goes to the President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Professor Parzinger, who generously offered to host this event at the Bode Museum.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a fascinating and multi-faceted agenda ahead of us for the 10th anniversary! I would like to thank the chairpersons of the Program Committee: Jürgen Renn, Director at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, and Bernard Schutz, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics, as well as all the members of the Program Committee and the Advisory Committee. Thank you so much for your efforts which have resulted in this impressive program!

I trust that you will all gain some new insights into the possibilities presented by Open Access, and I hope that the exchange of opinions proves stimulating. I am sure that today and tomorrow will see us setting new milestones for the next 10 years!