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'Quality and Publishing': a report on the 'Academic Publishing in Europe' conference held in Berlin, 22-23 January 2008

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Since its first conference in 2006, "Academic Publishing in Europe" (APE) has become a major event for STI professionals in Europe. Under the auspices of the EU Research Directorate-General, the 2008 conference took place in the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science, at the famous "Gendarmenmarkt" in the historical centre of Berlin near the Humboldt University.

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The particular character of this international conference may best be described in the words of its president, Arnoud de Kemp, former director at Springer publishers and chairman of EUSIDC: "(APE) supports awareness and a better understanding of academic publishing by offering a forum for presentations by and discussions between all stakeholders".

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About 230 professionals from 15 countries, in particular from Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom attended and exchanged experiences, best practices, analyses and views on "Quality & Publishing", the title of this year's conference. The audience was wide-ranging, half of whom work in the publishing industry (Elsevier, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell etc.) and their associations (STM, Börsenverein), 15% were from academic institutions (Max Planck Society, CERN, different universities), the other 35% came from libraries and STI centres, subscriptions agencies etc. For the organiser, 2008 was a conference with a record attendance and a long waiting list.

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The full conference was preceded by an education and training course for younger academic publishers with special tutorials and workshops on authors' and users' experiences, outsourcing, organisation skills and human resource management. (21 January 2009).

The program of the APE 2008 conference was rich and varied: on the agenda were four keynotes, four sessions with 13 communications, four panels with 22 participants and a round table on university press and e-books in the social sciences and humanities. Much time was left for discussion, questions and comments.

The four keynotes may give an idea of the lively debate on experiences, projects, insights and ideas. The first was given by Rolf-Dieter Heuer, research director of the German DESY and future Director General of CERN, on innovation in scholarly communication. The high-energy physics (HEP) community is leading in the movement for open access (OA) to scientific information. Their actual challenge is how to publish 5-7,000 articles per year (more than the half of all HEP publications) in OA journals. In the SCOAP3 project, they started

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fund rising for negotiations with Elsevier, Springer, APS and IOP; the basic price is €1,500 per article.

His argument in favour of open access was endorsed by the second keynote speaker, Arne Richter from the European Geosciences Union (EGU), a learned society that developed its own OA business model based on service charges for work flow management and peer review.

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The third keynote held by Michael Mabe from the STM association provided a well documented overview on the STM publishing market with precise figures on journals (23,000, +3,4% per year), articles (1,5m, +3% per year), authors (1m per year), readers (10m reading up to 250-300 articles per year), access to full text (1,5 billions downloads per year) and publishers (2,000 – 54% learned societies, 33% commercial publishers, 13% university press). According to Mabe, delivery of academic information will profoundly change in the next 10 to 20 years, moving to mobiles, handhelds, wifi etc., and the major questions will be the sustainability of new business models and the effect of mandatory OA policies.

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The last keynote (Rudi Schmiede from the Darmstadt University of Technology) was centred on future features of academic publishing e.g. in particular the inclusion of primary data, the move from static documents to dynamic entities and the automation of research procedures and operations. Like Mabe, he insisted on the need for knowledge of the user characteristics and behaviour of scientific researchers, and he added his conviction that their dependency on STI services (libraries etc.) will continue.

The sessions covered peer review and quality, economic aspects of publishing (“All about money”), innovation and enabling technologies, and on new models, tools and contents. There is not enough space to present them all. So just some highlights from different communications will have to suffice:

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There seems to be no valuable or acceptable alternative to peer review. The question is rather how to increase its quality assurance function, how to improve the speed of work flow, how to adapt it to the new collaborative tools and practices (Web 2.0), how also to find incentives that motivate scientists to contribute as peer reviewers.

The STI publishing market and the value chain of academic publishing was the subject of a controversial debate; especially Alexis Walckiers’s economic study on competition between for-profit and not-for-profit publishers (based on an EU report) which raised many comments from publishers. His critiques of pricing structures and market dysfunctions were supported by a paper by Deirdre Furlong from the European Commission that emphasized the EU support for OA journals and author-pays business models.

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One of the key actors in the publishing world is, without doubt, the scientific community itself with its specific research behaviours and communication channels and tools. In spite of the globalizing and levelling tendency of technologies, their application should be linked to the particularities of communities, learned societies and research organisations (journals, peer review procedures, repositories for documents and data etc.). The best examples are the HEP and the geosciences communities cited above; other examples came from the Max Planck Society. There is a kind of new awareness transposing Henry Oldenbourg’s fundamental principles of an academic journal into the digital era.

The preservation and dissemination of primary research data sets is a major challenge for scientific communities and the publishing industry. The challenge is both economic (who invests in new tools, who pays for recording and long term archiving etc.) and technological (how to preserve, how to link to publications, how to make data available and accessible etc.). Laurent Romary from the Max Planck Society presented a new form of academic publication in Linguistics called “Living Sources”, a data journal with peer reviewed primary lexical data meant to facilitate preservation of research results, protect copyright, increase interoperability of tools and citability of data.

Did anybody speak about interlending and document supply? They were not on the APE 2008 agenda and nobody explicitly mentioned them. Nevertheless, in a panel discussion Nol Verhagen (Amsterdam university library) and Wolfram Neubauer (Zürich ETH library) expressed their belief that the academic library will carry on its intermediary role in the new digital environment, with its traditional functions of acquisition, preservation and dissemination of STI. Yet, neither they nor Ann Okerson explained how these traditional functions would be integrated with the global digital environment, nor did A. Okerson (Yale university library); however they underlined the importance of creating and satisfying large audiences and keeping in touch and converging with the rapidly changing academic community.

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On the other hand, in a session on innovation Fiona Bennett (Oxford University Press) and Jens Bammel (International Publishers Association) presented the new “Automated Content Access Protocol” (ACAP). This protocol allows free, flexible and universal communication for all content users through machine readable information about access and content use policies for all search engines, facilitating digital rights management without additional technical devices or restrictions. The pilot phase of the ACAP initiative (cf. <http://www.the-acap.org>) is nearly complete, and the top three search engines have already shown interest. The impact on traditional academic publishing, article economy and document supply will need to be addressed and monitored in the next future.

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- Supprimé : – Joachim – I understand that this protocol is a way of managing the way in which content can be used when discovered through a search engine – so doesn't it facilitate digital rights management?.)

The PowerPoint presentations and some photographs are available on the APE web site at <http://www.ape2008.eu>. The papers of the proceedings will be published in a special open access issue of the journal, *Information Services and Use*.

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The APE 2009 conference will take place at Berlin, 20-21 January 2009, on “The Impact of Publishing”. Again, there will be an Education and Training Course for younger academic publishers just before the full conference, the 19 January 2009.

The last panel of this year’s conference addressed a list of forthcoming topics: the development of academic teaching and research environment, the differences between scientific communities, standards and interoperability, the integration of different kinds of information, the usage statistics of OA journals and the influence of governmental STI policies on academic publishing, especially with regards to national OA strategies.

During the conference, E. Fredriksson (IOS Press) and A. de Kemp announced a proposal for an EU project on Academic Publishing in the European Research Area (APER) that aims at a “better understanding of scholarly communication through value-added publishing and the increasingly important role of relevant information in science and society, with special emphasis on linguistic barriers”. APERA will “monitor and analyze the various e-publishing initiatives and developments throughout Europe, supported by a database, a peer reviewed

open access journal, hearings and workshops”. The proposal, supported by public and private organisations from various EU countries, will be submitted to the European Commission in March.

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