

## Welcome and Opening Addresses

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# Academic publishing is electronic publishing

Presented by Derk Haank

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Report from the editors

Derk Haank began by saying that he wanted to keep his presentation simple and would make only a few statements. The first of these was to say that, although it might be stating the obvious, academic publishing is electronic publishing. It has been remarkable how quickly things have progressed since the invention of the Web, and an EC study recently recognised that the revolution in electronic publishing has had a significant impact on the landscape of academic publishing. Haank sees this as a good development, as previous evaluations had compared the new, bright electronic future with the current state – and the current state was that of 1995 when we were at the end of the serials crisis with ever higher unit prices for single journals. Much has changed and improved since then, and though there is a lot more change to come what can be seen now is a lot better than before, when only paper was used.

According to Haank there can be no debate as to whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. It is definitely half-full. This is not because he is a born optimist, but because we are just at the beginning. In fact he hopes it's only a quarter full, because that would mean there is a lot more to come. We must move beyond the present position, and we will move beyond it. There is no shortage of thinkers who can describe the new frontiers. Haank has worked amongst them for the last 20 years. There are a lot of people who can describe how things will look in ten years' time, but there are actually very few people who can manage the migration to fully working databases. It has been no mean task to get the basic migration done, and we are almost there. Journal migration is now complete. It was a lot of work, but we can all take some credit, academic publishers and funding institutes, for having done this job so quickly, for it is only ten years since we started.

All journals must by now be available, somehow, somewhere, electronically. They can also communicate with each other, because electronic publishing is mainly about linking and not just about making a single publication available. A great job has been done in that respect. Haank is not preparing for his retirement speech, looking backwards. There are many more years to come because there is more work to do. He feels it is logical that we all started with journals, but the traditional book has fallen behind. Many of us are working towards, and have been successful in, getting the major reference works available online and getting them connected, but most of the books are not yet online, let alone being connected. And this is probably the next stage we should concentrate on – we certainly will concentrate on. This might not be technologically exiting. It is much more exciting to think of new technology to add

to what we already have, but Haank is of the opinion that we would serve the scientific community more by making books available online and connecting them than by adding to, enhancing and advancing the technology we already use. There is a lot of debate on new technology, what else we could be doing, but as long as we don't have all the existing material available at the fingertips of everybody, we should concentrate on making that available before we move on. This is no longer a technology issue. It is very interesting to see what the new technology brings and what will happen in the years to come, but using existing technology we could do a better job in disclosing all the information that is already available – and not just leave it to the Googles of this world.

The end picture is now becoming clearer, particularly with journal migration completed. Some people will continue to debate the business model, but Haank is slightly more optimistic about that aspect, and thinks we have moved on a lot. We are all experimenting with business models, whether it is open access, open choice or giving it away for free. We are experimenting but an end picture is already emerging. We are converging on something, the debate is extreme. We are all moving towards a combination of databases. The emphasis on individual journals is gone. Now we all offer the journals as a part of a bigger database. We try to make it attractive for professional users to buy as much as possible from that database, and that at the same time.

Haank has, for the last ten years, been working towards connecting everybody in the world with an interest in the content that is included in their database. He calls this relevant access. That is the model, the vision they have been working towards, at the same time using technology to stimulate repositories, because he sees no harm in individuals having their own repository to wave their flag, or to see what Joe Blogs did in the last 35 years. Two articles is probably the average score, but there should also be repositories for more active researchers. If he were running a university, or Max Planck like society, he would want his own repository, just as a showcase of activities, and so that people who were interested in the activities of the institution would have no difficulty in seeing that by looking at the repository. And if only we can encourage some kind of understanding that these repositories are developed to give wider access to the general public, and to show how funds have been spent, and that their main intent is not to destroy the commercial or the business model itself, then he thinks we can live in parallel for many more years.

The ideal world for the professional through these database licences would be immediate access, probably with some delay or some limitation. Everything would be available somewhere in the world in a repository, either with the author or the institute. Haank can see no harm in that, and would like to see more and more of these bases installed. He took the opportunity to make one remark to Dr. Nicole Dewandre of the EC on the report, welcoming the report because it is a significant step in describing how much has already changed. But more could be done.

Haank then moved on to discuss 'bundling'. He objects strongly to the use of the word, because 'bundling' is completely unacceptable. Because bundling means you can only buy product A if you also buy product B – and that is unacceptable. That is using your market power to force something down the throat of the customer when he does not want it, but because he wants one element very badly he has no choice but to pay for the other as well. Haank said that as far as he knows there is no publisher who uses that model. There was one person in the room, he thought, who once used that model – but that was only because of technological limitations ten years ago, and since then we have all moved on a lot. You can now buy any piece of scientific material you want; you can buy it by the article, you can buy it by the journal, by subject collection or by the whole database. This is the reality today, and it has nothing to do with bundling. It may be offering volume discount: the more you buy, the lower the unit price becomes,

that is the reality. You might wish to comment on that system, that is a different matter, but it is definitely not bundling!

Finishing on a positive note, on the subject of the conference, Haank wanted to say that it is important to sit together and talk about the position that has been reached. So far so good, he felt it was positive. Maybe it is also a sign that we are getting there. But sometimes these gatherings have the tendency to concentrate too much on what is not yet right, instead of celebrating what has been achieved. Maybe after ten years, there is also a reason to celebrate occasionally. So he asked the conference to also celebrate, in the next two days, what has been achieved in the last ten years. And also to get excited about what's to come, because, despite what he had said, he did not want to be portrayed as somebody who is only interested in books and journals being made electronically available. He was probably as excited as anyone about the new technology, about what the new world will look like in another ten years, but he wants to see first things first. And excitement should not be at the expense of the pure hard work of making everything available electronically in a basic format.

A final note came from the audience, raising the issue of VAT. If there had not been a VAT issue, most of our customers would have opted for the electronic way even more quickly than they have done. It is remarkable that despite the e-limitation because of VAT, for the average academic publisher, a third of their customers now have e-only. Despite the fact that they are being penalised, they manage to overlook that disadvantage.