

Welcome

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German Association of Publishers and Booksellers

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Colleagues,

European dialogue on the future of publishing is hugely important. The intense discussions last year at what was the first-ever conference on “Academic Publishing in Europe” made this obvious. Professionals from libraries, publishing companies, academic institutions and international associations debated their sometimes very different perspectives, requirements and views, exchanging information and know-how. There has been a big demand for the conference this year too – I am delighted that you are all here today. You are very welcome!

As chair of the Publishers Committee within the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels – Germany’s association of booksellers, publishers and the intermediate book trade, – and as a publisher of scientific publications, I am confronted daily by the way in which technological options are changing our industry. Shifting patterns in the enquiry and buying behaviour of customers affect us as publishers just as much as do changes in marketing methods among our competitor publishing companies (think open access), or the use of technical possibilities by university teachers, libraries, academics and students.

In Germany, however, the situation facing academic publishing is also changing because the politicians are seeking to drastically restructure the background conditions in a way that is unreasonable for us as publishers. This is why we have been involved in intense discussions since the beginning of last year with the education minister, Annette Schavan, who is also patron of this event. At the suggestion of Ms Schavan, we are working with representatives from libraries and academic institutions in an effort to develop innovative concepts that demonstrate free enterprise solutions for cooperation between publishing companies, libraries and institutes in the context of digitisation, so that the legislator does not have to intervene with rules and regulations in a system that will regulate itself.

I am very pleased that at the end of last year, we managed to agree with the German Library Association on a joint statement which makes it clear that, for all our conflicting views, we are above all united by our interest in and love of text, of knowledge and of books. So I hope that during this conference too, we never lose sight of the originators, the authors.

German publishers normally operate within a limited and protected linguistic sphere. But in the STM sector, globalisation has long since caught up with us. What is new, however, is that thanks to the Internet, the relationship to publications and publishing in general has changed. Anyone and everyone can write publications and make them available openly on the net. This is why we publishers must increasingly concern ourselves with securing the quality of contents, with protecting the intellectual property of our authors, with selecting knowledge and making it easy to find. Google shows us the way when it comes to searching and finding, but a great many improvements are still needed in order for texts and also illustrations and photos to be really well and meaningfully structured on the Internet, so that they are

found quickly, can be read and used to learn and work with. This, not least of all, is one of the topics at this conference.

In this context, an important project for the Börsenverein has been the “Volltextsuche online” – “Full-text Search Online” platform which will give Börsenverein members the opportunity to place digitised versions of full texts on a shared website platform and make the texts available to search and find. The project has been very positively welcomed, not just by publishers and booksellers in Germany, but by other European associations as well.

You are all aware of the efforts being made by the European Commission to make a digital library accessible to readers throughout Europe, with all available information contents and European texts. We certainly welcome and support these efforts. But we would also like to ensure that one aspect is always taken into account in all such initiatives: the protection of copyright must make up the unalterable basis of all planning. For a publishing company, the marketing of its texts are at the forefront, and the company has to see to it that its authors’ rights are protected. Over the course of the next two days, we will certainly be discussing in detail the forms that texts may take and the formats in which they can be published or made accessible, the various business models behind this and the options available to academic publishing.

I wish us all many new insights and that we enjoy ourselves!