

16th Berlin Open Access Conference

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Welcome & Opening, Conference Co-Chair

Ulrich Pöschl, Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, Mainz, Germany

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here at the Harnack Haus and jointly follow up on the developments since the Berlin Declaration on Open Access some twenty years ago.

I would like to thank Martin Stratmann as well as the former Max Planck President Peter Gruss for the strong personal and institutional support they provided for the development of Open Access throughout the past decades, and I would also like to thank all participants and OA supporters for their individual and institutional contributions.

Some of us have already participated in the 1st Berlin OA Conference in the year 2003, and we know that it has been a long way from there, that a lot has been achieved, and that a lot remains to be done yet to fully establish and utilize Open Access for the benefit of humanity worldwide.

Here, I would like to quote the OA2020 Expression of Interest that arose from the 12th Berlin OA Conference in the year 2015:

“To gain the full benefits of OA and enable a smooth, swift and scholarly oriented transition, the existing corpus of scholarly journals should be converted from subscription to open access. ... At the same time, we continue to support new and improved forms of OA publishing.”

From my perspective as an active researcher and university professor, this dualism of “as-well-as”, and not “either-or”, is still a key message for our endeavor and for this conference:

- We need top-down approaches to achieve large-scale progress as well as bottom-up initiatives to maintain scholarly diversity.

- We need appropriate transformative agreements with traditional publishers to achieve an efficient conversion of subscription journals that are still important for some communities, and we also need to liberate and provide funds for proper OA publishers and new publishing platforms to maintain competition and innovation.
- Most importantly, we have to uphold and improve scholarly quality assurance, evaluation, and self-regulation. For this purpose, we need to maintain functioning elements of traditional peer review and add advances such as open review, interactive discussion, and article level metrics that are traceable, transparent, and inclusive for the global scientific community and society at large.

Indeed, transcending hidden peer review and citation counting oligopolies by transparent forms of quality assurance that can be followed, reproduced, and refined by everybody around the world is among the main reasons why we need full and immediate open access to scholarly research publications.

In times of growing irrationality, alternative facts, postfactual discussions, and fake news, it seems ever more important to openly show and share the basis, methods, and rigor of the scientific discourse and critical rationalism as a role model and reference for societal exchange, decision making, and evolution.

I hope that we can follow up on these and related issues in the course of this conference. For now, let me just thank you again for joining us and hand over to my colleague Gerard Meijer.