

## Conclusions and Recommendations

UNICA SEMINAR  
VIENNA, NOVEMBER 25/26, 2004

### 1. Summary

On the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> November 2004, the UNICA network organisation held its second seminar on **scholarly communication** entitled *Fair publishing and fair reading*. Hosted by the Universität Wien and chaired by Prof. Devroey, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, and Director of the Libraries of Université Libre de Bruxelles, the seminar was attended by 40 head librarians and academic decision makers from 20 UNICA member universities.

The programme aimed to present some recent developments as a follow up of issues raised in the first seminar held in Madrid in 2002. The first session was devoted to **the relation between scholarly publications, research assessment and research policies**. Georg Winckler, Rector of the University of Vienna, underlined the impact of publications on the career of individuals, on the development of scientific field research, and on the distribution of funding. He called upon policy recommendations to enhance publication-based research assessment, especially regarding young scientists, new and creative work and language barriers. For Wolfgang Glänzel, bibliometrics proves useful for research policy but must be handled with caution; the factors influencing publication by authors, such as the different practices in the different scientific fields, must be taken into account.

The second session addressed **the economics of scholarly publication**. Helmut Hartmann evoked the savings and the increased electronic journal access gained through the early consortia, but stressed the need for libraries now to regain control of their journal subscriptions. Although some new models allow for more flexibility in journal choice, they still impose the publisher's overall turnover to be maintained and annually indexed, thereby withholding an increasing proportion from the libraries budget. Yves Dumont then briefly introduced the study launched by the EU DG Research on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets in Europe, presented by the next two speakers: Marc Ivaldi sketched out the database built for the pilot study on the economic modelling of the market behaviour, and Mathias Dewatripont presented some facts about the market based on the case of economics journals and underlined the unnecessary bundling of the certification and the dissemination of research results into journal publication.

In the third session, three experiences with **digital repositories** in Unica universities were presented; with edoc<sup>1</sup>, the document and publication repository of Humboldt-University Berlin, Suzanne Dobratz insisted on the use of standards and quality control for such servers so that they can be networked. Herbert Hrachovec took a philosopher's look on the slow adoption of open archives by authors, in relation with the paradigmatic changes brought by electronic information in terms of time, granularity, ownership and user interaction. Miha Peternel provided a concrete example of the installation and running of ePrints.FRI<sup>2</sup>, the repository of the Faculty of Computer and Information Science of the University of Ljubljana.

The last session addressed the issues of **copyright** and of **open access**. Rather than a fight for copyright, Sijbolt Noorda advocated balanced rights to be allotted to all stakeholders in the scholarly communication process in order to maximise access on an international basis and at a fair price. This is the goal of the Zwolle group<sup>3</sup>. Finally, Jean-Claude Guédon explained the two approaches to open access: open access journals and self-archiving in open archives or repositories. He argued for open

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<sup>1</sup> <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de>

<sup>2</sup> <http://eprints.fri.uni-lj.si>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.surf.nl/copyright/>

access as a better infrastructure for science and illustrated the added-value services that can be built on top of institutional repositories such as quality control, top research collections or citation analysis.

The speakers' abstracts and presentations are available on the UNICA website:  
<http://www.ulb.ac.be/unica>

Each plenary conference session was followed by a 50 minutes discussion in two parallel working groups, where participants shared experience, raised questions and provided ideas on the topics addressed by the speakers. The conferences and the discussions brought a useful insight into the evolution of scholarly communication and into the role of all the actors in this changing context.

The participants wished the UNICA network organisation to act as a lever to **disseminate the conclusions and the recommendations of the seminar** towards the academic authorities of the UNICA universities and towards the European Union commission. The member universities should contribute to disseminate the conclusions in their country towards their national governmental and public research funding bodies.

## 2. Conclusions

The following conclusions highlight the important and recurrent issues that have been raised by the speakers and by the participants throughout the seminar, during the plenary sessions as well as in the working groups.

There was a major concern about **how research results are assessed** and **how publications are certified**. Regarding research assessment, though bibliometrics proves useful for research policy, it must be handled with caution; citations provide a measure of information use and a measure of quality which are interrelated and can lead to distortion. All the factors influencing publication and citation impact must be taken into account: the two "cultures" arising from traditions and approaches being different across disciplines; the specificity of Europe due to its language diversity that introduces a barrier to readership; and the bias provided by English as an international communication language. There was a strong feeling that there is a need to set up indicators other than the journal impact factor, that account for national citation patterns, publications in open access journals and other types of publications such as books, conference proceedings, theses etc.

Regarding publication, it was pointed that there is no necessary relation between dissemination and certification. The bundling of the two functions into journal publication has led to a proliferation of publications that are not sought to be read by the researchers. Moreover peer review should not be regarded as the only form of validation. The certification process should be investigated more thoroughly and alternative validation procedures should be tested.

Institutional and subject-based **repositories** (or "Open Archives") were also evoked throughout the seminar. Both types were felt to be needed, the actual implementation depending on the opportunities, on the organisational structure of the institutions and on the traditions and expectations of the scholarly community in each discipline. Repositories appear to fit in the evolving scholarly communication process, potentially providing an effective public relations tool for the universities and the authors to produce institutional or individual bibliographies, store all scientific documents and publications. They form the database on which added-value services can be developed such as bibliometric analysis tools, certification services, printing on demand. Networking the repositories and providing access through national and European portals will enhance their visibility while respecting their linguistic specificities.

**Copyright** also came out as a major concern throughout the sessions. Contracts between institutions and authors, and between publishers and authors are not transparent. The actors have differing, though not contradictory, interests that need to be reconciled through a balanced allocation of rights that really serves the scientific community interests and the advancement of science.

The debates highlighted a holistic view of the scholarly communication process and raised key issues, inciting **all the actors to rethink their role** and reposition themselves along the continuum from validation through publishing, to making available and archiving. There is a role for **institutions and funding bodies** to support the development of institutional repositories, to facilitate their researchers

to deposit their publications in open archives, to provide advice on intellectual property issues, to investigate new forms of validation and free academics from publisher pressure. There is a collaborative role for **libraries** to set up partnerships and alliances with **university publishers and learned societies** to develop electronic publishing activities, for instance to make available online titles that are no longer reprinted, together with a print-on-demand service.

The general feeling was certainly that changes in scholarly communication are best brought into effect through building on existing structures and methods in a series of incremental, perhaps small, steps, rather than by trying to invent a completely new system from scratch.

### 3. Recommendations

Recommendations provide propositions of concrete support actions to be engaged by the UNICA member universities to meet the changing scholarly communication environment:

**UNICA academic authorities** are encouraged to:

Support a common research effort about the issue of **validation and certification of scientific research results** at all levels: local (publication, thesis), national (quality assessment) and international (ranking of universities). Notably,

- Encourage discussion regarding the development of a European citation database for publications arising from research conducted within European universities.
- Coordinate the research effort in the Unica network and raise the issue to other European and international academic and research organisations

Promote a multi-national view of **institutional or subject repositories** of documents and publications. Notably,

- Rely on existing Unica thematic network to create thematic repositories that meet the researchers' real interests and goals.
- Link the repositories managed by Unica member universities through the Unica network
- Support further investigation into mechanisms to ensure the quality of content in institutional or subject repositories

Adopt **copyright policies** that support authors in retaining rights of value to the academic community and that support the deposit of pre-prints or post-prints of journal articles in open institutional or subject repositories

Rethink **electronic publishing** in universities in the context of the whole scholarly communication process. Notably,

- Meet the need of the academic community to be educated and trained in e-publishing (e-writing, metadata, intellectual property rights issues)
- Rethink the role of university publisher or press to join with other departments for a better coordination of electronic publishing activities in the universities

In general the UNICA network is encouraged to **coordinate efforts** to

Collect and promote good practices for scholarly communication process

Lobby funding agencies to ensure that publicly-funded research is publicly available

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