



Open Access Ambassadors Conference 2019 Report

General information

56 members of PhDnet, mainly from the BMS section (23), came to Berlin for the 2nd OAA Conference jointly held by PhDnet and MPDL on December 10-11, 2019 at the Harnack House. 18 ECRs were from the GSHS and 15 from the CPTS. With Bernadette Lessel there was also a representative of the PostDocNet present. In total were 41 MPIs represented.

The conference program comprises both talks by external speakers (see »Talks«) as well as interactive workshops split up by sections (see »Workshops«). Right after the conference a short survey was conducted asking for both feedback on the conference and suggestions for future events (see »Feedback«).

A plain OAA toolkit was distributed before the conference to the participants and they were asked to fill in the details with the information given during the talks and workshops.

Talks

Veronique de Herde

Veronique de Herde gave an introduction to open methodology in science, especially the advantages of FAIR data (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) and Open Access. She also encouraged the OAAs to convince their supervisors of supporting open science and named several online sources for further information on these topics.

Corina Logan

Driven by own experience, Corina Logan made a critical analysis of typical scholarly workflows and provided support for several campaigns to enhance the scholarly exchange. She explained the advantages of direct communication between peers and innovative approaches for academic publishing. Corina Logan has also proven in her Grackle Project that using OS tools actually makes research better and faster.

Sandra Vengadasalam

In her talk, Sandra Vengadasalam gave a rough overview of the Max Planck Digital Library (MPDL) and the services provided by its various teams, e.g. information provision via central content licensing or innovative tools to support scientists in their workflows. She explained strategic initiatives, like Projekt DEAL, and named future activities, for example focusing on author services and openness.

Noémie Aubert Bonn

In her research, Noémie Aubert Bonn focuses on the current research assessments and their influence on the integrity and quality of research. In her talk, she gave an overview of her research and also addressed the phenomenon of many leaving academia and was pleading for continuity to change the system from the inside.

Kai Geschuhn/Ana Valente

Kai Geschuhn and Ana Valente took the audience through a short history of academic publishing, focusing on the origins of the global journals market and how it evolved to what we know it to be nowadays. This was followed by a brief overview of the current landscape of scholarly publishing, with particular attention devoted to the open access movement, its impact on the market, and the reasons why the Max Planck Society and MPDL are invested in providing OA publishing to German researchers. They wrapped up the talk by highlighting the role of open access as a catalyst for innovation in the publishing sphere.

Colleen Campbell

Colleen Campbell highlighted the tensions currently at play in the scholarly publishing landscape that have prohibited an open access mode of disseminating research results to be implemented on a large scale. She also outlined the leverage that different stakeholder groups—researchers, funders, institutions—hold to accelerate the transition of scholarly journals to open access. She further explained the key OA2020 strategy of “transformative agreements” negotiated by libraries under which their former subscription funds are repurposed to support open access publishing of articles by authors (example: Projekt DEAL and MPDL agreements with major publishers such as Wiley, Springer Nature, ACS and more).

Georg Botz

During his talk, Georg Botz described the position of the Max Planck Society towards Open Access by naming the different regulations and rules, such as the “Rules of Good Scientific Practice”. He also explained the key role the MPS played by initiating the “Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities” back in 2003 as well as the current campaigns towards a large scale OA transformation, e.g. OA2020.

Gerard Meijer

In his presentation about transformative agreements, Gerard Meijer reflected on dissemination as an integral part of research and asserted that considerations for dissemination should be included in the grant application. He also pointed out the many advantages of an Open Access publishing world, especially the increase in transparency and the higher service orientation.

Mark Patterson

In his last talk given as executive director of “eLife”, Mark Patterson gave an overview of innovative approaches within scholarly publishing, for example preprint reviews or reproducible documents by eLife, as well as campaigns for cultural changes, e.g. DORA. He also encouraged early career researchers to act as reviewers for journals as they are highly motivated and very thorough in their analysis.

Wolfgang Huang

Wolfgang Huang explained the work of the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings which also encompasses outreach to society as well as, from time to time, authoring highly formative declarations, e.g. on climate change. Prompted by Elizabeth Blackburn, in the summer of 2019 they initiated the Lindau Declaration 2020 on Sustainable Cooperative Open Science. The Declaration, which is still open for discussion, aims to give clear guidelines that young researchers can use in their daily scholarly work.

Workshops

GSHS

In a lively discussion, the GSHS group reflected on openness in the scholarly environment and why and how to achieve it. While collecting numerous approaches and tools (e.g. Github, Open Science Framework (OSF)) the statement “Openness is restricted by the openness of people’s minds” illustrated the main obstacle that ECRs in particular are facing within their institute when promoting openness. Nevertheless, they all see openness as the major aim because “it is the future”.

CPTS

In a controversial discussion about workflows, the CPTS group stated that the standard published article is not sufficient anymore and that new formats, like the ones promoted by eLife, need to be developed. On a more practical level, it was suggested that ECRs learn from people with more experience in OA Publishing and in using Open Science tools, e.g. Latex. The ambassadors should focus on spreading information with a focus on explaining why and how adopting open science practices is a good idea. It was suggested to ask peers or directors about their questions to gain good discussion topics.

BMS

Being the largest group, the BMS group came up with multiple suggestions concerning innovative research workflows. Apart from naming several technical tools (e.g. vlogs, labwiki, SciFlow), group members suggested advocating for more cross-section or multi-institute conferences. It was also stated that support for more openness should come from a higher level which can be achieved, e.g. by including openness in the on-boarding program for new directors.

Feedback

The overall feedback from the survey conducted right after the conference was quite good (4,08/5,00). Nevertheless, some participants suggested that future workshop groupings should be organized around data needs (i.e. by the quantity of data managed in their research) and that less focus should be given to the presentation of tools (which may or may not be relevant to a specific field of research) and more focus be given to the actual motivations and benefits of open access and open science.

Nevertheless, many stated that during the two days they learned a lot about (open) technical tools which they can use in their scholarly workflows.

Several suggested that the MPS libraries should be further involved and they specifically asked for more information about legal issues around copyright.

Many pleaded for a continuous exchange between PhDnet, MPDL and the ambassadors on a large scale as well as with smaller groups. They asked for other meetings as well as communication platforms, e.g. a blog about “hands-on OS and OA” or subject-specific communication channels. They also asked for help involving directors or their supervisors, e.g. by handing out two editions of the toolkit, one for peers and one for higher-levels to give “lightning talks”. They would like to have some kind of official recognition for their work as an ambassador, like a badge or sign for their commitment.

Outlook

As a follow-up, the participants will be provided with a comprehensive toolkit (deck of slides) based on the one provided before the conference. The aim is to have elaborate materials to use for further reading, discussion rounds and presentations at their institutes.

As the conference was such a success, there are plans for a follow up on a regular basis, also possible on a regional level or field-related. It will be discussed to involve higher levels in the hierarchy for the next large event.