

Speech of Roger Genet  
*Tenth Anniversary of the Berlin Declaration*  
*19th November 2013, Berlin*

Mister Secretary of State,  
Mister President of the Max Planck Society,  
Mister President of the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Science and  
Humanities,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's an honour and a great pleasure for me to be here before you to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities.

First of all, I want to express my warmest thanks to you for having organized, here in the German capital, this anniversary ceremony of the so-called "Berlin" Declaration, and to assure you of France's commitment to this decisive movement marked by this declaration that has seen, this very year, extensions at the European level.

Since Berlin 2003, I believe that we can congratulate ourselves on the progress made, together and by each of our countries. We have also proven in this way, that when researchers get involved and when their governments support them, then the construction of a worldwide knowledge-based society is within our reach. This is not however an easy path. We are not unaware of the tensions, contradictions and uncertainties that can be encountered in a domain where technological, economic, social and cultural evolutions are continuously accelerating! A domain that disrupts all our points of reference, all our customs, all that we take for granted – and that leads us to elaborate, together, our future. Yes indeed, we have come quite a way in the last 10 years.

But that which lies ahead is not less challenging.

As I mentioned, this broad movement towards open access is a bottom-up process: it originates from the researchers themselves. In Budapest, in Bethesda and above all in Berlin, researchers have said that we must invent new ways so that the immense opportunities offered by digital technology can facilitate access to research results, in particular extending it to the numerous new countries, instead of hampering them for economic reasons.

The movement quickly understood that its strength is to be found in the adhesion of institutions, the organisation, and the implementation capacity that they bring to these ideas. It is this will and this shared ambition, signed by the institutions, that the Berlin Declaration carries. The first institute to have understood this is the Max Planck Society, a model of proximity with its researchers, and I have the pleasure to pay tribute to their vision and tenacity. I am happy to add that French establishments such as CNRS, INSERM or INRIA, are also among the first signatories.

Considering that scientific publications have two functions:

- that of broad and impartial diffusion of knowledge, of sharing of research results, indispensable to progress in research,
- but also to provide decision-makers with the determining elements for evaluation and budgetary choices...

the researchers formulated four major principles:

1. public funding, coming from citizens, should provide returns to the society;
2. communication of scientific results is an intrinsic part of the goals of science;
3. a more open science today will give a better science tomorrow;
4. a more accessible and more advanced science is a guarantee for cultural, economic and social development.

For France, ladies and gentlemen, these principles are moreover messages for the Governments. It is up to us, European officials, builders of a knowledge-based Europe, of the solidarity between scholars and citizens, to heed or not the messages that our researchers and our research institutions have sent us.

I will return to this point. But let us get back to the brief history of the Berlin Declaration!

After this very strong bottom-up initiative that already laid down the central concepts of gold and green access to preprints, the period that followed has been rich in significant decisions, mostly originating from the United States or Great Britain. It has been rich also in new infrastructures, PubMed Central in the USA, the OpenAire program in Europe, the launching of the national open archive platform HAL in France.

And then, since a little more than a year, the affair has accelerated and a new threshold of political visibility and commitment on Open Access has been crossed:

- At the political level, we can cite some structuring events:
  - The communication of the European Commission, in July 2012, [*by the DG CNECT (Communications Networks, Content and Technology)*];
  - The G8 declaration of June 2013;
  - A number of national level norms and positions;
  - The preparation of Horizon 2020, that envisages free access to publications as a general principle and a pilot action on open data.
- At the scientific level, the emergence of new preoccupations regarding the access to research data, raising the requirements attached to scientific projects, their publication and their control by the international scientific community.

After 10 years, it is clear to everyone that open access is neither an ideology, nor a fashion, but a process that is going to deepen and to diversify, and that already constitutes an added value for science.

So, Open access has already enriched the landscape of scientific communication, which also means that it has made it more complex by adding to the traditional mechanism of journal subscriptions and by presenting itself in diverse forms. This multiplicity of diffusion channels and means of financing of scientific communication is in the image of the diversity of science's needs, sometimes contradictory: the need to share as much as possible among researchers and, at the same time, the need for acknowledgement by the most prestigious journals that provide the necessary points of reference for the financiers of science; the possibility of the fastest diffusion, but also the necessity to preserve scientific publishing.

These contradictions, while creating a very positive dynamic of cooperation, of overcoming international as well as national fragmentation, that I pay tribute to, these contradictions have nonetheless provoked a real tension in the community and underlie some very difficult choices.

These choices, I recall, are the following:

- the financing of journals up-front by the authors, the “gold” solution;

- self-archiving by the authors, the “green” solution;
- and the third way, public financing of platforms that permit free access to publications and the purchase of supplementary services, the “platinum” or “freemium” solution.

Each of these ways has its advantages and disadvantages that vary as a function of the scientific community that is concerned. Each one must serve as a stimulus but also as a safeguard against the others.

Open access, as was stated by our minister Geneviève FIORASO in her declaration of the 24<sup>th</sup> of January this year, is not an end in itself. It has become the optimal means of diffusion for scientific production.

It is also a means for encouraging greater transparency of costs. It can limit the temptations to abuse dominant positions that can be faced by certain publishers according to their capacity to anticipate and their place in the mechanisms of research evaluation (citation indexes). This can give them, or not, a unilateral capacity to impose their subscription rates on researchers and institutions. Hence the impression that researchers sometimes have, to pay the brand name of the journal rather than to have the fair return of their work.

On the other hand, the model author-payer, if it becomes universal, would bring up another danger: the suspicion of neutrality of the selection, and as a consequence, the doubt that the quality of the article is the only reason for its publication.

On the contrary, direct scientific communication, or with a minimal filtering, as fruitful as it may potentially be, cannot replace the long evaluation by peers.

The question is thus to know which model takes best into account all of these issues: the added contribution of publishers, the independence of evaluation, the free access of all actors to publications and the improvement that an accelerated circulation of results can bring.

Indeed, if coexistence could represent an ideal that avoids the choice between models, none of which is the obvious solution, in practise it could reveal certain incoherencies that are before us:

- How to avoid paying twice in a mixed regime: as author and as reader? This is the question of hybrid gold;
- How to apply these rules that we enact? Should there be an obligation to publish the results of financed research in open archives, on pain of not acknowledging articles that do not respect this in financing and promotions?
- How to control, with restricted budgets, public expenditure by a preference for means that do not require any supplementary expenses, notably the green way for which we observe a remarkable renewal of interest?

Faced with these different questions, what is the position of France?

Knowing that today nobody can predict with certainty what is the best model – neither the one that will prevail in a globalized society and economy of knowledge, the French position seeks a balance: in agreement with the Commission, we advocate a mix while maintaining a certain lucidity regarding the system itself...

In order to limit the drawbacks that I enumerated before, we seek to implement a policy that is both pragmatic and coherent, guided by the concern to reach solutions that are adapted and balanced with respect to the principal problems that the implementation of open access encounters.

- Pragmatism has led us to organize the point of view of public research on the evolution of the actual means of validation of publications, for a subsequent dialogue with private publishers, notably on the question of the duration of embargos; for exact sciences and technology, work with the ANR, our principal financing agency, will fix a limit in the European and American ranges (6 or 12 months). For social sciences and humanities, decisions will be taken in Spring after communication of a study led by a research unit specialized in the impact of public policies.
- Implementation by an action plan that re-stimulates and puts into coherency different national infrastructures:
  - HAL, the national open archive platform, trans-disciplinary, interoperable with local platforms and international thematic archives such as Arxiv or PubMed Central, that receives about 3000 documents per month and hosts more than 80 institutional scientific archives;

- Thèses.fr, a portal for consultation of theses (30 000 today), built upon databases of defended and on-going theses;
- Open Edition, national platform of books and journals in the platinum mode, that publishes more than 380 journals in social sciences and humanities, as well as research blogs;
- Persée, free access portal of retrospective collections in social sciences and humanities, today more than 140 and close to 3 million visits per month;
- CINES, perennial archive warehouse for all the platforms and, tomorrow, for research data.

The new issue of research data concerns the passage from opening of results to “open science”, but is also a part of the vast ensemble of projects for wide diffusion of public data.

This plan is driven through a ministerial program (BSN, National Digital Library), which organises the cooperation between the major research actors, in all fields of scientific information, and allows settling the big issues while respecting the autonomy of the actors.

Major arbitrations await us.

In order that they succeed, it is important that we share our points of view and our findings, notably on the following crucial questions, among others:

- the definition of perimeters of data to conserve, that varies among disciplines and has serious financial consequences;
- the definition of conditions and standards for the quality of data;
- the placing of the cursor between data that should be diffused immediately (notably the availability of proof on which publications are based), and those whose ownership give a competitive advantage to research teams, that we can acknowledge, but for how long?

Beyond the regulations and the structures, beyond all the mechanisms that our institutions and governments can invent, the only valid question, and on which all depends in the end, is the willingness and the motivation of our researchers. It is to them that I would like to pay tribute, in ending.

They are the ones who, 10 years ago, by inspiring the Berlin Declaration manifested the ambition that scientists retrieve the mastery of the diffusion of knowledge. They are the ones that brought the objective of free access to the results of research.

The new horizon is that of research data. Of their data...

The same conviction should enable us to advance in this domain, even closer to the heart of science. Because she who seeks the truth is also the one to whom it is important that it be known.

On behalf of France, if the Max Planck Institute will agree to welcome us again, I would be delighted to be here, in 10 years from now, in Berlin to measure all the progress that researchers of the whole world will have made for our societies – and to thank them again, as I thank them today.

Thank you for your attention.