

**Intervention de Madame la Ministre Marie-Dominique Simonet
à la Conférence OPEN ACCESS,**

le 13 février 2007 à 12 heures à l'Académie Royale des arts et des sciences

Ladies and gentlemen,

Scientific publications are today at the crossroads.

On one hand, the present system of publication in journals, for all its virtues of seriousness of peer review and focus on the best publications, shows increasingly its limits.

Indeed, there are today twenty-four thousand (24 000) scientific publications world-wide, and the cost of subscription is in many cases increasing faster and faster. Today, almost no library can afford to keep up the subscriptions to even a sufficient selection of journals. In particular, the results of publicly funded research are not publicly available, and scientific institutions have to pay both for the creation of knowledge and for its subsequent access.

Needless to say, most developing countries have no access to the basic research publications.

On the other hand, internet and electronic publications give unprecedented opportunities of distribution of knowledge all over the world.

One sentence of the Berlin Declaration that we are signing today makes this point perfectly : "For the first time ever, the Internet now offers the chance to constitute a global and interactive representation of human knowledge, including cultural heritage and the guarantee of world-wide access".

The idea of Open Access publications shows the path to realising this opportunity. According to the European Research Advisory Board report, "the challenge is to exploit the new possibilities offered by the technology to improve scientific communication while at the same time retaining the best features of the present system".

Proper action being taken to preserve these best features, the Open Access idea offers a large variety of advantages.

Our Belgian researchers publish well, in good journals, and their work is well referred to. Open access would further improve access to their work, making it still more visible, and more cited and used.

The results of research, being broadly accessible, would have an increased impact both in the academic and industrial circles, thereby improving also technology transfer for economic development.

Free access to science and culture for the third world would contribute to its development, hereby decreasing the present fracture of the world.

Also in our regions, general access for all would be a factor of social and cultural development.

The challenge of developing Open Access, while guaranteeing long term storage and distribution in a coherent standard would also serve as motivation for new developments in the field of information technology.

By signing the Berlin Declaration, I want to encourage our researchers to participate to an international movement in favour of open access to the scientific production, while retaining the advantages of the peer reviewing, their freedom of choice of the place where they publish, and the intellectual rights on their work.

I also aim at positioning our community at the lead of the latest and future developments of scientific and cultural information.

Thank you for your attention.