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Access to scientific information: The role of the EU

The European Commission is very much aware of the ongoing developments in the area of dissemination of scientific information. It has accompanied and supported many relevant activities over the years.

There are essentially four different ways in which the European Commission's actions have a bearing on this topic: 1. The Commission is a very large research funding agency and, through the way it structures its grant agreements are structured, has a direct impact on the way research results are disseminated. 2. A part of the research funds has been used to support the development of infrastructures for the provision of open access to scientific information (e.g. OpenAIRE or OAPEN itself). 3. Other funding has been dedicated to research on technologies that will help make better use of available information, e.g. semantic web technologies. 4. Last but not least, the Commission can propose European legislation, or give recommendations to Member States, concerning national (including regional and local) policies for the dissemination of scientific information.

For all these aspects 2011 is an important year because several legislative proposals targeting the period from 2014 through 2020 and beyond will be elaborated and adopted during this year. An indication of what is to come can be found in recent policy initiatives of the Commission, such as the Digital Agenda for Europe (http://bit.ly/digital_agenda) as regards the role of information and communication technologies and the Innovation Union initiative (<http://bit.ly/dmx9Sf>) as regards research policy.

The address will put policy options in the area of access to scientific information into the context of the global open access movement's aims and on this basis will develop a preliminary view on steps the Commission should take. It will also discuss ways in which researchers, librarians, publishers and others could contribute to this political process.