Introduction

Dear Arnoud de Kemp, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to thank the organisers of this event for inviting me to give the closing address of this year’s Academic Publishing in Europe conference. I would also like to state that the European Commission has been very pleased to support the pre-conference training day that took place on Monday. I congratulate everyone present for the stimulating and rich discussion there has been over the past days.

I am here today to represent the views and express the support of the European Commission for progress and innovation within the academic publishing sector. I will address three points:

First I will briefly explain why the European Commission is interested in innovation within the academic publishing sector.

Second, I will describe what the Commission sees as some of the challenges that lie ahead.
Third, I will suggest how we can make progress together on the path towards innovation and dissemination of knowledge.

**First, why does the Commission care about innovation within the academic publishing sector?**

The context in which I see room for common progress and collaboration in the field of innovative publishing is the construction of the European Research Area which pursues the goal of improving the performance of Europe as a knowledge society. It is an “internal market” for European researchers that structures the European research fabric and coordinates national research activities.

A successful European Research Area depends on a healthy and efficient academic publishing system. The academic publishing system determines access to and dissemination of research results, which form the basis for future knowledge. It also is central for peer review, the key certification and quality assurance mechanism within the scientific community.

All in all, a healthy academic publishing system stimulates research innovation and excellence, thus supporting the growth of the knowledge society and Lisbon objectives, based on the premise that Europe must become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”.

**Second, what does the Commission see as the main challenges in the field of academic publishing?**

Academic publishing has become an area of heated debate over the past years, both in Europe and worldwide. This has occurred at the same time as the digital revolution, and the development and increasing importance of the knowledge society.
The digital revolution offers new possibilities for improved access and dissemination. It has profoundly changed academic publishing – from the services requested to the types of jobs in the publishing industry. The publishing industry has risen to the challenge by investing considerably in new tools, services and technologies.

European Activities connected with this overall goal are the Framework Programme for Research and Development, and the i2010 strategy for the information society, which promotes an open and competitive digital economy.

The digital revolution and the need to move towards a stronger knowledge society offer challenges to academic publishing. On the one hand, industry is under pressure to innovate in terms of methods, models and technologies. On the other hand, publishers benefit from a market that is developing thanks to the growing demand for dissemination of knowledge and the demand for diversity.

The research community has been increasingly attentive to these trends. As you know, the area of publication of scientific journals has been especially scrutinised over recent years.

The research community appreciates the advances that have been made and the new services provided. But at the same time there is a feeling that alternative publishing models may be more advantageous for the research community.
In this context, recent events have shown that there is an increasing push from the research community towards improving access to research publications. The Berlin Declaration of 2003 states that “our mission of disseminating knowledge is only half complete if the information is not made widely and readily available to society”. It suggests “Open Access”, a concept well known by this audience, as a way in which to address this challenge.

Research organisations and funding bodies in Europe and elsewhere are taking this call seriously by developing positions and policies. A prominent example is the Wellcome Trust, which recently has set down that it requires the publications that it has supported financially to be deposited within six months of publication in a journal.

Further European examples of similar policies are the French CNRS’s “Hyper Article en Ligne” open archive initiative, and the German Research Foundation’s request for researchers to make peer-reviewed articles from research they fund openly accessible within six to twelve months. There are also several non-European examples of this trend, including the NIH’s Public Access Policy in the United States.

In December of 2006, two concrete signals were given at the European level. The first signal came from the European Research Advisory Board, also known as EURAB, a European advisory group composed of 50% research community representatives and 50% industry representatives. EURAB published an opinion entitled “Scientific publication: Policy on Open Access”. In this report, EURAB recommends that the European Commission – I quote -

“consider mandating all researchers funded under [the seventh Framework Programme] to lodge their publications resulting from EC-funded research in an open access repository as soon as possible after publication, to be made accessible within 6 months at the latest”.
A second clear signal came from the Scientific Council of the newly created European Research Council, Europe’s new funding body for frontier research. It stated its – I quote -

“firm intention [...] to issue specific guidelines for the mandatory deposit in open access repositories of research results [...] obtained thanks to ERC grants”.

In the context of this increasing demand for improved efficiency and support of the dissemination of scientific knowledge, the European Commission has started to study the evolution of scientific publishing activities.

The European Commission is concerned with improving the impact of research on society and on the development of knowledge. And this is intimately linked with the dissemination of results of the research that the Commission finances.

2007 is the year in which the Community’s Seventh Framework Programme is being launched. Over the next seven years, more than 50 billion euros will be spent on research. The European Commission must get a good return on investment in order to develop the European Research Area, the European knowledge society, and to be able to benefit society-at-large.

So far, funding bodies and the public purse more generally have tended to contribute several times to the research process. They fund the research to be performed through research grants. They also support peer review in the sense that they usually pay reviewers’ salaries. Finally, they often acquire the finished publications for research organisations in the form of scientific journals.
From the point of view of a research funding body, it therefore seems that there is room to improve and maximise the impact of research on society and on the development of knowledge.

This point has been made by the Study we commissioned on “the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets in Europe”. This Study was presented to you at the 2006 APE conference.

Among the concerns pointed out by this Study were rising costs of journal subscriptions and fiscal obstacles, for example high VAT on electronic publications. These and other elements prevent the maximisation of research result dissemination to the research community and society.

This Study raised considerable interest within the scholarly publishing community. It was consulted over 50,000 times on the Commission’s website and led to a public consultation.

Evolution is inevitable. Evolution in the academic publishing sector, evolution in universities’ and funding bodies’ policies, and evolution in the perceptions of researchers, politicians and the public-at-large.

The European Commission recognises the fundamental importance of access to, and dissemination and preservation of scientific publications. For us, the dissemination of the results from the research that we fund is a key issue.

Third, in this situation, how can we make progress towards innovation and dissemination of knowledge?

The exact mechanisms by which access and dissemination should be improved are yet to be determined in a policy process that is only just beginning at the European level.
A forthcoming European Commission Communication on access, dissemination and preservation of scientific information is being developed together by the Commissioner for Science and Research Janz Potočnik and by the Commissioner for Information Society and Media Viviane Reding.

This Communication will highlight that an open and constructive policy debate is necessary to move forward. The best way to move forward should be developed through dialogue and co-operation among European institutions, Member States, industry and all other stakeholders involved in an effort to find balanced solutions.

This Communication will also encourage experimentation with possible future publishing models in order to arrive at an answer on how access and dissemination can be improved, and how preservation of digital material can be ensured.

What are the principles that should underpin the search for solutions?

First, evolution can be encouraged by Europe, but the main instruments for change must be put in place by the Member States. The European Union can give impulses, but it is up to Member States to take concrete action.

For example, in the area of digital preservation of scientific information, the European Commission can fund networks and projects to develop strategies and best practice. But it is up to the Member States to develop coordination strategies through open dialogue.
Second, evolution must happen in an inclusive manner that takes into account the needs of all stakeholders. We must look for solutions that make use of all the players’ strengths. Academic publishers play a crucial role in this respect. They have developed invaluable know-how and experience that make them well-placed to provide editors and editorial boards, and to organise the peer review process.

The Commission has no intention of being directive on the question of innovation in publishing. It will be up to publishers, supported where appropriate as part of European projects and networks, to develop the best ways in which to innovate.

Third, evolution should be designed in a way that brings forth a win-win situation. Improved access and dissemination to research results will also lead to a thriving European Research Area and a growth of research activities. This in turn will generate more publishing activity. The European Research Area needs publishers to deal with this increased demand for innovative and timely services. The final aim should be an overall growth of the scientific publication market so that both the European Research Area and the publishing industry can benefit.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that, for the reasons I have outlined, evolution is inevitable. The digital age and growing importance of the knowledge society make it necessary to adapt the current scientific publishing system, and to improve access to and dissemination of research results.

All players involved in this debate must move beyond the present state of the debate, which often seems polarised and does not appear to seek real compromise.
We must address possible options for change together, with the goal of devising a win-win situation. Through increasing research activity, the market will grow, with more opportunities for business and innovation to go around.

In this spirit, I would like to draw your attention to a concrete possibility to engage in this kind of dialogue: In three weeks time, on the 15th and 16th of February 2007, the European Commission will host an important stakeholder conference, in Brussels, on “Scientific Publishing in the European Research Area: Access, Dissemination and Preservation in the Digital Age”.

This event is a joint initiative of DG Research and DG Information Society, and both Commissioner Potočnik and Commissioner Reding will be speaking at the conference. The conference programme has been distributed and is available on the internet.

And now let me close by reiterating what I started out with: I once again wish to express my thanks and congratulations to the organisers of APE 2007, to the speakers that have shared their views and knowledge, and to the participants that have engaged in the debate on innovation in academic publishing. Each and every one of you has made this event stimulating, rich and memorable.

Thank you very much.