



European Commission
ERA Team
Green Paper 'European Research Area: New Perspectives'
SDME / 9-50
B-1049 Brussels

31 August 2007

Dear Sir,

Green Paper 'European Research Area: New Perspectives'

LIBER is pleased to respond to the consultation on the EC's Green Paper *European Research Area: New Perspectives*. LIBER – The Association of European Research Libraries/Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche – is the principal association of the major research libraries of Europe. It was founded in 1971 under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Its current membership includes research libraries of more than forty countries. LIBER membership is not restricted to the area of the European Union, and membership of research libraries outside the European Union is encouraged. Its website is at <http://www.libereurope.eu>.

LIBER is submitting this response and is also making an online submission via the webform at http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/questionnaire_en.html.

LIBER wishes to be associated with the response from SPARC Europe, an organization with which LIBER has strong connections. In particular, in terms of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), LIBER does not believe that restrictions enshrined in IPR/copyright legislation are in the best interests of the ERA, and would suggest that a new model for scholarly communication be developed – one which looks at ways in which the rights of rights holders can be managed, whilst still maintaining a balance which allows researchers and users in the ERA maximum access to these published research outputs'.

In addition to the response from SPARC Europe, LIBER would wish to make the following points:

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Many researchers, particularly in Science, Technology and Medicine, use journal materials in digital form, and do not wish to use their paper equivalents as the primary means of access to published literature. Libraries increasingly wish to move to e-only delivery for journal literature. Yet, as the Frankfurt Group has shown (see http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/frankfurtgroup/PR_Survey.pdf), the imposition of high levels of VAT on e-resources is the greatest obstacle to the wide dissemination of research literature in Europe since it harms European competitiveness. Whereas printed publications are subject to a reduced rate of VAT across the EU, electronic publications are usually charged at the highest rate of VAT. LIBER urges the EU to act with speed to address this anomaly as there is need for urgent action.

Digital Preservation

The Green Paper says little about the need for digital preservation of electronic information. As researchers increasingly use/produce digital information sources, such as e-journals, there is an urgent need to secure the long-term preservation of such materials. Publishers are not seen as a trusted source of digital preservation and there is no pervasive infrastructure across Europe for the digital preservation of research content. This lack represents a major threat to the ERA, as there is a real danger that research publications will simply disappear if they are not digitally preserved. LIBER is concerned about this and has drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding with the e-Depot in the National Library in The Hague to investigate such concerns on a European scale. LIBER urges the EU to make funding available for trusted parties to work together across Europe to construct an infrastructure for digital preservation, which will support the ERA and its enhanced research profile.

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Science, Technology and Medicine

The Green Paper says a great deal about research in Science, Technology and Medicine but little (if anything) about Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The research outputs of universities in these areas – e.g. in Law, History, or Geography – are fundamental to the European understanding of civilization, European citizenship and the understanding of global threats such as terrorism or global warming. Such researchers need to have access to a wide variety of materials from a considerable time span. Much of this material is not available in digital form and this represents a real handicap for the successful growth of the ERA.

The EU is urged to fund major digitisation programmes in these areas to create a critical mass of content to support researchers, no matter where they are in Europe. Present and future researchers will really need access to the full range of research materials in the sciences and the humanities because of the significant increase in cross-disciplinary research work across the two. The scope for further opportunities that having the materials conveniently available worldwide would offer is very significant. Funded by the EU, such content could be available in Open Access and free at point of use, digitally curated by European digital curation services. It is a compelling vision for the future of European research.

Research Ph.D. theses

Europe's network of research universities is producing young research of great vitality and promise. Ph.D. research dissertations in paper format are known to be difficult to find because they are not conventionally published. LIBER has begun the construction of a European portal for research theses (see <http://www.dart-europe.eu>) for the location and retrieval of the electronic full-text of research theses across Europe. Evidence already shows that, where research theses are available digitally, they are accessed many more times than their paper equivalents - often up to 100 times a month. Where a research thesis is published as a monograph, a good print run would be only 400 copies. The EU is urged to consider making special funding available to European universities to back-digitise runs of their paper Ph.D. theses and to encourage third parties to develop search and retrieval services to open up this wealth of European research to all interested researchers where, copyright permissions allowing, it can be free at point of use.

Access to Europe's research libraries

Europe has a wealth of research libraries and researchers in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences need to have access to a wide range of material from a large number of libraries. LIBER is developing a European library passport, based on the successful SCONUL SRX scheme in the UK (see http://www.sconul.ac.uk/using_other_libraries/srx/). The EU should encourage all research libraries in Europe to make their materials more accessible to visiting researchers by their sponsorship of, and support for, the European Library Passport.

LIBER Board members would be delighted to meet with members of the ERA to discuss further any of the issues raised in its response to the Green Paper.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Paul Ayris
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