

Vienna Declaration

on Open Access

10 Theses on Freedom of Information

Introduction

Knowledge is of great importance for society and its social, cultural and economical development. Nowadays, the extent of knowledge stored digitally is constantly growing. However, in many fields the legal and socio-political environment for access to digital knowledge is not sufficiently adapted to technical developments, thus the transfer of knowledge is performed inefficiently and selectively. The necessary steps and actions to be taken in order to enable best possible access to information shall be made clear by the following 10 Theses on Freedom of Information:

The 10 Theses

1. Digitalization and networking allow easier access to information in a historically exceptional manner. Anything can potentially be accessed, copied, and modified. This will change information processing in a way unknown so far opening up the opportunity for a major progress in accessibility of knowledge.
2. The chances linked to this development are only open to people who possess and control the necessary cultural techniques. Therefore, guarantying access to required technical infrastructure and education must be an aim of any educational policy.
3. When distributing information interests of authors, institutions and people exploiting copyrights, and the general public have to be considered and the legal system shall establish a fair and economically reasonable balance. The legal system is the instrument to be chosen here. Law must be preferred to technically caused facts which are created by dominating market participants.
4. The principle of fair use is limiting the exploitation rights of authors without their permission in favour of the general public. It has proven to be the right instrument for balancing interests and must be prevented from weakening and limitation by technical measures and their legal protection.

5. Limitations to copyright are fundamental requirements for social and economic progress. Therefore, free access to information for science, teaching and education is to be guaranteed at the maximum level possible. In this regard copyright is in need of a reform.

6. Copyright is largely based on the historic tradition of the intellectual developments of the 19th and 20th century. It must be reviewed by legal and social science and by law and politics, whether copyright is still guaranteeing the balance between authors, institutions and people exploiting copyrights, and the general public in a desired way.

7. Authors have the possibility to make their works easily available via digital networks. They have to be informed neutrally about copyright rules regulating the making available of works. This has to be done with specific regard to promoting freedom of information such as open content licenses or open access initiatives. This task shall be carried out by science and politics. It is the authors' task to use these opportunities.

8. Scientists are challenged as role models when handling freely available knowledge. Scientific institutions shall recommend their scientists to particularly make state-aided research results available easily and free of charge. Simultaneously, it is task of the state to offer compensation for possible disadvantages caused hereof.

9. The state bears an exemplary responsibility in handling information. Therefore, it shall technically and legally facilitate access to public information in the best possible way. The creation of an enforceable individual right to access public information on the basis of an Austrian or EU-wide Act on Freedom of Information according to international examples as also the effective control of handling state-run electronic registers and data has to be discussed.

10. Digitalization and networking implicate new questions about security and preservation of information. It is task of the state to prevent that missing technical access to information causes a loss of knowledge. In order to accomplish this task awareness of the issue has to be improved by aimed educational efforts and a review of the legal framework as also the provision of the necessary financial resources are required.

Our Intentions

As signatories we make a commitment for the optimal use of the possibilities of handling digital knowledge and communication networks for education and science. At the same time we ask for an implementation of fair and balanced conditions for the access to information for the general public.

Signature

A. Individuals:

Name and Title

Telephone

Occupation

E-Mail

Location and Date

Signature

B. Scientific or educational institutions, professional associations or any other type of societies:

Name of the Organisation

Name and Title of the Signatory

Telephone

E-Mail

Location and Date

Signature

Please mail or fax the signed declaration form to the following adress:

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