

Impressions from the 14th Munin Conference on Scholarly Publishing 2019

By *Anna Mette Morthorst*

Abstract

The 14th Munin Conference on Scholarly Publishing 2019 took place at UiT The Arctic University of Norway on November 27–28, 2019. This short article reports some impressions from the conference. The full materials of the conference, including presentation slides and video recordings are available at <https://doi.org/10.7557/scs.2019.1>.

Keywords:

Scholarly publishing, Open Access, Open Science, conference

Late November 2019 I attended a two-day scholarly publishing conference in Tromsø focusing on Open Access and Open Science. If scholarly publishing for a long time has been mostly in darkness – like winter days in this part of Norway – the conference certainly abounded in "northern lights" of new perspectives and insights.

The conference started with Aileen Fyfe (University of St. Andrews, UK) who gave an excellent first keynote "[Money or Mission? Trends in Scholarly Publishing since c. 1850](#)" on the history of the development from community-led to commercial publishing, looking at the various reasons for this development and focusing on the UK. An important lesson from history is that one should take advantage of new technology. Moreover, we should now refocus on classic mission-driven publishing – like university presses and learned societies – as a driver for change. Aileen pointed out that "the sales-based, commercial model of academic publishing is neither inevitable nor eternal".

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Today money is still an important part of publishing: we heard [the Swedish experience](#) with the cancellation of the agreement with Elsevier this summer and the new transformative Read and Publish agreement signed in November. There were promising results, even though it is evident that the costs and monopoly remain a real threat to Open Research.

The afternoon presentations on day 1 of the conference revealed important knowledge about possible barriers and attitudes on Open Science from a researcher perspective, for example a deep concern for scientific quality, but also worries about problematic metrics and pressure on academic freedom. Howard I. Browman (Institute of Marine Research, Norway), described his [scepticism regarding preprints](#) and worries about the lack of traditional peer-review – with possibly unvetted information being spread as a result. However, the landscape today is diverse, and a second wave of preprint servers is emerging – driven by researchers dedicated to good quality of research.

There were inspiring examples of Open Science initiatives, like [SOAPbox](#) at Trinity College Dublin, where students and young researchers are trained in open publishing skills, and [MusicLab](#), an Open research project at the University of Oslo that captures data from both musicians and audience at public music performances. The MusicLab project illustrated challenges in data management including GDPR, but also great perspectives on data sharing across research disciplines.

The second day opened with a very inspiring keynote by Arianna Becerril-García about [Open Access publishing in Latin America and AmeliCA](#), an ecosystem of science communication built in the Latin-American region, open, non-commercial and academy-owned. Sharing its main goals with Plan S, AmeliCA demonstrates that non-APC models are robust – when combined with robust infrastructure and funding – and can certainly compete with Read and Publish models.

That both infrastructure and metadata are essential to enable Open Science was emphasized in the presentation by Vanessa Fairhurst from Crossref, which has now made it possible to add more [funding metadata with Grant-ID](#). Following Vanessa, [results of a new survey from Knowledge Exchange](#) on Open Access article metadata in publishers' agreements were presented; the survey reveals the importance of metadata for consortia to support Open Access workflows and to evaluate agreements with publishers.

The conference finished with a panel discussion between SPARC Europe and European funders, recognizing that funders now also play a major role in facilitating a transition to full and immediate Open Access.

Some concluding remarks from the conference are that various Open Access publishing models can co-exist and be developed, that there is an urgent need to change and reinvent existing metrics to be more inclusive, that new publishing formats including data are needed and that Open Access publishing should take advantage of new technology and be scholar-led.

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