

Aachen, 26th September 2012 (annual conference)

**The Aachen Declaration:
six recommendations for the acquisition of electronic books¹**

At the passage from Gutenberg's to the digital era, at the unavoidable transition from the printed to the electronic book the AGMB registers the various developments within the publishing sector and the different efforts of publishers to create competitive and profit-oriented business models. With concern the AGMB observes some developments, which could hurt the publishing eco system especially the market of academic text books as well as the prosperous cooperation of lecturers, libraries, publishers and users. This could harm the medical education system.

1. Limited Use/ Digital Rights Management (DRM)

The supply of electronic text books in proprietary and/or flash based software formats leads to massive limitations for their usage, which is seen critically by the AGMB. Students do not welcome flash or other constraining technologies, but prefer free, flexible and unimpeded access to the text books. In this context the publishing house Springer can be named as a positive example for offering electronic textbooks as DRM-free PDFs. Impediments by mechanisms caused by DRM are seen critically and are as well principally disapproved for textbooks supplied via campus licenses.

The AGMB encourages its members to insist on free-DRM media in contract negotiations. Furthermore, electronic textbooks need to fulfill the following demands:

- unlimited, modifiable, unsecured files on section and book level (currently PDF is preferred)
- unlimited printing
- no obligatory registration
- unlimited saving (for offline usage)
- no „1 limited access“ offering, but extended license models
- not only offering electronic books as an online license, but offline usage for mobile devices (e.g. iPads)
- single title choice
- the possibility to annotate, modify and share content with other users
- accessibility with mobile and other devices
- no special technical requirements (e.g. particular browser, Java, Flash, Plugins and so on)
- fulltext indexing, comprehensive search within all available electronic books
- compliance and text mining
- MARC data delivery
- persistent URLs at least on book title level

2. Open Access / Open Educational Resources

The idea of Open Access is becoming more popular in the book sector as well. In view of this fact the AGMB recommends that the political institutions (particularly the universities and academic ministries of the federal states as well as the institutions of other agencies) support Open Access to electronic text books (Open Educational Resources) beside Open Access to electronic journal articles, following the California Free Digital Textbook Initiative, too.

3. Price

The AGMB encourages its members to examine the proposals in detail. Prices have to be put in relation to the offered services (PDF or HTML-only, offline or only online usage, IP authentication or registration, unlimited access or DRM, mobile usage or only special devices and so on) as well as actual usage (price per page view). Additionally, usage statistics (see below) should be demanded. Libraries should not support overpriced offers even if the related faculty or institution insists on them. Mini-monopolies may exist for some standard works. These, however, do not legitimize the conclusion of contracts based on prices and conditions that – because of their blatant inefficiency – will result in inspections by the finance controlling departments in the long run. Apart from this, such business models hinder the desired transition towards e-publications instead of facilitating it.

Instead of the generally rather overpriced current offers publishers should offer distinct license models separated according to inclusion (at a higher price) or exclusion (at a lower price) of the permission for archiving.

The AGMB would point out that the competition arising from self-publishing of lecturers via Amazon, Apple or Open Educational Resources will clearly influence the customary market prices for text books.

4. Usage Statistics

Regarding usage statistics the AGMB insistently appeals to all involved publishers to provide standardized usage statistics immediately (including 2012), which are transparent in terms of how which data are analyzed. Those statistics have to follow a unified approach to all important publishers. Unfortunately, the current COUNTER Book Report 2 is ambiguous in its definition of what is counted as usage. With respect to the amount of money involved, incorrect and/or intransparent statistics are a criterion for exclusion. Usage statistics have to be provided in common file formats (e.g. xls).

5. Further Usage

The AGMB supports the rights of reusing content in online collections and/ or publications in e-learning environments with access for dedicated user groups. Therefore copyright has to be made clear in detail by determining e.g. *second publication rights* by transparent contract terms and acquisition of reuse rights. Particularly, publishing of text and pictures for lecture groups relating to electronic “Semesterapparate” (reserved reading books) is a central issue.

6. Privacy

One of the biggest cultural assets and achievements of the modern age is free access to information, which is basically built on the opportunities for anonymous reading supported by the libraries. Modern tracking methods and techniques like *Hiptype* as well as obligatory registrations can monitor the individual usage and reading behaviour of PDF files. The AGMB states that such practices are either illegal or have to be declared illegal and objectionable. The AGMB will scrutinize contract terms in order to find out which publishers try to include such control measures and which publishers do not.

The AGMB represents 460 medical librarians from 370 libraries in five countries. Libraries of the whole medical faculties in Germany, Italy, Austria and Switzerland represent a budget with approx. fifty million Euro.

¹ Translation of the original document “Aachener Erklärung: Sechs Thesen zum Erwerb von elektronischen Büchern” by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Medizinisches Bibliothekswesen e.V., available at: <http://www.agmb.de/papopro/index.php?menuid=12>