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From UNESCO Chair in Communication to Associate Member of ORBICOM

Having been the German UNESCO Chair in Communication from 1998 to 2010 I have decided to step down from this position after my retirement at the end of March 2010. The German Commission for the UNESCO is still in the process of finding a candidate for the new UNESCO Chair in Communication in Germany.

It was an honor and pleasure to act as a UNESCO Chair for such a long time. The exchange of knowledge between scholars in the ORBICOM network has furthered my work considerably both in the academic arena for research and teaching and in my advisory work in information politics on the national and international level. Therefore I happily accept the offer from the Director of Research Projects, Pierre Giguere, to continue cooperation with ORBICOM as an associate member.

My academic life has shifted from the University of Konstanz to the Humboldt University in Berlin where I am a member of the Institute for Library and Information Science¹ - as a senior scientist and a lecturer (comparable to a guest professor status). Since 2010 (till 2013) the center of my life is Helsinki, Finland, but I maintain residency in Berlin.

I encourage everyone in the ORBICOM network to contact me and involve me in their work to the extent that it fits my profile. I am particularly interested in contributing to a world-wide network of expertise which ultimately will establish a science- and education-friendly copyright regime in the open access and commons paradigm.

Profile: Information is knowledge in action

As an information scientist the concepts of information and knowledge have been at the center of my work for over 40 years. In a slight departure from the traditional hierarchy of data, information, and knowledge (and wisdom), my work continues to position information in the center by focusing on the pragmatic (action-oriented) aspects of information rather than on the traditional (syntactic, formal) understanding of Shannon's information theory.

In a nutshell, *information is knowledge in action*. How can existing (published) knowledge be treated and processed in order to provide people in their private, public and professional work with information (pieces of knowledge) that they do not have so far but need in order to solve problems or to develop a new understanding of their world?

Of course, my profile of expertise in this paradigm has changed over the years: I started with theoretical and experimental (software development) work in the areas of information

¹ <http://www.hu-berlin.de/> - <http://www.ibi.hu-berlin.de>

retrieval (automatic indexing, abstracting and translation), hypertext systems, electronic communication forums, electronic dictionaries and collaborative knowledge management in e-learning – but in the last ten years my work has shifted more and more towards the economic, legal (mainly copyright), and ethical aspects of the production, exchange and usage of knowledge and information.

The basic questions here are: Who owns knowledge and information? Who and what controls and regulates knowledge and information? Will the existing copyright regime, which is strongly based on private property rights, shift towards an understanding of knowledge as a commons and towards the recognition of common property rights to knowledge and information? Are the traditional proprietary business and organizational publishing models still adequate, productive and justifiable in electronic environments? Which new models can be developed in the open access and commons-based information markets paradigm?

Future plans – towards information ethics as part of a knowledge ecology

My current work aims at laying a foundation for information ethics by taking into account the character of knowledge as a commons². Information ethics can be considered the description of and the reflection on beliefs, rules and values in electronic environments, in particular with respect to producing, exchanging, sharing and using knowledge and information. In the commons paradigm, a new consensus must be achieved concerning traditional concepts such as freedom of information and science, intellectual property, authorship and the nature of knowledge objects in general.

Adopting a commons-based approach as a framework for the ethical, political and economic aspects for all processes concerning knowledge and information, information ethics will be part of general knowledge ecology

Knowledge ecology may appear to be an unusual concept. Ecology in general is concerned with the sustainability of natural resources (for instance water, air/climate, forests) and with the protection of these resources from overuse. Knowledge ecology aims at the same objective of sustainability, but rather than making the immaterial resources of knowledge and information a scarce good (as is necessary with natural resources), knowledge ecology maintains that the sustainability of immaterial goods can only be achieved by the opposite, by open and free access and unrestricted use.

Knowledge ecology can be seen in the context of UNESCO's attempts to contribute to building what UNESCO has called knowledge societies. UNESCO is the UN organization which is most profoundly rooted in an ethical (and increasingly information ethical) understanding of what needs to be done to achieve the goal of people-centered, inclusive and sustainable societies.

Current professional activities: Member of the German Commission for UNESCO and the German UNESCO Committee for Communications; Member of the Green Academy of the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation; Director of NETHICS e.V. (Information Ethics in the Net); Speaker/Chair of the German Coalition "Copyright for Education and Science"; Head of the Board of ENCES (European Network Copyright for Education and Science); member of

² As outlined in an article in the Proceedings of the International Conference commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Korean Society for Library and Information Science. Seoul Oct. 8th 2010 (<http://bit.ly/fEAZyK>)

numerous national and international advisory boards for institutions in culture, media, information politics and information economy

Numerous publications in the fields of information retrieval, computational linguistics, automatic indexing, text condensation, information science theory, hypertext, information/electronic markets, electronic communication forums, collaborative knowledge management, e-learning, virtual dictionaries, information ethics, information politics, copyright, open access and commons-based information markets (cf. <http://www.kuhlen.name/publikationen.html>)

Recent book publications: Konsequenzen der Informationsassistenten (Consequences of information assistants) Frankfurt 1999; Informationsethik (Information Ethics) Konstanz 2004; Erfolgreiches Scheitern – eine Götterdämmerung des Urheberrechts? Successful failure - twilight of copyright? Boizenburg 2008; work in progress: Foundation of knowledge ecology

Current major projects: Collaborative knowledge management, part of: Research cluster „Interactive Science“ (Center for Media and Interactivity, Univ. Gießen, financed by Volkswagenstiftung); IUWIS (Copyright Infrastructure for Science and Education) (Humboldt University – Berlin, financed by the German Research Society – DFG) (ongoing); MEDOANET EU-FP7-project (national and regional coordination of Open Access strategies, policies and structures in six Mediterranean countries) (ongoing)