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UNESCO Chair in Communication

Report on the Chair's activities in 2007
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1 Profile

Rainer Kuhlen, Professor for Information Science at the University of Konstanz, Germany, and personal member of the German Commission for the UNESCO (DUK), has been the German UNESCO Chair in Communication since 1999.

As expected from a UNESCO Chair, I have devoted some, if not most of my professional time directly to UNESCO-related topics, in particular, with respect to teaching, research, publishing, talks, organizing meetings and conferences/workshops and taking part in public affairs/political counselling and civil society activities. Through this work, the Chair has contributed to the development of an information and knowledge society in Germany and to raising public awareness for UNESCO's objectives in general and for topics such as access to knowledge and information, copyright/intellectual property rights and information ethics specifically.

2 Teaching

2.1 Information ethics

Following a well-established tradition, the Chair gave a course in information ethics in the summer semester of 2007 for students both from the Humboldt University in Berlin and from the University of Konstanz. In addition to a basic introduction to information ethics and philosophy-based theories of ethics, this course covered the following main topics:

- Privacy
- Human rights and cultural diversity
- Digital divides
- Knowledge ecology - Who owns knowledge and information?
- Ethics in the new media and Web 2.0-services
- Building trust
- Professional information ethics

2.2 a2k40i

a2kfoi stands for “access to knowledge for open innovation”. This course, held in 2007 at the University of Konstanz, was organized as a seminar for advanced students. It covered the following topics:

- Knowledge and information as commercial and commons-based goods
- Open access and perspectives of an commons-based economy for knowledge and information
- Consequences for the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
- The new Development Agenda of the WIPO in contrast to the TRIPS/WTO Agenda

3 Research, publications, talks

In addition to continuing work on collaborative knowledge management in e-learning, the research of the Chair concentrated mainly on copyright-related topics, open access and information markets, in particular with respect to a commons-based economy.

The efforts of three years to examine copyright from the perspective of science and education culminated in 2007 in the completion of a major book manuscript, published in 2008 as:

Erfolgreiches Scheitern — eine Götterdämmerung des Urheberrechts? Schriften zur Informationswissenschaft; Bd. 48. vwh - Verlag Werner Hülsbusch: Boizenburg 2008

In addition to being published by a commercial publishing company, the book can be freely downloaded from:

http://www.inf-wiss.uni-konstanz.de/RK2008_ONLINE/node/30

Publications in 2007 covered the following topics

- Copyright amendment in Germany – problems and deficits
- Potentials of a collaborative culture in politics
- Challenging copyright by making knowledge and information a scarce resource
- Connection between cultural heritage and open access
- Open Access – A paradigm shift for making knowledge publicly available
- Copyright-Enforcement Guideline
- A copyright exception for orphan works

These publications can be downloaded, under a Creative Commons license, from:
<http://www.inf-wiss.uni-konstanz.de/People/RK/publikationen.html>

Talks in 2007 covered the following topics

- Creative Commons
- Access to knowledge
- Aspects of international copyright regulations
- Full text search services
- The new copyright in Germany with respect to science and education
- Collaborative knowledge management in an e-learning environment
- Overcoming gender barriers in electronic communication

The presentation files (mainly Power Point) can be downloaded, under a Creative Commons license, from:

<http://www.inf-wiss.uni-konstanz.de/People/RK/vortraege.html>

4 Other activities with respect to UNESCO-related topics

As a personal member of the German Commission for the UNESCO and a member of the Committee for Information and Communication (FA-CI) I took a regular and active part in the Commission's work.

As the result of an initiative by the Chair and based on a text proposal by same, the German Commission adopted an Open Access resolution at its 67th General meeting in Dessau. In the context of this resolution, the German Commission produced and published a Handbook on Open Access, which was well accepted in the public and was published in English as well in a second edition, supported by the EU Commission: Open Access. Opportunities and Challenges - a Handbook. European Commission / German Commission for UNESCO, 2008.

The Chair was also involved in the work of the German civil society coalition, which contributed actively both to the wording of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and to the implementation of the Convention in Germany.

In addition, the Chair continued to strengthen the WSIS follow-up activities and to give support to the German member of the Information for All initiative, Dr. Verena Metze-Mangold, in her work for the Programme.

Starting in 2007, in an effort to build a European-wide Network "Copyright for Science and Education" (ENCES), the Chair attempted to get the European UNESCO Chairs involved in this activity. The pursuit of this initiative will be of major concern in 2008.

The Chair took a regular and active part in the mainly electronic exchange of information and in the business meetings of ORBICOM, the network of the UNESCO Chairs in Communications.

5 Final Remarks

The potential of the UNESCO Chairs is still far from being fully “exploited” by UNESCO. Whether the situation can be improved by greater assistance (immaterial as well as financial) by the national UNESCO Commission and by the Headquarters in Paris remains an open question. Any suggestions for strengthening the (almost non-existent) network among the UNESCO Chairs would be appreciated. I am aware that such an initiative is also a challenge for the Chairs themselves.