

Press Release

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Science Assets of the Digital Age at Risk

Leading figures from the international science community will meet today to try and save the digital records of the world's scientific knowledge from being lost. Policy-makers from the European Commission and national governments will convene with world-renowned research organisations and digital preservation experts at a strategic conference in Brussels. They will discuss creation of an Alliance and European infrastructure for preserving and providing permanent access to digital scientific information currently stored in formats which are fast becoming obsolete and growing exponentially in volume.

Like many other sectors in society, science has become completely dependent on digital information. This dependence comes with a number of major risks because of the many unresolved challenges in the long-term preservation and access to this information.

Today's conference, organised by the European Alliance for Permanent Access, will address the pressing need to establish a viable and sustainable European infrastructure for access to the records of science. It will provide an opportunity to establish a strategic partnership between the Alliance, the European Commission and national governments.

The Alliance aims to become the driving force behind the efforts to find an effective long-term solution. Its vision is to enable the diverse scientific communities to create information repositories which will form their part of the infrastructure. At the same time the Alliance will work with the communities to agree a set of common standards, in order to make their repositories interoperable. The repositories will also benefit from a number of common resources such R&D activities and a framework offering technical tools.

Initially the Alliance will collaborate with three or four well-organised communities. This will generate sufficient momentum for others to follow and will allow for evaluation of the project.

The Alliance has expressed the ambition to be a strategic partner of the European Commission and national governments to discuss and help develop and implement their policies in the area of preservation and long-term access.

For further information please contact

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Notes to editors:The European Alliance for Permanent Access

Major European stakeholders in science and scientific information have joined to establish the Alliance for Permanent Access to the Records of Science to develop a coordinated European solution for the problems of permanent access to the digital records of science. For more information on the Alliance see www.alliancepermanentaccess.eu

The founding members of the alliance are CERN, the European Space Agency, the European Science Foundation, the Science and Technology Facilities Council from the UK, the Max Planck Gesellschaft in Germany, the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales from France, the British Library, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers, the National Archives of Sweden and the Joint Information Systems Committee from the UK. The national coalitions for digital preservation from France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have also agreed to be involved in the Alliance.

The Conference Programme

The conference will be chaired by the president of the European Science Foundation, professor Ian Halliday. At the conference the Alliance will present its approach and its vision of a sustainable European infrastructure for permanent access to scientific information. High-level representatives of the European Commission and of major organisations in the fields of research data and scientific publications will give their view on permanent access and the ideas of the Alliance. Furthermore, a representative of the National Science Foundation will elaborate on the latest developments in the field of cyberinfrastructure in the United States. Some 80 high-level representatives from key stakeholders in Europe will participate in this strategic conference.