

SIGNING OF THE BERLIN DECLARATION
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SU Open Access Seminar
20 October 2010, 14:00-17:30,
JS Gericke Library Auditorium, SU

Dankie, programdirekteur.

Goeiedag almal. Good day, everyone.

This is an historic occasion. As you know, Stellenbosch University is about to become the first African university to sign the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities. The goal of this international convention is to make research freely and widely available to society.

Why is this important? Let me explain by telling you about my visit to Windhoek over the weekend. We were there to meet with alumni and friends of Stellenbosch University, and to launch the University's HOPE Project in Namibia.

The one thing that struck me was the tremendous thirst for knowledge there. In the audience were doctors, lawyers, engineers, health workers, development specialists and so on. And all of them were keen to collaborate with us to add to their own development efforts.

This great continent of ours is facing serious challenges:

- There is a need for poverty alleviation and improved health services.
- Democracy must be strengthened and human rights protected.
- We need good governance, peace and security.
- And industrial development is required, but it must be done without harming the environment so that human lives and livelihoods can be sustainable.

The good news is that we have tremendous potential in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world, particularly in terms of human resources.

Some of our best minds have been working on solutions to the problems that we face. This includes the work done by our researchers here at Stellenbosch University.

And that is why I could confidently say to our friends in Namibia that Stellenbosch University is opening its research output to the world. We are taking this step to stimulate even more research and to promote human development, particularly in Africa but also elsewhere.

This ties in with Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project. We are convinced that a university should be relevant to society.

We want to use our expertise and our science to address some of the most pressing needs around us in South Africa and on the rest of the African continent. In this way we aim to become a centre of hope in Africa, from Africa and for Africa, our continent.

And what better way to share our knowledge than through open access? This brings me to the Berlin Declaration, which was adopted in Germany in 2003.

The Declaration takes as its starting point the fact that "(t)he Internet has fundamentally changed the practical and economic realities of distributing scientific knowledge and cultural heritage".

The signatories undertake to support "(n)ew possibilities of knowledge dissemination, not only through the classical form, but also – and increasingly – through the open access paradigm via the Internet".

According to the Declaration, open access contributions must satisfy two conditions:

Firstly, authors and right holders must grant all users a free, irrevocable and worldwide right of access their material, which includes a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital

medium for any responsible purpose. The only proviso is that proper attribution of authorship should be given.

Secondly, a complete version of the work and all supplemental materials should be deposited – and thus published – in at least one online repository.

Stellenbosch University has established such an open access repository. It is called SUNScholar, and it can be accessed by anyone with an internet connection at <https://scholar.sun.ac.za>. It is an electronic archive for the collection, preservation and distribution of digital theses, dissertations, research articles, inaugural addresses, conference proceedings and other material.

By signing the Berlin Declaration, we firstly encourage our own researchers to deposit their material in SUNScholar, our open access repository. And secondly, we commit ourselves to openly sharing our research output with the rest of the world.

Stellenbosch University is a leading research institution, and as such we have a substantial contribution to make in terms of information sharing with others on the continent.

We also want to invite others to come aboard and support open access.

It now gives me great pleasure in proceeding to formally sign the Berlin Declaration on behalf of Stellenbosch University.