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**Greetings**

**APM 2009 - Academic Publishing in the Mediterranean Region: National Contexts and International Experiences**

19th March - 20th March 2009

Aula Magna, University of Florence, Italy



Good morning ladies and gentleman,

I am very happy to open this Conference on 'Academic Publishing in the Mediterranean Region' on behalf of the Rector of the University of Florence, professor Augusto Marinelli, who invited me to give the best greetings of the University and welcome to Florence to all the participants to the Conference. I am particularly glad to introduce this meeting since I am also in the Scientific Committee of Florence University Press, which is one of the sponsors of this Symposium.

The theme of the Conference is very interesting and stimulating and the programme appears very wide, complex, and covering practically all the topics dealing with academic publishing in our Mediterranean Basin.

As I can notice from the time schedule of these two very intense days, after two keynotes on quite general subjects like examples from the Mediterranean Region of private-public partnership in research and on the critical edition of old manuscripts by means of computational tools, you will have the opportunity to debate about many topics dealing with academic publishing. I believe that the Mediterranean region presents some unique peculiarities and very properly you start your sessions underlying these diversities consisting mainly of the "non-English" output with the prevalence in human and social sciences resulting in actual multilingualism, presence of remarkable monographs production, frequent need of translation, and combinations of print and digital products. I guess that the countries of the Mediterranean Basin shall be able to play a very important role in a near future as a strategic hinge for melting of different cultures and in this view academic publishing can be an useful tool to activate and catalyze this multicultural integration.

In this sense cooperation, aimed to achieve what you call "strength in numbers" in the title of the second session, shall be the key for University Presses to succeed in going out from a possible isolation in the world of the publishing houses and in cutting out an autonomous and specific space. Concerning this aspect of networking among the Mediterranean University Presses there is a subject that I have especially at hearth: the publishing cooperation with the Arab world and all the other Mediterranean markets and I appreciate very much that this is the topic of one of the speeches of the second session.

Speaking on academic publishing cannot but treat the theme of innovative technologies mainly associated with learning materials. The development of some supplementary products and services to support the textbooks is an important challenge for the future of academic presses. I believe that we must not have a Messianic trust in the means of information technology because, at the end, they are simply means, but nevertheless the aim of academic presses should be that of exploiting as much as possible these means in order to achieve the main goal to facilitate access to learning content for a widespread diffusion of culture and research. Many questions are completely open about this aspect and I am sure that your third session will give important answers and ideas on how to face out this bet for the future.

On the other hand, if learning and research are topical subjects for academic presses, we cannot forget that in the third millennium societies dissemination of the university research, popularisation and ethics of science, use of scientific content shall have to be strategic goals. In the global world of the millennium just started countries that will succeed in extending the knowledge to the general public certainly will have a great advantage over those that will remain back on this front. I guess that academic presses will be able to play an important role and I think you agree too, taking into account that the forth and last session of the Conference is dedicated to this topic. Concerning the importance of the outreach of scholarly publishing, I would like to remember you that in the far seventeen-ninety-nine Sir Benjamin Thompson, known also as Count Rumford, founded the *Royal Institution of Great Britain* and what was the declared aim ? “for diffusing and facilitating the general introduction of useful mechanical inventions and improvements and for teaching by courses of philosophical lectures and experiments, the application of science to the common purposes of life.”. It is not a mere chance that this Institution was born in the very country where academic presses have the oldest and best tradition.

In these two days you go out and go in this Aula Magna and you will pass in front of the old gentleman in marble thoughtful keeper of our University a few meters far from here at the entrance, on his feet on the landing at this first floor of the old palace hosting the central siege of the University of Florence. This gentleman is Galileo Galilei and he looks at us, he hears our speeches while holding in his hands a telescope with the book by Tolomeo and an armillary sphere at his feet. The father of modern science seems to indicate us that books and instruments coming from the progress of science and technology are the means through which knowledge and culture can develop and disseminate around the world. Books and scientific and technological items, namely computer science, are the topics of a possible and desirable development and progress of academic presses in the Mediterranean Basin.

Well, I stop here my brief introduction to this Conference and greetings opening reminding that the great German dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht in his ‘Galileo’s life’ put in Galileo’s mouth the following words: “Much has been already found, but what we have still to find is much more. And this means other work for the new generations !” Paraphrasing this beautiful sentence we could say that much has been already done in the Mediterranean Basin starting from the very old Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations, but we must trust that even much more we should be able to do in the future. And this is true for every folding of knowledge and culture and consequently much work is to be expected for academic presses of the Mediterranean Region. Have a nice stay in Florence, please accept the best wishes of the University of Florence for the success of your Conference, good work and thank you for your attention !

Prof. Luigi Dei