

**17th Berlin Open Access Conference, Harnack-Haus, Berlin-Dahlem, 5 February 2025**

*Opening remarks*

Colleen Campbell, OA2020 Initiative

Good morning, everyone. It is a pleasure to welcome you all here today.

I'd like to begin with an image—one that acknowledges the many perspectives and experiences in this room. Imagine the great rivers of the world: the **Amazon**, winding through Brazil and across South America; the **Yangtze**, stretching through China; the **Danube**, flowing across Europe; the **Mississippi**, shaping the heart of North America; the purifying **Ganges**, the **Nile**, a lifeline through Africa; and the **Tigris**, a historic river of Mesopotamia. Each of these rivers has its own course, shaped by shifting currents, tributaries that feed into them, and obstacles they must carve their way around. Yet all of them share a common direction—flowing forward toward the open seas of discovery, connection, and collaboration.

This is how I see the open access transition. Some of us have been navigating these waters for years, charting new paths, braving rapids, and discovering new routes forward. Others have joined the journey more recently, yet they've moved swiftly, making remarkable strides in just a short time. And there are those just now pushing off from the shore, looking to us—our shared experience, our hard-earned knowledge—for guidance on how best to navigate ahead.

Today, members of the **OA2020** community from more than 40 countries are here. Throughout the day, we will return to the themes that were defined as critical to the open access transition at the last Berlin Open Access Conference. We have invited members of the publishing community to join us, to reflect on the progress they have made in upholding these principles, and to explore together how we move forward in the next phase of this transformation.

This movement is what brings us together today. Publishers and libraries may have entered this conversation from different starting points, sometimes with different objectives, but we share a fundamental purpose: to support researchers in their work, to help them push the boundaries of discovery, and to ensure that knowledge flows freely and efficiently to those who need it.

Through our collective efforts—especially through transformative agreements—we've already made immense progress. We've proven that when we work together, we can create real structural change. And now we have the opportunity to build on that momentum and to set the course for the next phase, shining a light on the path forward for those who are eager to follow.

I invite all of you to embrace the spirit of co-thinking today. Let's approach these discussions not as separate sides negotiating from across the table, but as partners navigating the same river, charting the best course forward together.

That is the thought I leave with you today, and I hope that you carry it with you throughout the discussions.

Now, to give you a formal welcome on behalf of the Max Planck Society, Richard McElreath, Director of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. Followed by OA2020 co-chairs, Uli Pöschl and Gerard Meijer.