



FIZnews

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Knowledge needs responsibility - for an open infrastructure in the digital age

Karlsruhe, May 19, 2025 — On 12 May 2025, Prof. Wolfram Horstmann, Director and CEO of FIZ Karlsruhe, held a keynote speech at the international conference “Open Metadata and Linked Open Science” in Seoul, Korea, which was organized jointly with Stanford University to mark the 80th anniversary of the founding of the National Library of South Korea, on a key topic for the future: the role of science, libraries and artificial intelligence in the development of an open knowledge infrastructure.

The speech entitled “Open Knowledge Infrastructure” addressed one of the most pressing questions of our time: How can knowledge - as a human, “analog” achievement - be preserved, developed and made accessible in a world where digital information is available in unprecedented quantities?

The central thesis: information is not the same as knowledge. Knowledge is created in people - through interpretation, through creating meaning, through responsibility. Digital tools and artificial intelligence can support this process, but they cannot replace it. On the contrary: they challenge us to take a closer look at how we create, share and protect knowledge.

In his speech, Prof. Horstmann emphasized that science and libraries have a historical responsibility. They have always been the producers of knowledge; today they are faced with the task of creating a global, open knowledge infrastructure that also has an impact on the everyday lives of people at schools, in families, industry and politics. Such an infrastructure does not yet exist on a broad scale, although it would be technically possible. Other applications, mostly of a commercial or political nature, currently dominate the field.

Artificial intelligence in particular shows how necessary it is to rethink the relationship between digital information, knowledge and truth. For when people start to confuse machine systems such as ChatGPT with knowledge carriers, there is a risk of a loss of orientation. Trust in scientifically proven knowledge, public institutions and democratic discourse is at stake.

The speech was an appeal: libraries and science must work together to shape the digital knowledge infrastructure - openly, accessibly, reliably. They have the know-how, the data and the social legitimacy. What needs to be strengthened is the common, global will to consistently pursue this path.

Read the entire speech here:

<https://www.fiz-karlsruhe.de/sites/default/files/FIZ/Dokumente/FIZnews/who-rede--open-knowledge-infrastructure.pdf>

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