

# **Grußwort**

**von Frau Rektorin Professorin Dr. Karla Pollmann**

**anlässlich des Fiesole Retreats 2026:  
„Welcome from the University of Tübingen“**

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Alte Aula

Dear researchers,  
dear colleagues from around the world,  
dear guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the second day of the Fiesole Retreat. As President of the University of Tübingen, it is both a profound honor and a personal delight to greet you here today. I hope that yesterday's discussions have already sparked new ideas, raised challenging questions, and opened pathways for collaboration.

In 2025, I had the pleasure of attending - for the first time - the Fiesole Retreat myself, near the beautiful city of Florence. The Retreat brings together in one place people who do not often have the opportunity to speak with one another in depth: librarians, scholars, publishers, technologists, and leaders of research infrastructures. This unique constellation was to me as inspiring as it was intellectually invigorating. So I was delighted when Michele Casalini accepted my invitation to host a retreat here in Tübingen!

What makes this retreat so distinctive is not only its focus on the most pressing issues in our field, but also its atmosphere: informal yet rigorous, intimate yet far-reaching, relaxed yet deeply thoughtful. We can step back from daily routines to engage in conversations that help us imagine what academic communication could and should become. The Fiesole Retreat provides a rare environment in which such imagination can flourish. It allows us to think not only about what we do, but about why we do it – and how we might do it differently.

In the present time, we find ourselves at a moment of profound transformation. The 21st century has brought extraordinary technological advances, new forms of knowledge production, and unprecedented possibilities for access and collaboration. At the same time, it has confronted us with ethical dilemmas, geopolitical uncertainties, and structural challenges that demand careful consideration. In this increasingly complex environment, central issues such as open access, data and research security, and export control are gaining significant importance. These areas urgently require resilient and forward-looking responses. Responses to which this conference will meaningfully contribute. In this context, the Humanities and the institutions that support them play a crucial role.

For the Humanities offer something indispensable: a high degree of reflexivity, the ability to contextualize, to question, to interpret. They help us understand the ethical implications of technological progress, the societal consequences of innovation, and the human needs that must guide our decisions. In a world marked by geopolitical volatility, the Humanities also

contribute to what we might call *knowledge diplomacy*, a form of intercultural exchange that goes beyond political negotiation and economic interest, and that fosters mutual understanding through shared inquiry.

Yet the Humanities also face significant challenges. The monograph remains the gold standard of academic communication, but the costs associated with book processing charges continue to rise. Open access, while essential for democratizing knowledge, has shifted financial burdens from readers to authors, and large-scale agreements with commercial publishers have become increasingly expensive. This raises fundamental questions: how do we ensure that open access remains socially fair? how do we balance cost and quality? how do we maintain editorial excellence in a landscape where resources are limited?

One promising path lies in strengthening not-for-profit, publicly funded publication infrastructures, including Diamond Open Access models, and in fostering closer collaboration between University presses, libraries, and other dissemination structures. These are not merely technical or financial questions; they are questions about the values that underpin our academic ecosystem.

Digital transformation has also expanded the role of academic libraries in remarkable ways. Libraries are no longer solely repositories of knowledge; they have become information hubs that support the entire research lifecycle. They host publication platforms for e-books, journals, research data, and other open-access materials. They manage publication funds, advise on data management, and collaborate with departments across the campus to ensure that research outputs are prepared, archived, and made accessible in sustainable ways.

In doing so, libraries contribute to the digital sovereignty of research, a crucial element of democratic societies. By offering open, transparent, and tracking-free infrastructures, they provide alternatives to commercial systems whose interests do not always align with those of the academic community.

At the University of Tübingen, we have embraced these developments with determination. Over the past decade, we have significantly expanded our capacities in Computational Methods, Digital Humanities, Artificial Intelligence, and Machine Learning. Our Digital Humanities Center, which evolved from an e-Science initiative, anchors these efforts within the Humanities and Social Sciences. Our researchers are active partners in the Excellence Cluster *Machine Learning for Science*, recently renewed for another seven years. And our University Library plays

a vital role in these developments, for example through its work with *Transkribus*, which enables automated recognition of handwritten and printed texts.

Tübingen is also deeply engaged in national research data infrastructures. We participate in nine of Germany's 26 National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) consortia and are associated with many more. This reflects our commitment not only to advancing research, but also to ensuring that research data, including complex Humanities data, are curated, preserved, and shared responsibly.

These developments are closely aligned with the broader direction we pursue as a University of Excellence. Under the guiding idea of *Research – Relevance – Responsibility*, we aim to create an academic environment in which innovation grows from collaboration and in which academic work remains deeply connected to societal needs.

Several elements of our excellence strategy resonate strongly with the themes of this retreat. One is our commitment to fostering a *culture of cooperation*, a recognition that the most meaningful advances emerge when disciplines, infrastructures, and perspectives intersect. Another is what we call *ChangeAbility*: the ability of a University to remain responsive and open to new research paradigms, technological developments, and shifts in society. Few areas illustrate this need more clearly than academic communication, where expectations and possibilities evolve at remarkable speed.

Equally important is our dedication to *engaging more fully with society*. The democratization of knowledge, a topic at the heart of many discussions here at Fiesole, is central to this mission. It challenges us to rethink how we communicate research questions and results, how we build trust, and how we ensure that knowledge remains a public good.

These principles do not stand apart from our daily work but are intrinsically connected to it; they shape the way we think about libraries, data infrastructures, open access, and the future of the Humanities. And they align closely with the spirit of the Fiesole Retreat: reflective, collaborative, and committed to imagining an academic ecosystem that is both innovative and humane.

As the discussions continue today, let me gesture briefly toward the themes that will guide the remainder of this conference and situate our gathering within its broader arc.

This morning, Session 2, "*Collection as Data*", will explore how collections become research data and how this transformation reshapes methods, infrastructures, and interpretive practices.

With speakers from Marbach, Marburg, Kyoto, and Oxford, the session highlights the extraordinary diversity of what “data” can mean in the humanities.

In the afternoon, Session 3, “*Preserving Integrity: Collective Actions for Trust and Impact*”, will address the infrastructures and partnerships that underpin trust in scholarly communication. Contributions from JSTOR, Clarivate, Coherent Digital, and the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium (SCELC) underscore the global networks of stewardship and governance that shape our scholarly ecosystems.

The day will conclude with an optional visit to Mohr Siebeck, followed by the conference dinner, generously sponsored by EBSCO.

Tomorrow (Wednesday), Session 4, “*Collection Development under Constraint*”, will examine how libraries and publishing infrastructures navigate a world marked by limited resources, geopolitical pressures, and the need for new forms of collaboration. With speakers from Lille, Florida, Paris, London, and Cairn.info, this session brings together international perspectives on cooperation and innovation.

The Retreat will close with final reflections and an optional tour of the University Library.

Across all three days, one theme stands out: the future of scholarly communication depends on *collaboration* across institutions, disciplines, and nations. No single library, publisher, or University can address the challenges we face alone. Whether we are speaking about data stewardship, metadata standards, digital preservation, or the evolving forms of reading and authorship, the solutions we seek require shared responsibility and collective imagination.

I hope that Tübingen provides an environment that inspires this kind of reflection and exchange in particular. Our city has long been a place where ideas travel freely, where traditions meet innovation, and where academic work is pursued with both rigor and imagination. I am confident that your conversations here will contribute to shaping the future of knowledge in meaningful ways.

Let me close by expressing my gratitude to the organizers, to the speakers, and to all of you who have traveled here to participate. Your work matters. Your insights matter. And the dialogues you engage in here will resonate far beyond this retreat.

I wish you a stimulating, productive, and enjoyable time here in Tübingen!

Thank you.