

## Editor's Preface

Whenever we talk about information, *access* is one of the terms most frequently used. The concept has many facets and suffers from a lack of definition. Its many dimensions are being analysed in different disciplines, from different viewpoints and in different traditions of research; yet they are rarely perceived as parts of a whole, as relevant aspects of one phenomenon. The book series *Age of Access? Fundamental Questions of the Information Society* takes up the challenge and attempts to bring the relevant discourses, scholarly as well as practical, together in order to come to a more precise idea of the central role that the accessibility of information plays for human societies.

The ubiquitous talk of the “information society” and the “age of access” hints at this central role, but tends to implicitly suggest either that information is accessible everywhere and for everyone, or that it *should be*. Both suggestions need to be more closely analysed. The first volume of the series addresses the topic of information justice and thus the question of whether information *should be* accessible everywhere and for everyone. Further volumes analyse in detail the physical, economic, intellectual, linguistic, psychological, political, demographic and technical dimensions of the accessibility and inaccessibility of information – enabling readers to test the hypothesis that information is accessible everywhere and for everyone.

The series places special emphasis on the fact that access to information has a diachronic as well as a synchronic dimension – and that thus cultural heritage research and practices are highly relevant to the question of access to information. Its volumes analyse the potential and the consequences of new access technologies and practices, and investigate areas in which accessibility is merely simulated or where the inaccessibility of information has gone unnoticed. The series also tries to identify the limits of the quest for access. The resulting variety of topics and discourses is united in one common proposition: It is only when all dimensions of the accessibility of information have been analysed that we can rightfully speak of an information society.

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