

FIZ Karlsruhe
Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure

FIZnews

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To what extent may research libraries assist with legal issues?

Karlsruhe, November 24, 2026 — Whether the topic is electronic publishing, licenses, open access, or research data, legal questions arise time and again in research libraries. What information are libraries permitted to provide? And when are they allowed to offer advice in specific cases?

Prof. Dr. Thomas Hartmann of FIZ Karlsruhe spoke on this topic on November 10, 2026, at the fall conference of the Chemical-Physical-Technical Section (CPT) of the Information Service Providers within the Max Planck Society. He explained what types of legal advice research libraries are permitted to offer. Questions that frequently arise in practice were also discussed.

The presentation was based on Hartmann's legal opinion on institutional research data management. In it, he examines—based on the Legal Services Act—the conditions under which academic institutions may provide advice on research data. One option is a two-tiered approach: Researchers first direct their questions to a point of contact within their institution. If a more in-depth legal review is necessary, that point of contact can consult a specialized advisory service.

Read the legal opinion at Zenodo

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FIZ Karlsruhe – Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure is one of the leading addresses for scientific information and services and a member of the Leibniz Association. Our core tasks are to provide science and industry with professional research and patent information and to develop innovative information infrastructures, with, for example, a focus on research data management, knowledge graphs and digital platforms. To this end, we conduct our own research, cooperate with renowned universities and research associations and are internationally and interdisciplinarily networked. FIZ Karlsruhe is a non-profit limited liability company and one of the largest non-academic institutions of its kind. For more information, please visit www.fiz-karlsruhe.de/en

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