**Not just a notebook -
How ELNs are becoming the digital platforms for the lab of the future**Dr. Simon Rolf Bungers, labfolder GmbH, Berlin, Germany; presenting author,

Many users still think of digital lab notebooks still as the electronic form of the traditional paper lab book. However, this is only a small part of what a so-called Electronic Laboratory Notebook (ELN) can achieve today and can become in the future.

First of all, the lab notebookbook belongs to the personal basic equipment of every employee - such as lab coats and goggles. In contrast, laboratory equipment, specialized analysis software and many laboratory information and management systems (LIMS) are specifically designed for a particular laboratory environment or work role.

The ELN falls more into the category of a productivity and collaboration platform for lab teams. And with around 400,000 laboratories worldwide, it falls into the category of a mass product, unlike the special software for the analysis X or the device software of the manufacturer Y, which can only serve a specific segment within this market.

As a digital mass-produced product, the ELN is present in the laboratory – always and everywhere. Unlike special applications, the software is not opened on demand, but is running constantly, just as the the e-mail program, the instant messenger or social media pages.

This clarifies what role digital lab books will play in the near future: Most likely, they’ll develop into something like a a gateway to digital transformation, connecting all data streams are linked. The more researchers and lab employees use them, the greater the demand for further digital improvements in the lab.

This means that the market will change: from the current supply market, in which strong, expensive offers are the norm, to a demand market in which customer demand and platform solutions will give rise to affordable, more easy to use and more easy to connect solutions.