CALL FOR ACTION!!

Lars Björnshauge

Introduction

Edited closing words from the Swedish conference “Meetingplace Open Access”, Lund, November 24–25 2010 – a gathering of 100 participants from all over Sweden working with institutional repositories and Open Access. The meeting was arranged by the national Swedish cooperation Open Access.se in cooperation with the Library Head Office, Lund University.

Call for action!!

This conference, which is about to come to an end, can be considered as an executive summary telling about all the work that we together have been doing during the recent years and the results we have achieved so far. We have together been developing standardized, interoperable institutional repositories. We have been developing and will continue to develop these repositories to encompass not only traditional scholarly publications like articles, dissertations, and theses, but also other kinds of digital objects, such as open educational resources, research data, and, further on, to link publications to research data, information about research projects, research grants, thus enabling our repositories to provide data for research evaluation, resource allocation, bibliometric analysis and ultimately become Current Research Information Systems.

Today we can see – as Alma Swan so convincingly pointed out yesterday – that our repositories add value to our institutions, to our researchers, and to society and the international community at large: increased visibility, increased impact of research, improved decision making and increased transfer of knowledge from our universities to society, small and medium sized enterprises etc. I think we have a job to do in order to bring this to our masters’ attention!

Our repositories also add value to the researcher: again increased visibility, increased impact and new possibilities to connect to researchers all over the world.

But our activities also add value to ourselves and our libraries. Due to our activities with repositories, given ourselves new possibilities to position ourselves within our universities, given ourselves new opportunities to develop our competence, given ourselves new career opportunities.

This conference provides a balance of our activities in terms of our lobbying for open access. In the early years (not that long ago), we were the only ones working with these issues, always asking ourselves: “where are the researchers, where are the university managements, where are the research funding agencies?”

Now they are onboard, now they are here! We have managed to bring the Swedish Association of Higher Education onboard, the managements of our universities are onboard, and, due to the outstanding efforts of the Swedish National Library in organizing our cooperation under the umbrella of Open Access.se, we have also brought the research funders to the table. The Swedish Research Council, The Swedish Research Council Formas, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences are all involved in the Open Access.se alongside the Knowledge Foundation. Most of these as well as the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation have issued open access mandates. So now the important players are onboard. What an accomplishment!

Suddenly we are in serious business! Now we have to support the implementation of these mandates, see to that our universities and researchers comply with the mandates. More work, but exiting!

To sum up: We have made substantial progress with parallel publishing and institutional repositories – in short Green Open Access.

We have worked a lot on this and there is so much more to do!

But…

For some of us, maybe many of us, the work in promoting and lobbying for open access has not only been motivated to demonstrate added value for our institutions, our researchers and society at large, but

1 http://www.kb.se/openaccess/
2 http://www.kb.se/Dokument/open%20access/Swan%20-%20Lund%20Nov%202010.pdf
just as much to bring about change in a scholarly publishing system, which is – and there is plenty of
evidence for that – unsustainable, too expensive,
inefficient, monopolized and biased, and, basically,
excluding large parts of the world!
Still some publishers do whatever they can to put up
obstacles for Green OA, hiring expensive lobbyists and
lawyers to spread misinformation – guess who are
paying for that? Yes, right – we are via our big deals!
But so far there is no evidence, that Green OA will do
the job: to bring about radical change in the dominant
scholarly publishing system!
What happens when – and this is what many expect
will happen – parallel publishing is adequately
comprehensive and when libraries in dire straits are
tempted to cancel subscriptions and big deals, and try
to rely on open access versions of toll access articles in
institutional repositories? Good question, right?
Normally, when demand decreases market
mechanisms will have effect on pricing – that is
reduced pricing. The only problem here is that in
commercial publishing no market mechanism exists.
So reduced demand will probably have the opposite
effect – increased pricing!

**But…**

There are publishers that are trying to accomplish
what we would like to see, namely a publishing system
preserving peer-review and quality control and, at the
same time, providing the content in open access.
These Gold OA publishers are struggling to find new
business models in order to reach sustainable
operations. These publishers need our support!

They need consolidation in order to achieve critical
mass, which in turn will reduce the current article
processing fees!
There are organizations, associations and services who
are working for the same objectives – to promote open
access to quality research, and to support the
development of a new publishing system, that will
guarantee extensive usage rights, bridge the digital
divide, and, in short, serve nations and society at large.
They too need our support!

While we are working intensively with Green OA, we
are at the same time conserving and supporting the
very system that we want to change and we are doing
that very efficiently through our consortia. When it
comes to supporting Gold OA, we are merely
providing lip service!

The transition from one system to another always
incurs transition costs. If we want things to change we
must invest, and we must convince our masters that
we have to invest!

GOLD OA publishers like BioMed Central/Springer
Open, PLoS, and Hindawi all have membership
programmes, which provide discounts on article
processing fees. BioLine has a support programme.

SPARC Europe works for Open Access and the
recently established Open Access Scholarly Publishers
Association (OASPA) is organizing OA-publishers.
They too need our support as well.

In the table below you will find an overview of the
current support from the Nordic countries to those
publishers and organizations:

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9 http://www.bioline.org.br/
10 http://www.sparceurope.org/
11 http://www.oaspa.org/
12 www.doaj.org – being the host of the DOAJ I will not and
cannot complain about the Nordic support, but there is room for
more!
13 Open Access.se sponsors the DOAJ
We should do much better and we can do much better to support those who work for the same objectives that we do!

It is very much appreciated, that in Sweden, due to the efforts of the National Library, the two –conflicting – tracks Open Access and the licensing consortium are slowly coming together. In the licensing agreements with commercial publishers clauses about parallel publishing will be included, and, where appropriate, discounts on APCs in hybrid options will be included as well. This is good! But we need to do better.

I call upon the national committees in Sweden and in the other Nordic/Baltic countries to establish national membership agreements to BioMed Central, PLoS, Hindawi, BioLine, SPARC Europe, OASPA and other appropriate publishers, organizations and initiatives 14.

During the IFLA satellite meeting: Open Access and the Changing Role of Libraries 15 Leslie Chan, Director Bioline International, launched the 1% idea 16 - that is: if the library consortia allocated the equivalent of 1% of the turnover of their license agreements (big deals) in support of OA-publishers and organizations working for Gold OA, this would indeed make “one heck of a difference”!

It is time to stop paying lip service to Gold OA, it is about time to stop just talking in positive terms about open access journals and monographs, it is about time to invest, and it is about time to actively support those who are trying to implement what we want to happen!!

Next time you sign an invoice from one of the big publishers think about the 1%!!

Lars Björnshauge Director of Libraries 17 Lund University

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14 Like OAPEN for instance – http://www.oapen.org/xtf/home?brand=oapen


16 http://www.kb.se/dokument/Aktuellt/utbildning/ifla%20OA%202010/Chan_preIFLA2010.pdf

17 Needless to say, but anyway: Lund University Libraries have membership to BioMed Central, PLoS, Hindawi, BioLine, SPARC Europe and OASPA