

PROMOTING OPEN ACCESS IN FINLAND – THE OA-JES PROJECT

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Abstract

A country report on open access activities is naturally up-to-date only for a very short time. Projects end and new projects and operational system continue the activities. The basis for this article are the results from the two-year project "OA-JES" which ended in Dec. 2007. The project was advancing open access in three main areas: providing information, building of repositories and building a platform for society publishers to publish scientific journals in Finland. However, the activities that have been started in universities in Finland need a continuation and in the latter part of this article we discuss a road map for an open access infrastructure in Finland.

1. Introduction

Following the publication of the memorandum "Recommendations for the promotion of open access in scientific publishing in Finland" in 2005, the Finnish Ministry of Education allocated financial support for a project aiming at finding concrete means for advancing open access publishing in Finland. The project "OA-JES" finally ran for two years (2006-2007) and was coordinated by the National Library of Finland. Partners in the project included the Helsinki University of Technology and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. Cooperation with the FinnOA working group was intense throughout the project. It was decided to concentrate the efforts into three activities: 1. Actively providing information about open access publishing to researchers, university and research organization administrators and information professionals; 2. Promoting the establishment of open access repositories at universities, polytechnics and public research organizations, including technical support; 3. Building an open access publication platform for publishers of scientific journals in Finland.

2. Main results

2.1 Information

The project ran an information campaign targeting research workers, publishers, libraries, science policy makers and funders. For this task it employed a part-time information officer, but in addition other persons engaged in the project, in particular the open archives coordinator, were active. Lectures and talks were given

across the country, articles and news items were published in magazines and on the internet. An open web journal, Openaccess.fi, was established.

2.2 Institutional repositories

The goal of this subproject was to facilitate the establishment of OAI-compatible open repositories in Finland. It was realized as two parallel strands: 1) the national coordination of repositories and 2) the development of a national service providing a centralized DSpace based platform for those institutions that do not want to build a repository of their own, together with general support for DSpace based repositories. The number of repositories is 27 according to a recent survey.

2.2.1 National coordination of institutional repositories

The project employed a part-time coordinator, whose tasks were to inform about best practices and to give advice and technical support for establishing and running repositories. The coordinator established as criteria for an open repository the provision of full-text documents on local servers, the open availability of both metadata and full-text, the long term availability of documents (implying stable document identifiers, e.g. URN) and OAI-compatibility. In addition to performing the information and support tasks the coordinator has harvested several repositories in Finland in order to detect weak spots with room for improvement. She has also kept contact with international projects, chiefly DRIVER and DART-Europe, and informed about them.

2.2.2 DSpace central repository platform

This part of the project was undertaken by the National Library. A centralized platform based on DSpace software, <http://oa.doria.fi>, was established as a service for institutions not wishing to build and maintain their own institutional repository. Four universities and three polytechnics are currently represented. The national URN resolver, initially maintained by the Helsinki University of Technology as part of the coordination strand of the OA-JES project, moved to the National Library and was further developed there. Tools (based on the Manakin

software) for developing the interface of DSpace repositories were developed and taken into use.

Roughly half of the current repositories in Finland use the DSpace software. It was considered useful to develop a national knowledge center for DSpace based repositories. The project has led to regional cooperation in the form of a knowledge considered reliable and important by clients.

2.3 An Open Access publication platform

The aim of this project was to build a working publishing platform for Open Access journals published by the member societies of the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, but which could also be adopted to the needs of other publishers of Open Access journals. The Open Journal Systems (OJS)-platform was chosen as the basis for development. The platform was adapted to local use i.a. by translating the interfaces into Finnish (and partly into Swedish) and tested with initially three journals. At present, the platform, accessible through the portal www.tisci.fi, is ready and used wholly or in part by 13 journals (not all of them, regrettably, Open Access). The work was performed by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, and is continuing as part of the Nordbib project "Aiding Scientific Journals Towards Open Access Publishing".

3. A road map for Finnish Open Access

The report of the Finnish OA-JES project also gives us reason to provide recommendations for further development of an information environment based on Open Access principles. There is a need to define what kind of building bricks and resources are needed to plan and build an OA-infrastructure for Finland, taking into account the two existing roads to Open Access 1) Open Access journals and 2) institutional archives as defined already in the Budapest Open Access Initiative in 2002. We will in the following, for reasons of clarity, structure our recommendations keeping the two roads as separate even though they together form the recommended OA-infrastructure.

3.1 Building an infrastructure

3.1.1 Institutional publication repositories

The first step in our opinion is to support the ongoing work in starting, maintaining and improving institutional repositories in the universities and research institutes. The idea behind the OAI-protocol is interoperability and the possibility to harvest data from decentralized archives for different usages. Local archives designed for organizational needs form the

basis of the OA-infrastructure. However, we do not exclude cooperation with and centralized archives for organizations that do not wish to build archives of their own.

The important thing is to establish a coordination function providing best practice recommendations and a forum for discussion and recommendations regarding for example quality factors and copyright, ensuring that an institution has the right to publish material produced by its staff. As Open Access publishing and institutional archives are international in nature there is also a need for international cooperation and participation in international projects and initiatives. The form of the coordination function and how it should be organized is one of the main points that need to be discussed. This task could be initially tackled in the FinnOA group.

The integration of current systems for publication archives with the existing and planned systems for collecting data on research activities is also one of the important steps in providing an OA-based information architecture.

Long term preservation of material in electronic form published in the archives is the last piece in the OA-architecture. The long term archiving function is naturally a concern for the National Library but also for the managers of the local archives is finding a sustainable format for documents an important issue.

3.1.2 OA-journals

The project by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies to support electronic journal publishing and eventually also the Open Access format among learned societies has got a good start and needs to be supported also in the future. Many more societies and also research institutions have declared an interest in establishing Open Access journals, but lack of funds has prevented them from realizing their plans.

A major concern among the society publishers is how to combine membership fees including a subscription to a print journal, or subscriptions that generate income, with the Open Access format. New business models for small learned society publishers are needed.

The project also studied the possibility of transferring metadata into the reference database for Finnish articles Arto. The problem for users today is that Arto is not an Open Access service.

3.2 Advocating researchers to support Open Access

It is generally agreed that the main problem with institutional archives is not of a technical art, but with filling the archives with material, especially copies of scientific journal articles. The incentives for

researchers to submit to archives are visibility, free access, and impact. However, these incentives might not be strong enough to overcome the problems of dealing with copyright issues and permissions from publishers. The need for support in legal matters and in providing the accepted personal version of an article text for the archive is evident. The social factor, e.g. is Open Access publishing accepted by colleagues and promoted in the department or the university, is of importance. The question of mandating submissions to Open Access repositories either by the university and/or the research funding organization has been discussed and mandating has been put into practice internationally and also a decision pro mandating has been taken in the University of Helsinki.

We can also see very discipline specific patterns regarding Open Access publishing. In particular, decisions taken by the research funding bodies may change the publishing patterns greatly. The international trends affect the behaviour of the researchers also in Finland.

3.3 Conclusions

It is in the long-term interests of the advanced,

modern, information-based society that the results of fundamental research are made freely available. The obvious vehicle for this is Open Access publishing, but the transition to this new mode of operation will not come about as long as the broad research community alone has to pay the costs involved. The experience gained in the project unequivocally shows that earmarked resources must be allocated for a transitional period to promoting Open Access infrastructure and making Open Access publishing the normal channel for publication chosen by researchers. Advocacy and incentives for the researchers is important in order to fill the archives with high class material and to support Open Access journals.

In addition, coordination of activities and knowledge sharing continues to be important. In Finland, the FinnOA-group will continue to be an important player in this respect.

New business models are needed for learned society and institutional publishers to convert from print to electronic publishing and eventually to Open Access publishing. Public financial support, at least during a transitional period, would also here be of great help.

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