

## THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND OPEN ACCESS POLICY: THE WORK AND THE ATTITUDE OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF

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Open access is of great importance to libraries and students as well as the general public. The benefits from it are great for everyone, however the main advantage must be said to be to universities and the academic research community. Since the open access movement gained momentum in the nineties, many Western universities have implemented an open access policy for their academic staff. Funding agencies have done the same. The European Union has also adopted an open access policy since 2008.

Iceland has been comparatively slow in moving towards an acceptance of open access in comparison with the other Nordic countries. During the last couple of years open access has however become more widely known and accepted within the research community. The Council for Science and Technology, which formulates public policy on science and technology in Iceland under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, included the following sentence in its policy statement for 2010-2012: „Research results are of limited benefit if they are not accessible to others involved in research or innovation.“ The Council also called for the adoption of a public open access policy. Rannís, the Icelandic Centre for Research, adopted mandatory open access publishing for those receiving grants in January 2013. In October 2012 The National and University Library signed the Berlin declaration.

### Two articles on open access publishing

A recent article by open access advocates Ian Watson and Guðmund Á. Þórisson, *The Icelandic Open Access Barometer 2013*, was published in *Samtíð* (Contemporary Society): An Icelandic Journal of society and culture in December 2013. The article contains a survey of journals published in Iceland, an estimate of how many could be classified as publishing quality-controlled research that aims to contribute to general knowledge and how many were open access. The authors said that the result, showing a relatively large percentage of open access in Iceland, came as a welcome surprise. Of the 51 journals classified as scholarly, „16 were completely open, with articles

available for digital download from the moment of publication, 20 were completely behind toll barriers (published only on paper and sold to libraries and subscribers), and the remaining 15 released their articles openly in digital form after an embargo period of varying length“.

Solveig Þorsteinsdóttir published an article in *Sciecom Info 1* (2014) on open access to research articles published in Iceland in 2013. She found that a total of 305 scientific articles, (30%), had been published in open access that year, 118 articles in golden or hybrid OA and 187 articles in green OA. Þorsteinsdóttir's article was based on a measurement of articles found in Web of Science (WOS) but it should be noted that most of the Icelandic journals surveyed in Watson's and Þórisson's article do not have a digital object identifier (DOI) and are therefore not to be found in WOS.

### Open access mandates in Iceland

Only two of the seven universities in Iceland have adopted open access mandates. In January 2012 Bifröst University adopted an open access mandate, becoming the first Icelandic university to do so. (The policy was published on the university website in May the same year.) In November 2011 the University of Iceland formed a working group with representatives from each of the five schools as well as a representative from the National and University Library. The working group was to draft an open access policy for discussion and eventual acceptance within the academic community and submit the draft to the University administration before April 1st 2012. This article will discuss the work involved in drafting the mandate and the ensuing debate among the academic staff.

### The University of Iceland

The University of Iceland is by far the largest university in Iceland. In 2013-2014 there were in total more than 14.000 students enrolled, 3.500 masters students and 500 doctoral candidates. There were over

a 1000 foreign students, from approximately 80 different countries. Tenured academic staff numbered 660 but there were also more than 2500 part-time teachers.

### **Open access mandate for the University of Iceland: Preliminary work**

The working group met frequently during the first three months of 2012, collecting and studying mandates already accepted by other universities, both in Scandinavia and the US. A decision was taken to model the university's mandate on Harvard's policies. By the end of March the group was ready with the first draft and submitted it to the Division of Science and Innovation whose main role is to allocate research-related funds, evaluate performance of academic staff and oversee the work of evaluation committees.

However, almost two years were to pass before the final draft was accepted by the University Council on February 6th, 2014, effective from July 1st.

The working group agreed on all major issues and the first draft was quickly agreed on and completed. The draft was based on Harvard's open access policies. The working group wanted not only to encourage members of the academic staff to publish their scholarly output in open access journals or repositories but to require them to do so. In the final draft, however, the wording was changed: „The University of Iceland is committed to disseminating the results of all research carried out within the University. The University encourages the members of its academic staff to publish their scientific articles in open access journals, open archives, preprint databases or otherwise.” Academic staff were, however, required to make their articles available in green OA.

### **University of Iceland mandate on open access to research (abbreviated version)**

*Accepted by the University Council February 6th 2014.*

The University of Iceland is committed to disseminating the results of all scholarly research carried out within the University. The University encourages the members of its academic staff to publish their scientific articles in open access journals, open archives, preprint databases or otherwise. This policy on open access does not include books or book chapters.

Members of the academic staff shall provide the Division of Science and Innovation electronic access free of charge to the final version of their scientific papers no later than the date of publication. This can be done by submitting an article to the division in an appropriate format (such as PDF), sending a link to

the open access publication of the article, or in some other appropriate manner. The University of Iceland may save the articles and make them available in an open electronic repository. The policy applies to all scholarly articles authored or co-authored while the author is employed by the University except for any articles completed before the adoption of this policy and any articles for which the Faculty member entered into an incompatible licensing or assignment agreement before the adoption of this policy. The Division of Science and Innovation may also exempt individual papers or delay publication for a specified period should the author submit a written request to that effect, stating his reasons.

The policy also applies to students' final theses, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. On February 21, 2008 The University of Iceland Senate approved a motion for electronic submission of all theses to the University's open access repository.

The Division of Science and Innovation is responsible for interpreting this policy, resolving disputes concerning its interpretation and application, and recommending changes to the Faculty. The policy will be reviewed after three years and a report presented to the University Senate.

The working group also submitted various proposals and suggestions on a number of issues which the group considered necessary to take into account, such as unavoidable costs and guaranteed funding. It was also pointed out that copyright issues were often complex and negotiations with publishers difficult and the university would have to ensure that members of the academic staff had access to proper advice on publishing agreements. Special rules would have to be made concerning students' theses. The necessity of introducing the policy to the academic staff and listening to their views on it was also emphasized. Unfortunately there was at first next to no introduction and the first draft was not circulated until the start of the autumn semester 2012 when various authorities were asked to comment on it: each of the five schools of the University, the National and University Library, The Student Council, The Committee for Quality Research, the Council for Science and Technology etc. At that time the draft was not made generally available to all academic staff.

### **Comments made on the draft**

In March 2013 the working group was at long last sent a summary of the comments submitted by the above-mentioned authorities. There was general agreement

on the main content of the draft. But most also voiced concerns. There was some anxiety as to the freedom of research and the possibility to choose one's publisher, that is whether it would be possible to publish in closed access journals with a high impact factor. Some comments touched on book publishing even though the policy stated explicitly that books and book chapters were not included. Other comments referred to the future of Icelandic journal publishing and concerns about peer review and whether open access meant less quality. But most comments were concerned with funding and whether money designated for research would be used to pay for open access. There was also general agreement that more information should be made available on the concept of open access and that more discussion needed to take place before the policy was accepted.

### **Discussion on the academic staff postlist**

In April the draft was introduced and discussed at a meeting of the University Forum. The discussion was mainly positive but emphasis was on a better general introduction.

In May a spontaneous discussion on open access took place on the university postlist. The main focus of the discussion was on copyright issues, that is whether the University had the right to require their employees to provide the Division of Science and Innovation with electronic access to their scientific papers.

A teacher at the Faculty of Law began the discussion by doubting that the policy was legal according to Icelandic law. A professor at the Faculty of Medicine answered by saying that most scientific journals claimed copyright for articles they published anyway. He added that he felt an obligation to share his research results since they were paid for by the University and through public funding. In his opinion the Icelandic copyright law was outdated and needed to be amended. National and University librarian Ingibjörg Sverrisdóttir took part in the discussion, reminding the academic community of Skemman, the university repository and compared open access to legal deposit saying that the thought behind them was the same, that is to preserve knowledge and ensure access to it for everyone, open access being the modern equivalent to legal deposit. The debate ended with the following words from a professor of physics: "Wise men have said that in science no-one owns anything before it is made accessible through open publication. Those who keep their work in a drawer cannot claim to have been the work's author."

This year on February 6th the policy was accepted by the University Council and was to take effect on July 1st.



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