

THE NORWEGIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ADOPTS AN OPEN ACCESS POLICY

Jan Erik Frantsovåg

The first research funder's open access policy in the Nordic-Baltic region was adopted by The Research Council of Norway (Forskingsrådet) in January 28th 2009. The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) could have beaten Forskningsrådet to the first place, but in their December meeting decided not to make mandatory deposit a contract element – yet.

A full list of Norwegian open archives is available at the openaccess.no wiki. Of 30 government-funded universities and university colleges only two have neither an archive nor any concrete plans of establishing one. 24 archives are up and running with documents in them, while another three regional colleges only have to start putting documents into their archives. The Oslo University College has decided to establish an archive, and is currently establishing and manning an archive project to this effect. In the research institute sector, comprising some 60-80 institutions, depending on definitions, the coverage is not at all that good, only some 10-15 institutions have an archive ready for use. The situation is the same in the non-governmental college sector (Some 30 institutions currently with 7 archives). However, through the services of Bibsys Brage <http://www.bibsys.no/wps/wcm/connect/BIBSYS+Eng/> and HeRA, <http://hera.helsebiblioteket.no/hera/pages/about.html> any institution can establish an archive in a short time and at low cost. Therefore, archive coverage is not really an issue in the Norwegian discussion.

How forceful is the Norwegian decision? It is not a policy marked by use of brute force. It is too early to be sure about details; only a policy has been adopted, and the actual rules and procedures are to be worked out during 2009. The policy is – for the time being – limited to articles in scientific journals. It says, that Open Access should not in principle be limited to journal articles, but as this is the dominating form of scientific publishing, it is deemed convenient to limit

the policy to journal articles at this stage.

Forskingsrådet is explicitly reluctant to mandate a depositing regime that may infringe upon the scientists' right to choose their publishing venues freely, or that may conflict with publishers' rights. The policy states, that journal articles built upon research funded, wholly or in part, by Forskningsrådet, shall be deposited in an institutional archive if one exists. The policy does not state what to do if the author's institution has no archive. It seems that a subject-based repository will be an acceptable solution, but there is no reference to any "archive of last resort" for authors without an archive. It may seem that the policy only will have effect for authors having an institutional archive at hand. If the author publishes in a journal that does not allow such self-archiving, and the author receives a negative reply to a request for permission, the author will be exempt from complying with the mandate.

In other words, what this policy mandates is about, more or less, is that academic authors actually exercise the rights and permissions they already have. That is, if they publish in a journal that permits self-archiving, they have to make use of this possibility. It does not make a forceful stand against journal or publisher policies, or tries to effect fundamental change, but points to possibilities available already and demands that they be exploited.

It is a start. Hopefully, it does not end here.

[Jan Erik Frantsovåg](#)

