

GREATER ACCESS TO NORWEGIAN SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

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Introduction

In a letter dated 2 June 2008, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research requested that the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (Universitets- og høyskolerådet, UHR) advise the Ministry on which measures should be prioritized to stimulate an increase in the Open Access publication of peer-reviewed scientific articles.¹

The Ministry requested proposals on measures directed at encouraging self-archiving as well as other Open Access publishing activities, with an aim of increasing the availability of research results through encouraging use of Open Access.

UHR presented its report on 30 January 2009.² The following is a summary of the main proposals and background to the report.³

The UHR and its approach to Open Access issues

The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) is a membership organisation for all Norwegian universities and colleges and is their most important arena for cooperation. UHR is tasked with delivering collective opinions and information to the Norwegian Parliament and Government and is a key player within the political educational and research arenas.

UHR has worked for open access to research results over a longer period of time and since 2003 has arranged a number of seminars and meetings on the topic. Already in 2005, UHR submitted a letter to its member institutions summarizing its views and measures that ought to be taken.⁴ Among other things, our recommendations included the establishment of institutional archives, the deposition of published articles in these archives and publishing in Open Access journals. UHR has actively followed European developments in this area. Among other

things, we were one of the initiators behind the European University Association's (EUA) creation of a working group for Open Access in 2007 and a Norwegian participated in this group. In early 2008, we arranged a meeting between UHR's Research Committee and Sijbolt Noorda, who led the EUA's working group on Open Access. UHR's strategy for 2008-2010 also addresses Open Access, stating that UHR will continue to be "a driving force so that the research community, nationally and internationally, shall have free access to scientific results (Open Access)".

UHR delegated Open Access issues to UHR's Research Committee, which appointed a working group to answer the request submitted by the Ministry of Education and Research. Members of the working group had both scientific competence and juridical competence. The working group's secretariat has been in extensive dialogue with numerous Norwegian Open Access environments within the universities and colleges, who provided important input and information. Moreover, the group also consulted external parties, such as labour unions, the publishing industry and authors' associations, to gather their views on which measures should be prioritized.

Similar to the UHR, the Norwegian Research Council also received a request from the Ministry, who asked the research council and UHR to coordinate their efforts and avoid overlap. A very good dialogue was established with the Research Council during the process.

The Research Council has worked in parallel with the UHR working group in order to clarify its principles in relation to Open Access, and principles for access to scientific publications were adopted at a board meeting in late January 2009. Among other things, these principles demand that scientific publications emanating from projects financed by the Research Council shall be deposited in public archives and made publicly available. The working group is positive to the Research Council's Open Access policy, as this can contribute to more research results being made freely available. By taking a position, key institutions can have a positive effect, and it is likely that the adoption of the policy by the Research Council will have a positive impact upon the strategies and practices adopted by Norwegian universities and colleges.

¹ http://www.uhr.no/documents/fra_KD_om_OA.pdf

² The report is available in Norwegian at http://www.uhr.no/documents/Rapport_fra_Open_Access_arbeids_gruppe.pdf

³ This English summary was translated from the original by Caroline Sutton.

⁴ http://www.uhr.no/documents/05_29_Brev_medl.inst._pne_arki_ver.doc

The Ministry has asked for counsel on peer-reviewed scientific articles that are published in journals and anthologies. The working group has based its work on UHR's definition of scientific publishing from 2004 in its publication "A Bibliometric Model for Performance-based Budgeting of Research Institutions" (in Norwegian, *Vekt på forskning*).⁵ The Ministry has stressed that measures shall not be introduced that jeopardize academic freedom; researchers shall remain free to choose which journals they publish in.

Because of the limited scope of the Ministry's request, monographs and textbooks are not considered in the report. Open Access publishing of PhD dissertations also falls outside the report as do other student theses and reports. However, this does not mean that these are not important tasks for institutions to consider. Other intersecting Open Access issues such as access to research data,⁶ e.g. the OECD principles and guidelines for access to publicly financed research data and access to teaching materials, are neither considered in the report.

Summary of the Working Group's Recommendations

UHR's report recommends a number of specific measures that can contribute to making research results more openly available.

The initiation of measures to improve access to publicly financed research is of interest for several reasons. Research becomes more international through increased cooperation with other Nordic and European countries and with larger research nations outside of Europe. Cooperative research efforts are consolidated when large and complex projects, research networks and research centres are established across disciplinary, institutional and national boundaries.

Information formats and the use of information are increasingly digitalized and references to e-science and e-research denote this digitalization. Younger researchers increasingly demonstrate a high level of digital competence and greater expectations to digital services and rapid access to research materials and information. More and more, researchers prefer digital search tools for information discovery that provide easy access to content through the internet.

⁵ See: http://www.uhr.no/documents/Rapport_fra_UHR_prosjektet_4_1_1_engCJS_endelig_oversettelsen.pdf

⁶ OECD Principles and Guidelines for Access to Research Data from Public Funding, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/9/61/38500813.pdf>

In other words, we find ourselves in the midst of a transitional process in which technological developments, the organisation of research and user behaviours have important consequences for the possibility to access and utilise free access to research results. It is of course impossible to predict future developments, but UHR's working group believes that increased access to Norwegian research results will be a prerequisite for Norwegian researchers being able to fully participate in the international research community.

Publishing and the quality of publications produced by Norwegian researchers has generally been addressed in recent years and has brought researchers' attention to publishing issues. An evaluation of scientific publications as one criterion in the system of financing research departments and institutions has contributed to increased attention to publishing and a more conscious choice of publishing outlets among Norwegian researchers. An increase in international publications emanating from Norwegian researchers and an almost complete overview of Norwegian scientific publications has also resulted.

UHR's working group suggests that access to scientific results is an important political question. Norwegian authorities have been more committed to making information and research results more visible and accessible in recent years, as expressed in a number of public reports and parliamentary white papers. This, coupled with the attention to quality publications described above, provide a good basis for further developing good practices in this area. Moreover, Norway was a forerunner in implementing registration of scientific articles nationally and is thus in an excellent position to also be a forerunner in creating free access to the nation's scientific publications. To these ends, UHR investigated what proportion of Norwegian research articles published during the period 2005-2006 could in theory have been deposited in an institutional archive. The study showed that 47% of published articles potentially could have been made available in institutional archives, while the corresponding figure for 2007 was 40%. Both studies were based on information listed on the Sherpa/Romeo website.⁷

⁷ The Sherpa/Romeo web service operated by the University of Nottingham is believed to have the most complete overview of publishers' copyright policies regarding self-archiving, <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>. However, studies conducted by UHR showed that Sherpa/Romeo does not cover Norwegian and Nordic publishers very well at the journal level, and the working group suggests that Sherpa/Romeo be encouraged to expand coverage to also include Norwegian and Nordic journals that Norwegian researchers publish in.

In Norway we have made great progress with respect to establishing open, institutional archives, but the work of developing strategies and anchoring the use of archives and publishing in Open Access journals among institutions, remains. Libraries have had and will continue to have a supporting role and be a driving force, but we cannot move forward without this having a foothold among academics themselves.

A positive attitude towards Open-Access initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Research will have great importance for developments within institutions. The Ministry should therefore support free access when shaping policies and consider Open Access when it evaluates universities and colleges. Moreover, it should encourage institutions to develop strategies and guidelines that contribute to Open Access to scientific publications within their research strategies.

The long-term goal should be that all scientific articles that result from publicly financed research should be freely available, as long as there are no special reasons for why access should be limited. The short-term goals should be that 50% of all scientific articles published in journals are open by 2015. To achieve this goal, researchers themselves must recognize the benefits of free access and be willing to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by new technology.

The Ministry of Education and Research should prioritise supporting further development and use of institutional archives. (This does not exclude publishing in Open Access journals.) To achieve this, institutions must have a conscious approach to quality and to what they wish to use their institutional archives for.

The working group distinguishes between self-archiving and the provision of public access to published articles. The group suggests that institutions can demand the deposition of scientific publications in the interests of transparency, retesting of results, and maintaining institutional records. The deposition of copies of published articles will not automatically lead to access; the consent of the researcher is also required. The group believes that the majority of those who are asked to make their publications available will provide their consent, if they are well-informed, legal questions are answered and the proper infrastructure is in place.

A good infrastructure involves the creation of archives that are easy to use. It is advantageous if the full-text archive is directly linked to the research documentation system. In October 2008 a working group appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research recommended the implementation of a collective database for scientific publication, the

Norwegian Science Index (*Norsk vitenskapsindeks, NVI*).⁸ This system can be used both as a tool for profiling publications in addition to serving as complete research documentation system.

Currently little attention is directed to the negotiation of access to license-based journals in relation to Open Access, particularly with respect to preservation and access in institutional archives. The working group suggests that one should investigate the possibilities of negotiating rights in contracts with publishers to make possible preservation and access in institutional archives. Because access to information is of critical importance to policies on research and education, the Ministry of Education should involve itself in negotiations in order to achieve good national licensing agreements for UH institutions.

Institutions should provide for administrative evaluation of deposition, copyright and licensing terms and availability and have a communication plan that clearly identifies the advantages of Open Access. They should also encourage researchers to insist at the time of publication upon retaining their right to make their work available in archives of their choice. This will require resources, and in the short-run we cannot expect this to result in a reduction in prices.

To summarise, the Ministry of Education and Research, in addition to opinion-building, should prioritise the following measures at a national level:

- Establish the Norwegian Science Index (NVI) with links to institutional archives.
- Initiate negotiations with publishers on national subscription and licensing agreements.
- Maintain NORA (Norwegian Open Research Archive), in the first instance for the current year. Its function should be later evaluated in light of NVI.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Research should evaluate measures to cover the costs of publishing in Open Access journals.

To avoid possible unforeseen consequences of these measures, the Norwegian publishing market should be followed closely.

⁸ See:

http://www.nifustep.no/norsk/publikasjoner/norsk_vitenskapsindeks; in Norwegian only.



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