

OPEN ACCESS AT SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES: FROM HEADWIND TO TAILWIND

Peter Linde, Helena Stjernberg, Aina Svensson

Introduction

The great majority of researchers have relatively little knowledge of the advantages of Open Access and are still not sufficiently engaged in the possibilities of making their research more visible and accessible. The research libraries have, therefore, during the last few years as far as resources have permitted, in different ways and to different extents, worked to increase researchers' awareness of Open Access.

In this article we, who have participated in two projects with the purpose of increasing researchers' knowledge and familiarity of Open Access, want to share some reflections and thoughts about our efforts to reach and inform researchers. Now, when the projects are almost over, some issues remain to think about. Have our information efforts within the projects had any effect? How can the research libraries continue to work with the spreading of information and increase researchers' awareness of Open Access? Which are the conditions today to get the message across compared to previous years? In which direction does the Open Access wind blow at Swedish universities and university colleges?

Background

To strengthen and coordinate the education efforts of the research libraries on Open Access two projects, financed by the program OpenAccess.se at the National Library of Sweden, have been carried out from 2007 to 2009. The principal purpose of the two projects has been to raise the competence of librarians and instructing staff and to give support to information work to increase researchers' knowledge of Open Access. Those who have participated in the projects are librarians at seven Swedish universities and university colleges.¹

The result from the first project "Open Access Education Package for Researchers" is available in the form of the Web site Open Access Information.² Here

¹ Blekinge Institute of Technology, Chalmers University of Technology, University of Gothenburg, Lund University, University of Skövde, Uppsala University and Växjö University.

² Open Access Information, in Swedish: <http://www.searchguide.se/oa/> and in English: <http://www.searchguide.se/oa/eng/>

texts, PowerPoint presentations and flyers about different aspects of Open Access have been collected and made available for downloading and local adaptation.³ With this educational material as a base for further competence development we launched the project "Researcher Meetings on Open Access". The purpose was to provide support to library staff at some Swedish universities and university colleges to plan and carry out seminars directed to the researchers and doctoral candidates at the local university or university college.⁴

From the autumn of 2008 to the autumn of 2009 five seminars targeting researchers were, carried out at Malmö University College, Mid Sweden University, Umeå University, the University College of Kalmar in collaboration with Växjö University, and at the University of Gothenburg. The remaining sixth seminar will be held in February 2010 at Karlstad University after the end of the project period. Via the project we have, for example, been able to offer financial support to invited lecturers, but also to the planning of programs and the choice of lecturers. An important goal has been to make the seminars locally adapted and, if possible, engage local researchers as lecturers.

Apprehensions about starting seminars

To build up an information site on Open Access is certainly something that demands a great deal of work, as it requires coordination and commitment from various participants and continuous updating, but it is hardly technically or practically problematic. However, we ran into quite a bit of insecurity when we tried to encourage and engage research libraries to arrange local seminars for researchers. It turned out that there were quite a few apprehensions among the library staff. Several universities and university colleges declined the offer after some consideration. It usually depended on a fear of involving and inviting visiting lecturers, and, possibly, have to face the fact that no researchers

³ During 2009 the site had about 200 unique visitors per week from the whole world.

⁴ More detailed information from the projects is given in the article *Swedish Researchers Meet Open Access – Project Progress Report* by Peter Linde in Sciecom Info 2(2009).

would register or attend the seminar. Generally, they had bad experiences from similar previous seminars, where no-one or only a few researchers had participated and they feared repetition.

Another reason was that people did not consider that they had time and resources for initiating and carrying out a seminar, as there is not always enough staff who work with Open Access and digital archives in the libraries. In one case there were instead wishes for a seminar being arranged to raise the competence on Open Access within the proper library organization. We were unfortunately not able to accept this, as the main purpose of the project is to have researchers and doctoral candidates as the target group.

Seminars of success

In spite of our apprehensions, the first seminar arranged in the autumn of 2008 at Malmö University College was both well-attended and appreciated. There was a majority of researchers and doctoral candidates in the audience, which made the subsequent seminar planning easier. This trend has then been maintained for the other seminars. Researchers and doctoral candidates have shown a great interest and participated in all seminars to a far larger extent than we had dared hope for. Most likely the success with the first seminar contributed to making it easier to interest new universities and university colleges in arranging seminars. Something that facilitated matters was also the ready program suggestion which could be used as a basis and inspiration for subsequent seminars.

Size-wise the seminars have attracted 70-90 participants with a predominance of researchers and doctoral candidates. All seminar programs have contained basic information on Open Access but have also discussed how citation and bibliometric analyses are affected by Open Access. At each seminar there has been one or several presentations of the researchers' own experiences of Open Access publishing. Furthermore, there have been presentations on how to locally handle, for example, self-archiving by means of the publishing system of the local university or university college.

Links to the seminars which have been carried out together with programs, presentations and in some cases video recordings are available at the respective local web site of the university/university college:

Malmö University College:

<http://www.mah.se/oa08>

Mid Sweden University:

<http://www.bib.miun.se/publicera/openaccess/seminarium>

Umeå University:

<http://www.ub.umu.se/infosok/E-publicering/OA.htm>

University College of Kalmar, Växjö University:

<http://www.bi.hik.se/oa.htm>

University of Gothenburg:

<http://www.ub.gu.se/info/konferenser/2009/oa/>

What was particularly successful?

The reasons for the success with the seminars might be various. The most important is, of course, to offer a well-composed program with presentations and subjects that are of immediate interest from a researcher perspective. The program for the seminar at Malmö University College was put together by their publishing group, which consists of representatives from researchers, teachers, and also librarians. This contributed to both good quality and good attendance at the seminar.

A good idea has been to engage one or several researchers as lecturers from the local university/university college. This provides an interesting angle of approach to one's own experiences of Open Access publishing. Something that also works well and is strategically important is to invite external lecturers from other universities/university colleges or research institutes. This shows that Open Access is not merely a local concern but in the highest degree something being discussed at other university colleges both nationally and internationally. One such example is that Erik Svensson, Professor in Zoocology at Lund University, participated in the seminar arranged in Kalmar where he talked about his experiences as editor of the Open Access journal PLoS One.⁵ At the seminar in Gothenburg two international lecturers participated, i.e. Dr. Salvatore Mele from CERN who talked about the SCOAP 3 project⁶ and Dr. Virginia Barbour, Chief Editor of PLoS Medicine, Public Library of Science.⁷

Another successful move was to begin all seminars with a general survey of Open Access, where concepts and definitions are explained, and possible misunderstandings can be cleared up. This gave extra emphasis to the presentation as we at several seminars had Inge-Bert Täljedal, researcher in medicine, previous Vice-Chancellor at Umeå University and chairman of the Steering Group for OpenAccess.se, as the opening speaker under the title "Why Open Access Can be Said to be the Ideal Form for Scientific Publishing". In a pedagogical manner he conveyed basic knowledge of Open Access at the same time as he, from a researcher perspective, could explain the

⁵ <http://www.plosone.org>

⁶ <http://scoap3.org/>

⁷ <http://www.plosmedicine.org>

advantages of increased visibility and access to research results.

The method of mixing global, national and local aspects, i.e. presenting Open Access both as a global concern and as a local and individual concern, worked well. In a global perspective more people can take part of the research as long as they have access to an internet connection. The global spreading of results is like rings on water both for readers and for authors. Locally, for the university college or university, you get a clearer profile of your research by making the material more visible. On the individual level the researcher may get more citations of her/his publications as these are made accessible and do not require a subscription. It is therefore important to tie together Open Access publishing with issues which concern the evaluation of publishing and citation analyses. At the seminars these aspects have been illustrated by invited lecturers with competence in bibliometrics. Finally, we can note that a decisive reason for our seminars being well-attended is, naturally, hard work and commitment from the local library staff who have spent much time on marketing their seminars.

Recommendations for new seminars

Some comprehensive recommendations based on our experiences from realized seminars before the planning of new seminars on Open Access for researchers:

- Anchor the seminar locally: Plan a seminar in collaboration with researchers or other employees at the university/university college in order to jointly plan a program following the wishes of the researchers.
- Choose your point of time: Plan the seminar, if possible, in connection with a policy decision for Open Access or in connection with the launching of new services in the local publishing system.
- External lecturers to be helped along: Engage one or several external lecturers with experience of Open Access publishing, alternatively researchers with experience of academic leadership.
- Engage lecturers locally: Engage one or several lecturers from the local university/university college to talk about her/his own experiences of Open Access.
- Open Access and bibliometrics: Combine presentations on Open Access with bibliometrics and research assessment.
- Cooperate with other universities/university colleges: Facilitate and inspire the work by planning or coordinating seminars together with colleagues at another research library.

In which direction is the Open Access wind blowing at Swedish universities and university colleges?

So what is then the situation for the research libraries concerning the information work which is carried out there today? Do we believe that it has become easier to inform researchers about Open Access? Well, certainly we can note that there has been a change and that it has become easier to interest researchers in the subject. Today Open Access is a relatively well-known concept for researchers and doctoral candidates and, therefore, raises interest and attracts an audience to seminars to a larger extent than what it did just a few years ago. The reason for this is probably that Open Access is mentioned in more contexts, in connection with publishing or in the scientific debate and thus not merely by the libraries. The fact that an increasing number of research funders require Open Access to research results funded by them contributes to giving the subject more emphasis and also makes researchers, doctoral candidates and other staff more interested in gaining knowledge about development within the area. The details on how Open Access publishing works are, however, not equally well known, and therefore this type of seminars works very well for informing audiences on matters concerning, for example, self-archiving, copyright, and increased visibility.

New information work will definitely be needed for a long time to come at our Swedish universities and university colleges due to the Swedish Research Council's (SRC) recently adopted policy regard to Open Access. SRC now requires that research funded by the Council must be freely accessible within 6 months after publication. The requirement applies to researchers who receive grants via the Research Council's calls for proposals from the turn of the year 2010.⁸ Even if not all researchers are directly affected by the decision, the Open Access policy adopted by the SRC raises many issues, which the libraries may help to answer via direct contacts or seminars. Information campaigns are now needed on how to find Open Access journals and hybrid journals, on what OA means, costs, and how you pay for Open Access publishing. How do you self-archive in the local open archives, and how can the researcher get help and support in doing this? Here are many new questions from researchers that libraries can help to answer.

The expansion of the local publishing databases and the development of SwePub, a new national search service for Swedish research publications, have helped raising awareness among researchers and to increase

⁸ The Swedish Research Council's web page. <http://www.vr.se/>

their willingness to contribute. A majority of Swedish universities and university colleges today require bibliographic registration of research publications. Furthermore, the Swedish Research Council has shown an interest in using SwePub as a basis for national distribution of funds, which further increases the motivation to register one's publications. As researchers get used to entering information about their publications in their local databases, this contributes to the conditions for also adding full texts. With the right support from the libraries this does not involve any greater effort from individual researchers.

It is obvious, that we have now entered a new phase when it comes to working with Open Access. We have gone from *what* to *how*. From missionizing on what the Open Access initiative means to a phase when we above all must concentrate on how to describe the practicalities of Open Access publishing. And here the libraries continue to play an important role. It is now a matter of not losing speed, and instead making use of the occasion, to create contacts and cooperation with the researchers. The Open Access wind is growing. When we stick a finger into the wind it feels like a weak but still a clear tailwind. It is now a matter of intensifying the activities and of being prepared to hoist the spinnaker.



Peter Linde Blekinge Institute of Technology



Helena Stjernberg Lund University/Ferring Pharmaceuticals A/S



Aina Svensson Electronic Publishing Centre, Uppsala University Library