

OA awareness rises rapidly in Finland

Bo-Christer Björk, Professor,
and **Turid Hedlund**, Researcher,
Swedish School of Economics
and Business Administration,
Helsinki, Finland

bo-christer.bjork@hanken.fi

turid.hedlund@hanken.fi



The year 2003 was a clear turning point concerning the awareness among Finnish academics and academic librarians of the possibilities of open access publishing. A workshop organised by the Hanken business school to disseminate the results of the EU-project SciX provided the impulse for the founding of a working group that lobbies for wider adoption of Open Access in Finland. FinnOA is chaired by Professor Bo-Christer Björk and includes representatives from the central Finnish organisations affected by OA; the national library, several universities and university libraries, the association of scientific societies, research institutes etc. In addition to the main working group, which meets regularly about every two months, a number of task groups for institutional repositories, journal publishing and information dissemination have been established.

Early on FinnOA decided to organize a seminar to effectively spread information about the possibilities of open access. This two-day seminar was organized in January 2004 as an "Open Access" event with no participation fee from the over 200 participants. This

format was made possible thanks to a grant from the Finnish Academy for covering the costs of the foreign speakers (David Prosser from SPARC Europe, Ingegerd Rabow from Lund University Libraries, Leo Waijers from the Dutch Dare project and Natascha Robshow from BioMedCentral). The seminar was very successful, according to the feedback received from many participants, and the press coverage was also very helpful. In particular, Helsingin Sanomat, the main Finnish daily newspaper, devoted a whole page to the seminar in its science section.

At this stage there were already a few top academic policy makers who had become aware of the overall issue at stake, including the chancellor of the Helsinki University Kari Raivio, who in fact had opened the FinnOA seminar. In August the Ministry of Education, after some consultations with FinnOA members, organised a round table discussion on a high level, and this has led to the appointment of a formal work group appointed by the Minister of Education. This work group is on a very high level, including the head of the Finnish Academy, the chairman of the council of university rectors and the ministry official in charge of Finnish science policy. The mandate is to produce recommendations concerning Open Access policies and actions to research funding organisation, universities and publishing organisations. The timetable is very short, the recommendations should be ready by the end of January 2005.

In parallel with these high level political events a number of universities are carrying out more practical activities in order to develop the infrastructure for the creation of institutional repositories. Besides testing open source software for institutional archives like D-Space, operational solutions to make already existing publication databases OAI-compatible have been developed. The National library is testing the ENCompass software for digital collections (DOMS) together with some university libraries. One of the questions that we need to focus on is the harmonisation of meta data, possibly through national and Nordic recommendations. A national seminar on institutional archives is planned to take place in January 2005.

In addition to these more practically oriented activities a small research group devoted to Open Access and to how the scientific communication process is affected by the Internet has been formed at the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration (HANKEN) in Helsinki. In the SciX project HANKEN researchers collaborated with researchers from Slovenia, Austria, England, Spain and Iceland in the setting up of a discipline-oriented repository of scientific e-prints. HANKEN's role was in particular to study the changing economics of the scientific publishing process and barriers to change towards Open Access. This work is now being followed up in the four year OACS (Open Access Communication for Science) project funded by the Academy of

Finland. In this project copyright issues receive more attention. The OACS homepages contain all publications produced by the group to date, also including results from the SciX project.

Svensk sammanfattning

OA medvetandet ökar snabbt i Finland

Året 2003 var en vändpunkt för OA medvetandet i Finland. Då grundades en informell arbetsgrupp, FinnOA, vars uppgift är att sprida information om Open Access. Arbetsgruppens största kraftansträngning hittills var det mycket välbesökta seminariet i januari 2004, där ett flertal utländska gästföreläsare, inklusive Ingegerd Rabow från Lunds universitet, deltog. Delvis som ett resultat av detta har det finska undervisningsdepartementet i september 2004 tillsatt en kommitté på hög politisk nivå som med en ganska snabb tidtabell skall ta fram konkreta rekommendationer för forskningens finansiärer, universiteten, de vetenskapliga föreningarna mm. På det mer konkreta planet bedrivs testnings- och pilotarbete med universitetens digitala forskningsarkiv, bla utvärderar man D-Space. På Svenska Handelshögskolan bedrivs även akademisk forskning inom området, bla uppmärksammas upphovsrättsfrågorna.