RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF OPEN ACCESS IN DENMARK – EXTRACTION OF COMMENTS FROM THE HEARING PROCESS
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Introduction

In 2009 the Danish Ministry for Science appointed a committee with participants from universities, agencies and ministries with the primary task of finding out how Denmark might comply with the European Council Conclusions on access to scientific knowledge in the digital age.[1] In the beginning of May 2010 the committee issued their report[2] and a hearing process has taken place from May to July 2010.

The hearing process resulted in 48 answers. In this article I will try to give an overview of some of the comments and concerns that the hearing process generated and unearthed. The subjects I have chosen to address here are presented objectively but they are based on my own prioritization, and they are issues I believe to be interesting and crucial to the process of deciding how to implement Open Access in Denmark and on what level. The hearing process resulted in a wide range of views from very positive ones to a few very negative ones. For a complete overview I refer to the responses published by the Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation.[3]

Free access to the results of publicly funded research?

Generally there is support behind the principle that there should be unhindered and gratis access to the results of publicly financed research. The arguments are that Open Access is important for research as well as the democratic principle of free access for the public when the public pays for the research. Another central point is that it is absolutely necessary for a small country like Denmark that research results are made visible nationally and internationally. Barriers to access should be broken down and contribute to Denmark remaining an interesting co-operation partner internationally.

The concerns start when talk turns to how Open Access should be implemented and the hearing process revealed many comments, concerns, support and suggestions.

Some of the Danish universities have mentioned that they already work with Open Access but it is an important factor that their policies are not mandatory but recommendations for green Open Access. One university is even more reluctant and thinks that the report is a good first step towards the implementation of the Council Conclusions but that concrete suggestions to solutions of economy, copyright, infrastructure etc. are needed.

From the research councils there is also wide support to the fundamental idea that there should be free access to the results of publicly financed research to the furthest extent possible and it is stressed that there may not be limitations on access to knowledge.

Some of the smaller research institutions and regions believe that the fundamental goal of free access to the results of publicly financed research should include all research financed by the state and that the results from all research institutions should be accessible on equal footing with research from the universities. The library sector mentions that Open Access can help break down the public libraries' barriers to getting material from the research libraries as the materials are increasingly becoming strictly digitally available; a problem that has seen increased focus in Denmark as the research libraries are acquiring more and more strictly digital material.

The Danish publishers and scientific editors also support the principle of free access but at the same time find Open Access problematic in several areas; mostly because there are either no immediate suggestions for financing or publishers are not given a clear role.[4]

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[1] Council of the European Union: Council conclusions on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/97236.pdf

[2] Recommendations for implementation for Open Access in Denmark Available at:

[3] http://www.fi.dk/forskning/open-access

[4] The recommendation regarding Danish editors and publishers is given below.

Green or golden Open Access?

Generally there is support behind green Open Access from universities and other research institutions. Some recommend that green Open Access is supported with national backing arrangements such as 1) a common praxis to ensure that Open Access references specifies the full bibliographic reference with locators. 2) A national database of all journals in the bibliometric research indicator framework with information about the journals position on green Open Access. 3) Changing licenses with the large, foreign publishers so that they include a clear permission to green Open Access within 6 months after publication.

Concerns related to green Open Access are the administrative burden for the universities and in particular for researchers and thereby also the economy for the institutions.

One of the concerns in relation to golden Open Access is that it is problematic for researchers and research generally, because researchers will not get equal access to the financing of their publications. The message is that green Open Access is the most realistic way – as long as peer review and quality assurance are secured.

On the other hand, Danish publishers and editors are of the opinion that green Open Access is unfair competition for commercial publishers and that Danish researchers are placed in a worse situation if they only have access to second class manuscripts.

Many have concerns about the quality of research in a green Open Access world and underline the importance of the peer review process and that it needs to be the peer reviewed version of scientific articles that are deposited in the institutional archive. Furthermore, researchers should still be able to publish in the most prestigious journals.

The institutions' expenses

Some of the universities do not think that the report account for the expenses involved with an increased use of Open Access by universities and other institutions. Some want further economic investigations while other stress that they do not want their expenses towards publishing rising as a consequence of Open Access mandates.

Scientific publishing in Danish

There is a general interest in securing that Open Access does not ruin the possibilities of publishing scientific journals or monographs in Danish. Some believe that the State needs to support Open Access publishing in order to secure a minimum of national

scientific journals. Danish publishers do want to participate in the Open Access Committee's recommendation number 6: *Danish scientific publishers prepare discussion paper on transition to Open Access.*[5]

Recommendations on policies and mandates

The first three recommendations from the Open Access Committee relate to Open Access policies on three levels; 1) national, 2) research councils and public foundations and 3) universities. There are generally positive comments from all these institutions including the research councils to the idea of making policies on all three levels containing all types of research institutions. The fourth recommendation is that the bibliometric research indicator be coordinated with the national Open Access policy. There is generally no interest in making the bibliometric research indicator more complicated than it already is.

Recommendation on publishing in Danish

Recommendation number 6 is that Danish scientific publishers prepare a discussion paper on transitioning to Open Access. Generally there is of course an interest in securing the publishing of scientific monographs and journals in Danish. The research councils stress that the implementation of Open Access should take into account the conditions of publishing in Danish and that monographs are not ignored. Also the competences acquired by scientific journal editors should be secured. Danish publishers are indeed interested in participating in preparing the discussion paper.

International coordination

The need for international coordination is mentioned in several of the Open Access committee's recommendations and the hearing answers corroborate this notion. One university even believes that Open Access should look to the international standards for the area while local considerations should have minor weight.

I have given you a small sample of the voices from the hearing process concerning the Danish Open Access committee's report. For more information please look at the individual hearing answers at The Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation's web site.

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[5] Recommendations for implementation of Open Access in Denmark - Report from the Open Access Committee, p. 13. Available at:
http://www.deff.dk/content.aspx?catguid={432C8A5B-1EFC-47A5-8378-0339EAED4267%7d

What happens next?

The Open Access Committee is working on a revised version of its report and a suggestion for a national Open Access strategy for Denmark. Both publications will be delivered to the Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation on the 1st of December.

The Minister of Science Technology and Innovation will then decide on whether or not she will follow the Open Access committee's recommendation and implement free access to scientific publications based on publicly funded research.

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