

THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND'S DIGITAL REPOSITORY, SKEMMAN - OPEN ACCESS OR CLOSED?

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Skemman (<http://www.skemman.is>) is a digital repository for six of the seven universities in Iceland. It houses students' dissertations and theses as well as articles and other works by academic staff. It is run by the National and University Library of Iceland.

The Institute of Social Sciences' annual conference proceedings

Until recently not many members of the University of Iceland's academic staff had submitted any material. In spite of intensive introduction and numerous presentations within the university since it joined *Skemman* in 2008 many members of both the academic and clerical staff are still not familiar with the repository. Librarians at the National and University Library (NULI) were therefore very pleased when the organizers of The Social Science Research Institute's annual conference approached them in the spring hoping to negotiate the entry of their annual conference proceedings into *Skemman*. The conference (Þjóðarspejillinn - The annual conference of the School of Social Sciences, University of Iceland) is held in October every year and conference proceedings have been published under the title „Research in the Social Sciences“.

The proceedings, in all 173 articles by 210 authors, are now available in open access at *skemman.is*. Subjects include law, politics, economics, business administration, librarianship, sociology, social work and anthropology. A large number of articles are in English.

The publication of the conference proceedings marks the beginning of the University's academic community's participation in its own open access repository.

Students' theses – open access or closed?

The University of Iceland has three graduation dates: in October, February and June. According to the University Council's resolution from 21 February 2008 all graduating students shall submit an electronic copy of their final thesis to *Skemman* as well as the traditional paper copy of the thesis to the library. *Skemman* was introduced to the University as an open access repository. However, it was decided by university authorities that students should be free to decide whether access to their particular thesis was open or closed, in part or whole, temporarily or indefinitely.

Submission of students' theses got off to a slow start in October 2008 and it was decided to consider the first school year as a trial period. Statistics for 2009-2010 show that we are making progress but that we still have far to go, especially concerning open access. The overall submission count for October 2009 was 81% with 67% of the submitted theses in open access. In February 2010 submission counts were up to 86% with 71% open access. In June 91% of graduating students submitted their theses, again with 71% open access.

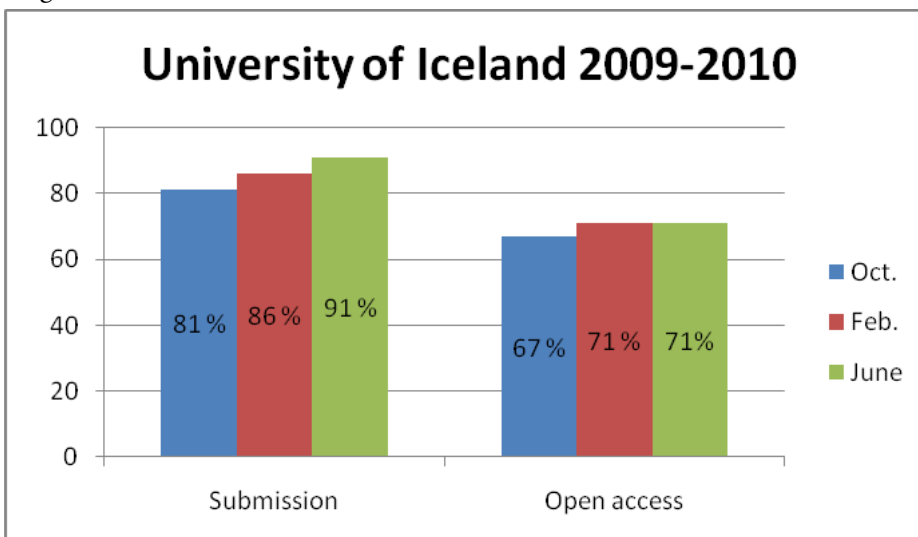


Table 1. University of Iceland - submission of electronic theses and percentage of theses in open access.

Many students choose closed access to their thesis, some even choosing open access to begin with but changing their mind later and asking for access to be closed. So far ca. 3800 students have submitted their theses, including 23 doctoral dissertations and 1165 master's theses. Two members of the academic staff have submitted their work as well as the 210 authors participating in the above-mentioned conference *Þjóðarspejillinn*.

Submission rates

The University of Iceland has five Schools: the School of Social Sciences, the School of Humanities, the School of Health Sciences, the School of Education and the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences. If the five schools are compared regarding submission rates and open access there is a considerable difference between them. The School of Education has the best overall rate of submission. They were the first school to start collecting electronic copies of theses and submission rates are therefore quite high. The School of Engineering and Natural Sciences has the lowest rate of submission.

Submission of doctoral theses

In 2008-2009 55 students received doctorates from the University of Iceland. So far only three schools have submitted doctoral theses: the Schools of Health Sciences (12), of Education (4) and of Engineering and Natural Sciences (7). This constitutes only 42% of the total number of doctoral theses, the School of Education once again showing the best results (100%).

Open access in Skemman

As mentioned above open access of submitted theses in 2009-2010 rose from 67% in October to 71% in June. If access is compared between schools there is also quite a large difference between open and closed access, ranging from 59-64% rate of open access in social sciences to 88-90% in engineering and natural sciences. Within schools a noticeable difference between faculties is also evident. For example in June the Faculty of Law within the School of Social Sciences only had a 24% rate of open access master's theses, whereas the Faculty of Social Work had a rate of 87% open access. Other faculties had the following percentage of open access master's theses in June: Social and Human Sciences 79%, Economics 55%, Political Science 83% and Business Administration 56%.

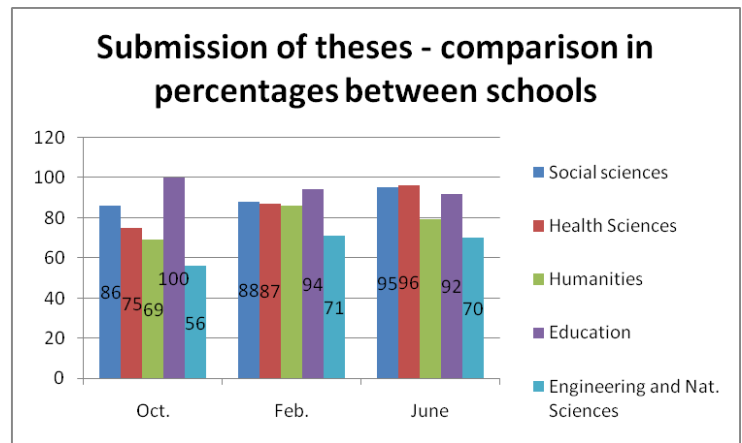


Table 2. Submission of theses - comparison in percentages between schools

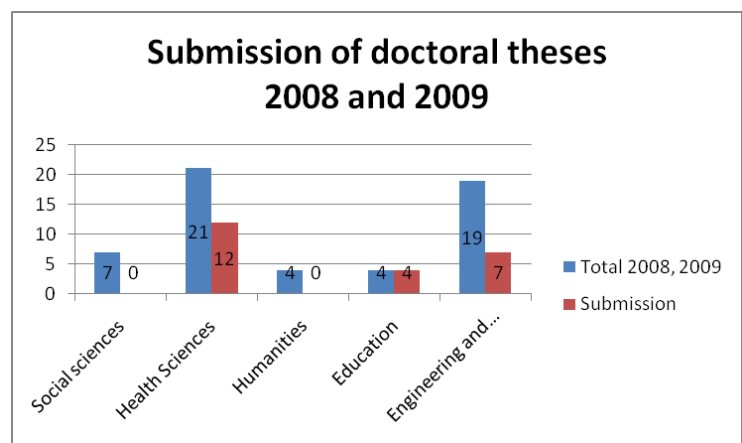


Table 3. Submission of doctoral theses 2008 and 2009

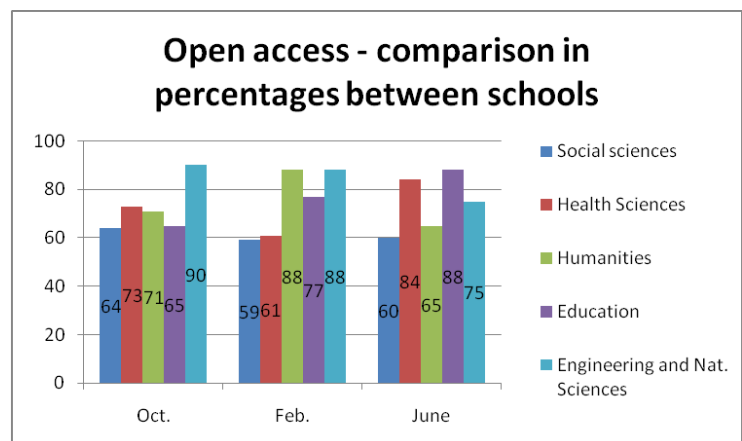


Table 4. Open access - comparison in percentages between schools

Reasons given for closed access vary. In Law, Social Work and Business Administration many students cite confidential information as the reason for closed access, in the Humanities and Natural Sciences students cite imminent publication in a journal or a book. Some students just say they don't want others reading their work.

Professors' reactions also vary. Most members of the academic staff are pleased with the repository but there are cases of negative reactions. One professor (Natural Sciences) called the repository a work of sabotage saying it prevented publication of articles in peer reviewed journals. This professor demanded that a certain student's thesis be removed altogether not taking into account the possibility of closing access to it temporarily or indefinitely. Another professor (Natural Sciences) demanded that the advisor be asked about access since he also held copyright to the thesis.

The professor claimed that the graduating student had neither the experience nor the competency to decide whether access should be open or closed to his own master's thesis. Sadly the University of Iceland has not yet implemented an open access policy. They have not even formulated any written rules or legislation concerning access to theses in Skemman although they have expressed a desire for more open access. Until The University does so students will continue to be able to close access to their theses indefinitely. The University of Iceland was founded in 1911 and celebrates its centenary next year. The National and University Library has expressed a wish that the University sign the Berlin Declaration and implement a policy on open access to commemorate the centenary. There are indications that the University might be willing to do so in the near future.



Áslaug Agnarsdóttir is Director of Services at The National and University Library in Reykjavik. She was Iceland's representative in Nordbib's programme group 2008-2009. Áslaug is editor of Skemman, an open access repository housing theses and scholarly articles for all six universities in Iceland.