

## THE MEETING ON OPEN ACCESS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LITHUANIA, 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2008

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### **The Meeting on Open Access in the European Union and Lithuania, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

Under the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, with the help of the Lithuanian Research Libraries Consortium a meeting on Open Access in the European Union and Lithuania was held at the Palace of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2008

(<http://www.lmba.lt/reng/angl/eindex.htm>).

The purpose of the meeting was to promote the Open Access movement in the Lithuanian academic community and among the officers of the Ministry of Education and Science. So, the organizers invited university vice-rectors, researchers, academic publishers, and librarians. Unfortunately, only one vice-rector out of 15 universities and a few researchers did come. However, researchers were very active. Approximately 2/3 of the attendees were librarians as usual.

Dr. David Prosser, SPARC Europe Director had been invited as a key-note speaker to make a presentation on Open Access matters in Europe and other parts of the world.

Dr. Giedrius Viliunas, the secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science opened the meeting. He told about the situation in Lithuania on the access to knowledge. Despite the fact that every year the Government allocates more and more funds for subscription to databases, the access to knowledge is still problematic because of the increasing costs of the scientific journals.

The presenter invited to discuss on new trends in scholar communication, the expansion of the access to knowledge, the public policy on the problem. He also stressed, that Lithuania needs support of international experts and good practice examples on Open Access movement.

After the opening speech, Dr. David Prosser made his wonderful presentation *Open Access and the Future of Scholarly Communication* (<http://www.lmba.lt/ppt/SPARC%20Europe%20Vilnius.ppt>).

After the presentation, Dr. Prosser delivered a very fresh issue, the shortened version of the Irish Open

Access Mandate, adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2008.

Mr. Vilius Kuciukas, a project leader of the Lithuanian Academic Library Network (LABT) presented a paper on *Open Access in Lithuania*

(<http://www.lmba.lt/ppt/LABT-OA-2008-05-07-Kuciukas.ppt>)

Lively discussions started already after Dr Prosser's presentation and continued after the delivery of the Kuciukas paper. It was absolutely clear, that Lithuanian researchers were not enough aware of the width, advantages and benefits of the Open Access movement. Their attitude towards the OA journals and the research information presented in them was rather negative. According to a professor of Vilnius University, the articles published in the OA journals are not of sufficiently high quality. Other researchers also shared his opinion on the fairly low value of the research information as most OA journals have no impact factor, and many of the discussing researchers do not intend to publish their articles in the OA journals. The Vilnius University Vice-Rector for Research Professor Juras Banys asked why a researcher has to negotiate the copyright with publishers and asked Dr. Prosser how the matter was organized at Oxford University. Dr. Prosser explained, that according to the Oxford University Open Access mandate, the researchers are obliged to archive their articles in the university e-repository or publish them in Open Access journal. He also mentioned that because of the ranking system, the OA movement at Oxford University was slow and late. Many other researchers suppose that the dissemination of scientific information is not the researchers' business and self-archiving articles in a university e-repository takes extra time and gives no benefit to the author.

Professor Arturas Žukauskas took notice of the high publishing price in the Open Access journals - researchers from the new European Union countries cannot afford publishing in them. Other meeting attendees considered that well equipped laboratories have access to the best commercial databases and journals, and for them there are no problems with access to information.

Our professors could not believe that many commercial publishers already allow self-archiving of their articles in the university open e-repositories. Representatives from libraries presented evidence that many commercial publishers do allow self-archiving

in open repositories and pointed to the SHERPA/RoMEO website. After hearing this evidence, many of them found another argument against OA – no final journal PDF version is allowed in most cases.

The reason for such a negative attitude to the Open Access movement in Lithuania might be the evaluation system of scientific results, as the results are evaluated according to 3 levels of journal lists. The highest scores are given for articles listed in the ISI Web of Knowledge database, regardless of the journal impact factor and the number of citations; level 2 is the list of commercial databases selected by the Scientific Council of Lithuania, and the lowest scores go to all other peer-reviewed journals, including OA journals.

Coming to the meeting conclusion, I could resume, that everybody, including librarians, researchers and ministry officers, remained of the same opinion as in the beginning of the discussions. The secretary of the Ministry Dr. Giedrius Viliunas made a suggestion that the Ministry should organize more discussions on Open Access and research output evaluation issues together with the university vice-rectors, a wide range of researchers and follow the EU recommendations, good examples and best practicea.

In order to show that the situation is not too difficult and slow concerning the Open Access movement in Lithuania, I would like to inform the journal readers

about the achievements of the university librarians as shown in article No. 53 on Open Access included in the draft of a new Law on Science and Studies. It sounds as follows:

***Article 53. Publicity of the research output***

*1. In order to guarantee the quality of the scientific research, the transparency of the utilization of the state budget funds, and to promote and stimulate public scientific advancement all the results carried out in the public science and study institutions must be published and otherwise made available for the scholar community, if this access is an agreement with laws regulating intellectual property and protection of the commercial secret.*

*2. Scientific research carried out using state budget funds (except special programme funds) are stored in an electronic form in the Lithuanian Science and Studies Electronic Documents Information System. The exact conditions of storage and access are defined by the Ministry of Education and Science.*

This law is not adopted by the Parliament yet, but has already been approved by the Government and has been sent to the Parliament. How the debates will go there we will see in the near future.

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