

OPEN ACCESS AND A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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General

Estonia has neither uniform open access policy nor a national-level official position concerning the publication of scientific research. Certain interest in the issue and a positive attitude towards it have been expressed, but the making of substantive decisions has so far been left to the competence of research institutions.

In final conclusion, the issue is determined by the position of the authors, and such a situation even has certain advantages – the decisions and applications do not come from far-away authorities. The authors are able to have their say and solutions to various problems can be found in the immediate process. On the other hand, any single institution could establish its own rules and require the publishing in a repository even of those works that have already been published elsewhere. However, reaching agreements with the owners of the rights one by one is a time-consuming and inefficient, if not an inept process.

In recent years, commercial publishers have expressed interest in open access publications and this allows us to view the future in more optimistic terms. We still cannot predict the outcome in a longer perspective. At present, the high purchasing price of licensed publications poses a serious problem. We are still to see whether open access under the wing of commercial publishers would, in the future, pose a similar problem in the form of high publication costs.

Despite the lack of national policy, *The Directory of Open Access Journals* lists 12 periodicals of scientific content published in Estonia, and actually, their number is even larger.

Dissertations

Systematic on-line publication of dissertations was started at the University of Tartu in 2004. Introduction of the practice took several years, as in addition to technical solutions, also the copyright aspects had to be worked out, and it was necessary to convince the authors in the advantages of electronic publishing. At the beginning, the authors believed that in the electronic environment they would lose their authorship rights. Technical simplicity of plagiarism created an illusion that it was acceptable. We tried to do everything to make plagiarism technically as difficult as possible, but no absolute guarantee can be

offered neither in case of printed nor electronic version.

It is interesting to note that at the same time, when the attitude towards electronic publishing of dissertations was still quite sceptical, first authors appeared who wished to publish electronically their monographs. They had heard about the existence of a technical platform and wanted to ensure the widest possible access to their works. Unfortunately, we had to refuse them at that time, because the publishers had already obtained the publishing rights of these books.

In 2003, the University of Tartu adopted a regulation obligating all masters and doctoral students to publish their theses and dissertations electronically before defending them. This rather forceful document granted the right to restrict access to these publications to the rector of the university. At that time, this was a right decision, but it created problems in cases the authors had planned to publish articles based on their dissertations in some refereed scientific journals, or wished to use a substantial part of their dissertation in a new publication. Even if the article had been mostly rewritten, the publishers still could reject it as an already published work. This would have been useful neither for the author nor the university.

Problems can be solved with understanding and flexible attitude. Resulting from electronic publishing, the number of hits in search engines and the number of downloads grew noticeably. Printed versions of the same text were usually read about twice to a score of times. In case of dissertations of wider public interest, the number of downloads per year extended to hundreds with users all over the world.

At least in one case, when the number of downloads exceeded one thousand, the author ceased to be simply one of many dissertants and became a noteworthy researcher.

By now, the electronic publication has generally been accepted. Probably, some features still need to be changed, e.g., to enable a temporary restriction to access fixed by the author, but this has no effect on the general trend.

We have also published students' research (due to the interest expressed by the students), textbooks and

study guides. Concerning the latter, more activities will be expected in relation with the development of the Estonian e-university and some other initiatives already in progress. The same platform and the same principles are used for issuing publications of one international scientific organisation. This work started only by chance – we had set up this platform just at the very time when they needed it.

One of the newest services expected and demanded of libraries is that they offered opportunities for using software and provided competence in handling metadata and its conversion.

Technical Platform

Regarding publishing, there is no difference whether the material has been digitised or created electronically, be it a dissertation from 1808 or 2008.

At first, a unique original system was created at the library, and for some time it worked excellently. However, soon we realised that at a certain amount of data, the development and administration of the system will become too costly and labour-consuming. We knew that the volume of digitised material will increase anyway, and were forced to search for a more stable and reliable standardised system with a maximum number of built-in main functions. We opted for DSpace. We studied and compared a number of different systems, but the final decision was based on research as well as on intuition. The main criteria were that DSpace has a wide range of users in different countries, it was easy-to-install in the default mode and it was flexible enough to meet our needs. Considering the facts that this year, DSpace and Fedora Commons (a truly functional system, but very complex to install) initiated cooperation for the functional unifying of their systems, DSpace has been adopted at many Finnish libraries in the recent years, etc., we can now say that we made a right decision.

What DSpace can offer

At present, we have entered more than 10 000 records which contain at least one, but can contain thousands of pages or stills.

- Administration of the system is labour-consuming, especially for organising the data and correcting mistakes made in entering the records. Administration can be delegated to other parties.
- DSpace supports search by metadata and full text search.
- Each object receives a permanent link registered in the handle-system; the web address does not change.
- DSpace supports the OAI-PMH data

exchange protocol. It has been registered in OAI registers and connected to OAI-based search modules, such as the OAISTER, the BASE or the European portal of dissertations DART-Europe.

Estonian memory institutions have created a number of important databases. The majority of their contents have been described in library catalogues and can be linked via these catalogues. More flexible linking on the basis of the OAI is possible only between the DSpace of the University of Tartu Library and Digar (repository of the Estonian National Library).

- Visibility increased by many times. According to Webometrics, the web visibility of the University of Tartu Library places, mainly due to its repository, on the 299th position among the research and development institutions located at 4000 different universities.

Shortcomings

- DSpace is not very convenient and user-friendly, especially when handling voluminous publications. This feature should be improved in the development of new versions. At present, we are introducing a new Manakin version which should offer better opportunities for representing materials.

However, a repository is primarily a means for preserving source materials in unchanged form. Materials can in the form of derivatives be exported to user environments, where they can be converted in any necessary way and then be imported back as already new objects.

- Metadata. So far, we have used a minimal amount of metadata in the repository; the full description can be found in the library catalogue in the Estonian language. A multilingual repository would involve much more effort and labour. Hopefully, the new version will offer some improvements.

About the future

The users expect different software options from the library. Our future plans include such options as the Open Journal System (and several other PKP software solutions compatible with DSpace), pageturner with text recognition and several additional modules of DSpace. This would involve hard work and researching of new opportunities, but it can be done – when there is a will, there is a way.

References:

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