Looking for commitment: Finnish open access journals, infrastructure and funding

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Jyrki Ilva <jyrki.ilva@helsinki.fi>
Scholarly journals and OA on a national level

- Many of the arguments commonly used in OA discussions are based on experiences from the international context
  - Mostly dominated by big corporate publishers with high profit margins
- Most of the countries worldwide also have their own national journals
  - Often in languages other than English, but many of them reach international audiences as well
- These journals are also making a transition to OA, but the issues that they are facing are often somewhat different
Background: Finnish scholarly journals

- About 30% of the Finnish scholarly journals are already open access journals - either immediately or after a delay
  - Many of the other journals are still only available in printed form or as part of a subscription-based service
- The Finnish domestic journals are mostly run by researchers, not by big commercial publishers
  - Most of the 100+ journals are published by small scholarly societies
  - Most of the journals operate with very little money; reliance on unpaid work and community effort
  - Lack of technical expertise and infrastructure
Current sources of income

- The main sources of income have been subscriptions, membership fees and state subsidies
  - Individual subscriptions and society membership fees very important for many journals
  - A few of the journals have received support from research organizations, but this has been decreasing
- State subsidies are distributed by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies
  - About 600,000 euros a year allocated to the journals
  - The journals need to have other income as well – the funding covers only a percentage of total income
- The total budget of the ca. 90 journals receiving state subsidies is currently in the range of two million euros a year
Differences in income

The revenues of 90 Finnish scholarly journals in 2014.
Source: Federation of Finnish Learned Societies
Flipping to OA?

- In theory, the transition to OA should be a relatively easy process, as there aren’t any big commercial interests in the way.
- In practise, however, it is not possible to simply flip the current the acquisition costs to cover the OA costs - there is not enough money.
  - The subscription and licensing costs paid by the research libraries for these journals have been minimal.
  - The total acquisition budget of the Finnish university libraries is ca. 30 million euros a year.
  - It has been estimated that they spend ca. 150,000 euros a year on domestic journals (about 0.5% of the total acquisition budget).
Value of the journals

- Although the acquisition costs are small, the journals are actually quite valuable to the research communities and organizations.

- About 8% of all peer-reviewed journal articles published by Finnish researchers come out in domestic journals.
  - The share of domestic publications is far higher in many fields within the humanities and social sciences.

- The universities also benefit directly from publications.
  - 13% of the total state funding for the universities is distributed based on the number and quality of research publications.
  - The articles published in the 90 journals receiving state subsidies account for nearly 5 million euros of state funding paid to the universities.
Making open access viable for Finnish journals

- The Kotilava project (www.kotilava.fi), 2015-2017, was a part of the Open Science and Research initiative funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

- Based on the recommendations of a report on the potential funding models for the Finnish scholarly journals (Ilva & Lilja 2014).

- The project has had two main goals:
  - To provide an improved Open Journal Systems-based technical platform for the Finnish journals (Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, Antti-Jussi Nygård, 9/2015-5/2017).
  - To create a sustainable funding model for the journals to support their transition to open access (National Library of Finland, Riitta Koikkalainen, 3/2016-9/2017).
Journals vs. platforms?

- Some OA activists insist that journals are an outdated legacy system that is no longer needed in scholarly communication.
  - It might be more cost-efficient to build a mega-journal-like generic national platform that could be used for the evaluation and dissemination of pre-prints/articles.
- However, the current journal-based infrastructure seems to be supported by the researchers, at least on a national level.
  - "Our own journal" often important for building researcher communities and defining researcher identities.
  - The case of Kasvatus ja aika ("Education and time"): a new OA journal founded in 2007 re-vitalized the study of educational history in Finland.
Conservative aims?

- The Kotilava project aims to preserve the current infrastructure consisting of journals mostly run by scholarly societies
  - Many of the Finnish-language journals still have a substantial audience as journals both within and beyond the academia
  - In many cases also incubators for new content, not just anonymous publication channels for unsolicited articles
- It seems to make sense to work with the current community-owned journals instead of trying to come up with something that would replace them
  - The current system can be enhanced by adopting new technologies and increasing the visibility and usability of the content
Journal.fi

- The newly branded Journal.fi platform was launched by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies in January 2017
- Upgraded to OJS 3, with major technical upgrades
- Currently contains 40 journals (most of them OA), about 20 other journals waiting for their turn to join
Part of the scholarly infrastructure

- The journals at Journal.fi will be integrated with national and international infrastructures
  - The article level metadata can be harvested to other systems via APIs
  - Adoption of permanent identifiers in Finnish journals: DOIs for the articles, ORCIDs for the authors
- The use of XML format in journals
  - Additional funding received from the European OpenAIRE project for piloting the use of a XML-based publication format
- Long-term preservation will be ensured in co-operation with other national projects
Journal.fi infrastructure plan, 5/2017

Graph: Antti-Jussi Nygård, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies
A national consortium to fund the journals?

- The other aim of the Kotilava project has been to create a national consortium which would provide funding for the journals.
  - The journals generally agreed that a consortium-based funding model would be the preferred solution for them.
  - For several reasons, the adoption of article processing charges (APCs) as such was not seen as desirable.
  - The organizations that benefit from the work the journals are doing seen as potential funders: e.g. universities, universities of applied sciences, research institutes, research funders.
- The continuation of state subsidies was also seen as essential.
  - The income received from the consortium and the state subsidy would compliment each other.
From subscriptions to consortium funding

- Based on voluntary participation from the funders and publishers
  - Commitment to support the domestic journals required
  - Research universities with a lot of publications in domestic journals would pay a greater share of the costs
- The journals would retain their independence and would be run by the scholarly societies in each field as before
  - Funding from the consortium would replace the loss of subscription income
An article-based funding model

- The consortium funding would be collected from the research organizations and distributed to the journals.
- The sums paid in the model would be based on the number of peer-reviewed articles published by the researchers affiliated with each organization.
- Preliminary article price used in the calculations: 800 euros.
- Based on three-year averages.

The formula to calculate the share of the member organisation:

\[ a = b + c \cdot d \]

- \( a \) = sum paid by a member organisation of the consortium.
- \( b \) = fixed charge for the consortium administration.
- \( c \) = mean value of the number of peer-reviewed articles published in the Kotilava journals by the researchers of the organisation, an interval of three years.
- \( d \) = price of an article.
The sources of revenue in the new model

- The income from the new model should cover significant part of the costs, but not all of them, at least not for all journals
  - The societies could continue subsidising the costs from e.g. membership fees
  - The rest would come from the state subsidies
  - The journals might be able to cut some of their present costs
The aims of the new funding model?

- The funding model will be a compromise between different interests
  - In the long run there may be winners and losers among the journals
  - This should be OK, as long as the model is fair and transparent
- The research organizations may end up paying more than they do now, but they should be able feel that they get compensated for that
  - The researchers would have competitive high-quality publication channels, which provide visibility and metrics for their work
  - In return for the funding the journals would pledge to follow certain standards in e.g. openness, licensing, peer review, infrastructure
Differences in OA requirements

- **Journal.fi**
  - Immediate or delayed OA (max 12 months embargo) required
  - Metadata CC0 required
  - DOIs and ORCIDs recommended
  - CC licenses recommended
  - Registration to DOAJ recommended
  - SHERPA/RoMEO policy recommended

- **Funding model**
  - Immediate OA required
  - Metadata CC0 required
  - DOIs and ORCIDs required
  - CC licenses or other OA licenses required
  - Registration to DOAJ required
  - SHERPA/RoMEO policy required
Some further issues under discussion

- Non-peer-reviewed content: should it be taken into account in some way in the funding model?
- International journals published in Finland: will some of them need additional funding (possibly APCs for non-consortium authors)?
- Funding and editorial independence: an affiliation should have no effect on publishing decisions
- Sustainability: the publishers should be able to trust that both the consortium and the platform will be around for the long term
What has been achieved by now?

- The Ministry of Education and Culture has been supporting the transition
- There have been big steps forward with the Journal.fi platform, with plans for further enhancements
- We have developed a funding model that may still require some adjustments but would probably work just fine
- The journals themselves are enthusiastic about moving to open access

- What could go wrong…?
Looking for commitment…

- The proposed model got initially a positive response from the Finnish university rectors in May 2017
  - "Important initiative"
  - "The costs seem reasonable"
- The plan has been to launch the funding model in 2018 with about 30 journals, with more journals joining during the two following years
  - A letter was sent to the rectors of the universities and universities of applied sciences in November, 2017
- Many of the universities of applied sciences have decided to join the model, but only one of the research universities (so far)
  - Several of the research universities have informed us that they will not join the consortium at this point
What happened?

- The university libraries have concerns about the model
  - "Openness would be nice, but we are wary of the costs"
  - "It would raise our acquisition budget"
  - "The model should provide more transparency on the actual costs on the publishers’ side"
  - "Introduction of APCs might be preferable, since they would be paid from research funds and not from library budgets"
Lessons to learn

- It seems that we haven’t been completely successful in communicating the big picture to the libraries
  - The goal has been to come up with a permanent solution that would be beneficial to the universities, libraries and journals
- There are short term issues which seem to make the transition more difficult than it should be
  - The library acquisition money is tied up in Big Deals (off-setting elements added to the current deals don’t necessarily help the journals/publishers that are not included)
  - The management of OA publication costs has not been centralized in Finland (APCs mostly paid from research funds, which are not administered by the libraries)
What next?

- The development of the Journal.fi platform will continue
- There will need to be further discussion on the consortium model with all of the stakeholders
- We still believe that a shared vision - and national co-operation based on it - would benefit everyone
www.kotilava.fi

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