



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-OA: Open Access

Removing barriers to knowledge

PROMOTING OPEN ACCESS IN LITHUANIA A CASE STUDY FROM LITHUANIA

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Results of the EIFL-funded project: Promoting Open Access (OA) in Lithuania implemented by Lithuanian Research Library Consortium.

“From the user's point of view OA can be evaluated only positively...In my opinion, if there is no classified information, the results of scientific research should be freely accessible. The research is paid from EU funds or from the budget of Lithuanian Republic, so it should be freely available... OA is only a tool. While evaluating research results there is no difference whether it's published as an open or limited access publication.”

Nerija Putinaitė, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Education and Science

“OA allows to find out very quickly what is happening in the scientific world, what research is carried out, what results have been achieved. At the same time it allows you to spread information about your own research and its results.”

Professor Vytautas Ostaševičius, Kaunas University of Technology

“I think that OA is a good thing and it should constantly expand. I hope that gradually there will be more openness, because it is very important that the publications are widely read. For me it is important how research supported by us [Research Council of Lithuania] is read, used, and what impact it has. Eventually OA should prevail...The positive aspect is that it is free. Another positive aspect is that science crosses the boundaries of a narrow circle, opens the space for a wider evaluation of scientific works, and reduces the number of falsifications.”

Professor Ruta Marcinkevičienė, Vice-Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania, Vytautas Magnus University

“OA creates better conditions for citing published material, results have better visibility, and at the same time they better represent the scientist or group of scientists to the whole society. OA helps to strengthen the relation between science and society.”

Professor Juozas Vidmantis Vaitkus, Vilnius University, Faculty of Physics

INTRODUCTION

The situation in Lithuania

- The library professionals are the best informed about OA and have been actively promoting it since 2005.
- The research policy-makers and top managers of research funding institutions are aware of OA initiatives. A requirement to publicly publish the results of research financed by the state has been embedded in the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (2009). However most of them believe that OA is not their concern but the concern of the universities and researchers.
- The administrators of research institutions take little interest in OA because their activity is directed towards the key institution's assessment indicators that are related to publications in high impact factor journals. Meanwhile there are not many OA journals with high impact factors. OA practices are not taken into consideration during the research assessment exercise in the country, therefore OA for research institutions and researchers is not a first priority.
- Publication of research works is mostly influenced by the research assessment criteria set in the country – publications in the journals with the higher impact factors are considered to be the most important. Therefore the researchers do not see any other benefits that could be derived from OA and do not want to spend time for activities which do not produce for them any tangible advantage.
- The Lithuanian research publishers are aware about OA and many of them practice OA publishing. In 2011 (with support from another EIFL funded project) most of the publishers have started using Open Journals System for publishing their research journals.
- The project activities were targeted to all stakeholders of scholarly communication – research policy-makers, administrators of research and educational institutions, researchers, librarians, publishers in order to raise awareness of OA.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Lithuanian research community and policy-makers became better informed about OA benefits and new possibilities for the research dissemination and sharing, as well as about the impact of OA on scholarly communication.
- A conference was held with over 100 participants, who learned about OA initiatives and projects.
- Three videos were produced from interviews conducted with well-known policy-makers, researchers, librarians and publishers discussing OA; the videos will be used to promote OA among the top research managers and researchers.
- The number of downloads of the videos since launch has been over 650 views, indicating an interest in learning more.
- A new partnership with Lithuanian Society of Young Researchers was formed.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main objectives of the project were the following:

- To develop OA policies in institutions;
- To promote OA publications;

- To demonstrate benefits of OA;
- To promote OA among researchers.

The main activities were undertaken with an objective to give incentives to scholars, lecturers of higher education institutions and academics to support OA and to deposit their research outputs in OA repositories. The main activities were:

- to carry out the survey among the administrators of research and educational institutions to collect their opinion on introducing OA policies and practices in their institutions;
- to interview the most prominent scientists, publishers, policy-makers, administrators of research and educational institutions with an aim to assess their approach towards OA, OA benefits and opportunities OA provides;
- to create a short video on the basis of the recorded interviews;
- together with the project partners to host a scientific conference dedicated to the promotion of OA.

ACTUAL VS. PROPOSED

The project was implemented in line with the set objectives and on schedule. However, not all objectives have been achieved with equal success.

The administrators of the research and educational institutions unwillingly participated in the survey; some of them delegated the task of filling in the questionnaires to the library managers.

One of the project objectives – to give incentives to the administrators of educational and research institutions to draft OA policy documents – has failed. The reason for this is due to timing; currently higher education and scientific research institutions are undergoing reforms; some of them are being merged, most universities are changing their status from the state institutions to the public ones. For this reason, administrators of the institutions were not able to concentrate on OA activities and do not consider them to be their top priorities.

STRATEGIES, TACTIC, AND TOOLS

We identified the research policy-makers, prominent and distinguished researchers, librarians and publishers supporting OA and conducted video interviews with them. They voiced their position concerning OA. Three short videos based on the recorded interviews were released (in Lithuanian):

- Why is OA important? <http://youtu.be/hKgyVJ6DjXY>
- How to promote OA? <http://youtu.be/vLQRiyPzu3w>
- What is OA? <http://youtu.be/ZxvXPfo89wM>

An article with interviews was published in the international journal *Scienscominfo*: Banionytė, Emilija; Vaškevičienė, Aušra; Tautkevičienė, Gintarė. Interviews with Lithuanian Policy-makers and Famous Researchers about Open Access. *Scienscominfo: Nordic-Baltic Forum for Scientific Communication*, 2011, vol. 7, no. 3. On the internet:

<<http://www.sciecom.org/ojs/index.php/sciecominfo/article/view/5274/4646>>.

The Research Council of Lithuania and the Academy of Sciences of Lithuania provided support in organizing the conference dedicated to promotion of OA. And the project partner – the Association of Lithuanian Serials – publicly promoted the event. The conference page is available here: <http://www.lmba.lt/renginys/atverkime-mokslo-zinias-pasauliui>.

LESSONS LEARNED

- In order to start the initiatives for promoting OA it is important to identify influential research administrators and prominent researchers who support OA. They will help you to disseminate OA ideas among sceptically or even negatively minded participants of the scholarly communication process.
- In addition, it is quite useful to partner with young researchers' groups and associations. They are still forming their research communication practices, more flexible and more open to new ideas.
- To make OA initiatives more viable, it is necessary to search for influential administrators and researchers inside a particular institution who are able to impact the choice of priorities within institution as well as trends of strategic development. This is not an easy job, it might require long and continuous efforts till some results are accomplished, therefore it is advisable to be patient and not to abandon the initiative.
- The timing of when to propose an OA policy is extremely important; when working with university administrators (or any major stakeholders) you should be aware of their priorities. For example, make sure the institution is not undergoing major reforms because in such a situation their institutional priorities will clearly be focused elsewhere.

THE FUTURE

The project helped to identify the strong and weak aspects of OA developments in the Lithuania, as well as main OA supporters, people with doubts and sceptics. It was good to reaffirm that a group of top managers of research and educational institutions supports OA. Some top managers have rather superficial understanding about OA, therefore it will be necessary to work individually with each of them. OA benefits should be promoted among the sceptically minded top managers and researchers. The recorded videos will be used to spread the message about OA among the top managers of the institutions and researchers in the country.