

# A new funding model and improved infrastructure for the Finnish Open Access journals

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## Abstract

A new project launched by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies and the National Library of Finland will be looking for ways to make Open Access publishing more viable for the Finnish scholarly journals. Most of the journals are published by small learned societies with modest resources. The project will investigate potential new funding models for the OA journals and develop improved technological infrastructure for them.

## Keywords:

Open Access; scholarly journals; domestic journals; infrastructure; Open Journal Systems; funding models

## Finnish scholarly journals and Open Access

A substantial part of the Finnish research output comes out in about 150 domestic journals, many of which are published in Finnish or Swedish. According to the publication data collected by the Ministry of Education and Culture, more than 8 % of all peer-reviewed journal articles produced in Finnish universities are issued in these journals. Within the humanities and social sciences the share of domestic publication channels is far higher and exceeds 50 % in some of the fields.

According to a recent report (Ilva & Lilja 2014) commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the articles of about one third of Finnish journals are currently openly available on the Internet, either immediately or (in some cases) after an embargo period. Another third is available to most of the Finnish researchers as part of two national

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subscription-based services (Elektra and Edilex), and the final third is not available in digital form at all.

Articles in OA journals	870
- <i>immediate OA</i>	681
- <i>delayed OA</i>	189
Articles in Elektra and Edilex journals	686
Articles in other Finnish journals	928
<b>Articles in all Finnish journals</b>	<b>2484</b>
The share of articles in OA journals	35,0 %
- <i>immediate OA</i>	27,4 %
- <i>delayed OA</i>	7,6 %

Table 1 The number of peer-reviewed articles published in Finnish journals in 2011-2012 by researchers affiliated with Finnish universities.

As far as Open Access is concerned, the journals can be divided into two distinct groups based on the main language of their content. Most of the English-language journals published in Finland have already moved to some form of open access publishing, as this allows them to reach an international audience they wouldn't be able to get in a subscription-based business model. On the other hand, the Finnish and Swedish language journals are a much more mixed case, as most of the major journals have not made the transition to Open Access.

### Small publishers with modest resources

Most of the Finnish scholarly journals are published by small learned societies, which publish only one or two journals. With very few exceptions, the journals operate on a very modest budget, sometimes with a part-time editor, but rarely with full-time staff. Most of the journals have not had funds to invest in proper digital publishing platforms. Because of their fragile economic situation, many of the journals have been cautious in moving to Gold OA or even allowing the self-archiving of their articles. Currently less than 50 % of the Finnish scholarly journals allow self-archiving, which is below the international average. (Holopainen, Koskinen & Piipponen 2014)

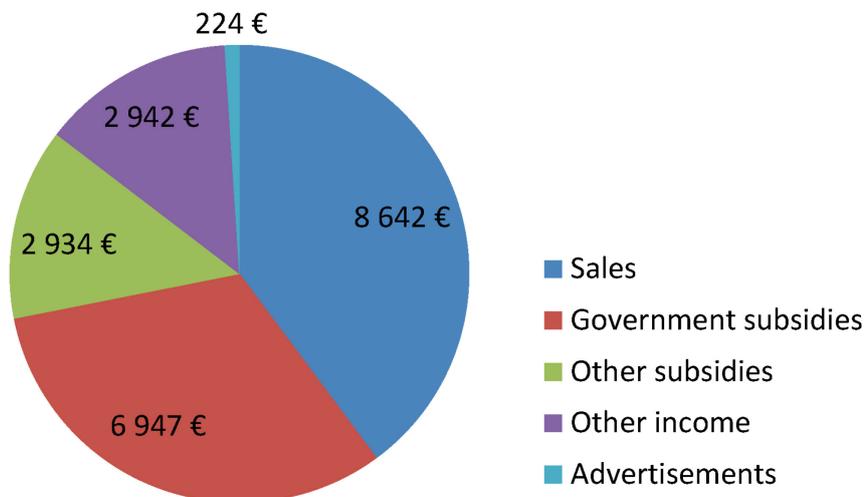


Figure 1 The average income formation of 86 Finnish scholarly journals which received government subsidies in 2013.

The main sources of income for the journals are usually individual subscriptions, society funding collected from membership fees and government subsidy, which is meant to cover deficits and can cover only a certain percentage of the budget. There are no million-dollar licensing deals for these journals – in fact, the Finnish academic libraries currently spend relatively little money on the acquisition of the domestic scholarly journals. The total cost of print and digital subscriptions to domestic journals paid by the Finnish research institutions is estimated to be in the range of a few hundred thousand euros a year. This means that there is currently not enough money available to sustain the journals if they would decide to flip their business models from subscriptions to Open Access.

### A new project will improve technical infrastructure and look for a funding model

To improve the situation, the Ministry of Education and Culture has decided to fund a joint project by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies and the National Library of Finland. The twenty-month project will develop an improved version of the Open Journal Systems-based hosted platform the Federation of Learned Societies has been providing for the journals of its member organizations (<http://ojs.tsv.fi>). The aims of this development work include the adoption of DOIs and ORCIDs in these journals and improvements in the flow of publication metadata to national and international information systems.

The project will also work together with the publishers and the Finnish research organizations and research funders to build a viable model for the funding of the journals once they transition to Open Access. For the most part, the adoption of article processing charges (APCs) is not seen as a desirable model for the domestic journals. Instead, the project will look for a consortium-based model, in which the extra funding needed would come from the research organizations and funders.

Of course, it is not necessarily easy to find a model that will be agreeable to all parties, especially now that the Finnish universities are facing severe budget cuts and many of them will be forced to cut back costs. However, the creation of centralized Open Access funds (which is currently under investigation) may provide opportunities for re-distributing some of the money that has been previously used for site licenses or the payment of APCs.

In any case, the universities are highly dependent on the availability of quality publication channels for their research output. In the current funding model for the Finnish universities 13 % of all state funding (more than 200 million euros a year) is handed out according to the number and quality of peer reviewed publications they have produced. This means that the universities should have a strong incentive to contribute to the funding of domestic publication channels.

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