Oh No – Not Yet Another Small, Stand-Alone Humanities Journal!

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Why not?

- This may not be the whole truth about all such journals, but a general impression (backed by some analyses) is that
  - Small journals are good at:
    - Quality assuring content
    - Creating communities
  - They are not good at:
    - The technicalities of publishing and distribution
    - Typesetting and design
    - Open Access
    - Economics
    - Sustainability
      - Often dependent on one person’s enthusiasm and energy
  - They often have financial difficulties
Examples of «non-professional» behaviour

• Journals from smaller publishers do not have a policy listed in Sherpa/RoMEO (a vast majority)
  – The source of information about self-archiving policies
  – Where authors having a funder mandate to adhere to, look to see if they can publish in a journal
  – Most smaller journals are actually very self-archiving friendly

• OA journals from smaller publishers
  – Are not listed in DOAJ -> invisible (some)
  – Listed, but not depositing article level metadata (a majority)
  – Do not use a CC license (a vast majority)
Present status in the Nordic countries

• About 500 Nordic journals
  – From a data set from early 2012 over journals accredited in the Norwegian system for financing HE institutions
  – Will probably still give an accurate enough picture
• Most of them published by small publishers
  – At least 177 published stand-alone
    • Publisher info lacking for 109 journals – probably also small publishers
  – Only 15 publishers publish 5 or more journals (a total of 135 journals)
  – Small publishers generally publish small journals (in terms of articles per year)
  – Few subscribers to a normal journal
Present status in the Nordic countries cont.

- **Open Access**
  - 38 publishers publish a total of 44 OA journals
    - This number is probably much larger today
  - Only 3 publishers publish more than 1 OA journal
    - The institutional publishing services are rather invisible, because they don’t count as publishers
    - Even the largest publishers publish few OA journals
- **Conclusion:** Nordic journals are small, subscription based and published by small publishers or by themselves
The top of the list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Number of journals</th>
<th>Open Access?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universitetsforlaget</td>
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<td>Taylor &amp; Francis</td>
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<td>Fagbokforlaget</td>
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<td>Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien</td>
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<td>Arkeologisk museum i Stavanger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aarhus Universitetsforlag</td>
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National policies

It looks like all Nordic countries are steering journals towards OA

- NOP-HS supports OA
- Norwegian Research Council supports OA and would like to make Gold OA the model
  - We’re waiting for a financial model
- The Danes say Open Access should be the model
  - Support?
- The Finns say Open Access should be the model
  - They are trying to find models to support a transition
- The Swedes don’t care – they won’t support journals any more …

- And internationally more and more research funding bodies demand results to become Open Access
Need to re-orient the models

- Subscription-based financing is increasingly difficult
  - Stand-alone journals and small publishers squeezed by the size of the big deals
  - The public is turning towards electronic media
  - Subscription income is declining
- National or Nordic level grants will be directed towards Open Access
  - Or disappear
- Funder mandates will steer manuscripts towards OA journals
Scaling

• Subscription and grant financing doesn’t scale
  – More manuscripts means less resources available per articles
  – Fewer manuscripts creates the need for explanations
    • Or the need to lower standards
• New fields need new journals
  – Or new space in old journals
• Science – even humanities and social sciences – grows
• Some fields could need the possibilities inherent in e-only publishing
Mega-journals

- A new phenomenon starting 2006 with PLOS ONE
- Multidisciplinary (PLOS ONE covers the whole of Science and Medicine)
- Peer review
  - But not necessarily judging importance
- PLOS ONE and most others has a threshold model
  - Technically sound
  - Well enough written
  - PLOS ONE published more than 23,400 articles in 2012
- Well suited to present negative results
- Well suited to subjects of low interest in mainstream journals
HSS mega-journals?

• They exist!
  – In the UK
• Humanities Directory and Social Sciences Directory
  – A commercial enterprise
  – A few issues have been published (started 2012)
• Open Library of Humanities
  – https://www.openlibhums.org/
  – A not-for profit collaboration between scholars
  – No articles published yet … (started 2013)
Why Megajournals in the Humanities?

• More robust than small journals
  – Few manuscripts in one field will be balanced by manuscripts in other fields
  – Not dependent upon any single person
• E-publishing gives new opportunities
  – Embedding sound and video
  – Colours are cheap
  – Pictures, illustrations, tables
  – Enclosing data sets with the publication
• Continuous publication
  – No need for the next issue to have your paper read
• Increases visibility
  – The larger the journal, the more important for indexing services
• Size increases competence and efficiency
Financial needs of a megajournal

• Editorial work (and peer review) donated by researchers
  – As usual …
• Technical work and platform must be paid for
• Copy-editing, proofreading, typesetting must be paid for
• Such a journal needs financial income!
Finding income

• Grant support from various sources
  – Including in-kind donations from institutions
  – But needs real cash!
• Article processing charges (author-side payments, APC)
  – Scales with the number of articles
  – Increasing number of institutions have set up funds or other mechanisms to pay for this
• Sale of versions? (OA to HTML, sale of PDF, ePub etc.)
• Advertising?
• Donations?
A Nordic Mega-journal for the Humanities

• For
  – Nordic subjects in any language
  – General subjects in Nordic (i.e. Danish, Swedish, Norwegian) languages
• Multidisciplinary
  – (Initially) based on specific subjects
    • Lacking journals or lacking capacity
      – New specialities
      – Older journals giving up
      – Or existing journals lacking sufficient manuscripts
    • Fields needing the new capabilities of e-only publishing
  – Flexible
    • Adding subjects/fields as the need arises and resources become available
  – An editorial team per subject field
  – An international editorial board
• Accredited on level 1 in the Norwegian system
It needs

- Editors who want to convert their existing activities to fit this model and take part in a start-up project
  - Or to start up new activities within such a framework
- Groups of scholars who need new publishing venues
  - Or the possibilities e-publishing brings
- Long-time (3–5 years) financial backing from
  - Research councils
  - NOP-HS
  - Larger institutions
- A commitment to fund APCs
  - From the HE/research community in general
- Technical support
  - Publishing has a lot of technologies embedded
- Management
  - Exploiting commercial income sources
- A base at an institution in a Nordic country
Goals (long-term)

- Financial viability
  - No (or strongly reduced) need for long-term direct support
  - Ability to accept non-funded manuscripts
- A good market share – 500–1000 articles per year
- Good standing as a good journal for authors
- Indexing by Web of Knowledge and SCOPUS
  - Acceptable levels of citation
- High number of downloads from outside HE
- Follow the industry standards
Who wants to join?

• This is a vision, not a project
  – Yet …
  – It is not my project, it should be led by editors
• If you find the idea interesting, let us talk and explore possibilities
• Talk to colleagues
• Think through your needs
  – Not your habits …
  – The traditional journal of today was a radical break with traditions when the first ones came in 1665
• Where could money be found to explore this?
  – Needs an initial «investment»
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