



EIFL-OA: Open Access

Removing barriers to knowledge

“OPENACCESS.SI – SLOVENIAN NATIONAL OPEN ACCESS WEB SITE”

A CASE STUDY FROM SLOVENIA

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Results of the EIFL-funded Open Access advocacy campaign to reach out to research communities implemented by Jožef Stefan Institute with the partners

INTRODUCTION

Within the research community in Slovenia, awareness about the importance of OA for the results of publicly financed research is generally low. There are no funders or institutional mandates for the deposit of publications or data from publicly funded research into OA repositories. And none of the Slovenian higher education or research institutions has signed the OA declarations.

The repository of the National and University Library, accessible through the [Digital Library of Slovenia](#), the repository at the [Digital Library of the University of Maribor](#), and the [repository of the Faculty of Computer and Information Science of the University of Ljubljana](#) are compliant with DRIVER Guidelines for content providers – exposing textual resources with OAI-PMH. Four other electronic theses and dissertations repositories are also in operation. [Social Science Data Archives](#), a member of CESSDA, maintained by the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana, is collecting raw data from social sciences research.

The [Research Infrastructure Development Plan 2011-2020](#) lists and briefly describes the important international and national research infrastructure priority areas. One of them is the establishment of the national OA infrastructure for the deposit of research data and publications from publicly funded research, linked to the national CRIS system (SICRIS). Deposit of data and publications will be made mandatory after the infrastructure is established.

The Slovenian Book Agency is co-financing a preliminary survey for the establishment of the Portal of [Slovenian scientific and literary journals](#). Open Journal Systems has been proposed as the software platform.

From the above it is clear that information on OA in Slovenia is scattered, and not part of coordinated effort, but rather driven by a few individual enthusiastic advocates. In February 2011, a meeting of representatives of the largest Slovenian research institutions and libraries was organized in order to discuss this issue. It was decided by consensus that developing a web site would be the most effective and flexible instrument for the promotion of OA in Slovenia. Detailed and well-organized information at the [openaccess.si](#) web site will stimulate wider adoption of open access (OA) to publications and research data by all stakeholders for the benefit of the increased visibility of Slovenian research.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Launch of a national website on OA in Slovenian - openaccess.si; since launch (in October), the usage continues to grow, reaching a high of over 2,000 visits in January 2012, even before a wide systematic promotion has been carried out.
- A web site that provides users with knowledge on open availability of publicly funded research results and also assists researchers in complying with OA mandates and scientific publishers in need of guidelines and standards for OA publishing
- The creation of an OA network consisting of thirteen major Slovenian research institutions (universities, institutes and libraries), representing almost all active researchers in the country
- There is now a core group of OA advocates who act as an open interest group advocating for OA, and as the advisory body on OA in Slovenia
- The project received the attention, support, and cooperation of the main national actors in R&D, including the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, the Slovenian Research Agency, and the Science and Technology Directorate at the Ministry

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

[The consortium of thirteen largest research institutions and libraries](#) built [a central national web site](#), which was launched in October 2011. It provides quality information and guidelines on different aspects of OA in Slovenian. Content of the web site is licensed with the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY), thereby enabling its further maximum use and unlimited distribution.

STRATEGIES, TACTIC, AND TOOLS

Primary target audiences of the project are researchers, research funders, and research policy makers. Each consortium partner brought to the project the expertise on the needs and modes of action and operation of one or more target groups. The wide network of collaborators and their enthusiasm were the key to our success. Since the grant covered only the server set up and web page design, all other activities (editorship, content provision, promotion, evaluation) were carried out within the collaborators' free time.

Web site content was prepared in teams, each team covering one of the aspects of OA: OA publications, open data, topics of interest for researchers, international and national policies, and OA publishing practices. A FAQ section and a presentation of the state of OA in Slovenia in English language were included as well. Besides preparing the content, all collaborators were active in testing the web site prototype. They were also actively evaluating it and disseminating the information on its establishment.

The web site was built using WordPress open source software. Web page design was outsourced to a web design studio. Coordination and communication was carried out by the project coordinator.

The National Institute of Biology joined the project after the grant was allocated. Therefore, the consortium by the end of the project consisted of all four universities, the six largest Slovenian research institutes and three research libraries.

SUCCESS STORIES

A central national information point established through a coordinated approach on a national level. This is judged to be the most important benefit of our project. Due to the prior lack of a coordinated approach and dissemination of information, the usual misconceptions about OA were common among the research community.

Support of policy makers and funders. A very important aspect of the project was the attention, support, and cooperation received from the main national actors in R&D: policy makers and funders. Though not formally listed as partners, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, and the Slovenian Research Agency actively supported the project. The Science and Technology Directorate at the Ministry also leased the openaccess.si domain.

An OA network. An important strength of the project is the cooperation of thirteen major Slovenian research institutions (universities, institutes and libraries), representing almost all active researchers in the country. For each institution, the permission to join the project was granted by its management (rectors, directors), which is an indication of their support of OA. Partnerships resulted into a network that might have important influence on the development of OA in the country.

Better informed and proactive researchers; information available to scientific publishers, SMEs and general public. The web site will enrich these stakeholders with knowledge on open availability of publicly funded research results. It will especially assist the researchers in complying with OA mandates and scientific publishers in need of guidelines and standards for OA publishing. The website usage continues to grow since its launch in October 2011: in November 2011: 1259 visits and 13383 pages viewed; in December 2011: 1381 visits and 8960 pages viewed; and in January 2012: 2036 visits and 13014 pages viewed.

A core group of OA advocates. Another key benefit of the project is a dedicated core group of OA advocates and promoters who will use the web site for further promotion of OA in Slovenia. The group will act as an open interest group advocating for OA, and as the advisory body on OA in Slovenia. Members of the group, or their institutions, will co-operate in joint projects, provide information on OA to the public, provide an advice on compatibility and standardization of the digital repositories and advocate for national OA policies to research publications and data.

LESSONS LEARNED

- In any project it is vital to clearly define its goals, plan its sustainability at the very beginning, and choose the appropriate tools.
- When the project is connected with research, it is very important to have a diverse group of collaborators with different areas of expertise that can address the needs of different members of the research community.
- When building a web site, it is crucial to design a logical structure and a recognizable appearance, including a well-designed logo.
- For better performance it is advisable to hire a professional web site developer.

THE FUTURE

The website will be kept up-to-date and new content will be added. The project marks the beginning of the formation of an OA community in Slovenia, which will use the web site for advocacy and promotion of OA in the country. The endeavours on disseminating and spreading awareness of OA through the website and other means have already given the first results. The Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering and the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana have established their own OA repositories. The network of Slovenian OA partners has increased as well as the number of those contributing content to the website.