The National Library of Sweden is taking an active interest in the development of scientific and scholarly publishing. BIBSAM - our Department for National Coordination and Development – is involved in several activities that concern this area. BIBSAM co-ordinates a consortium of Swedish research libraries for the licensing of electronic resources. We promote Open Access by funding and co-ordinating a number of development projects within the framework of a programme called OpenAccess.se. Along the same line, in 2005 the National Library signed the Berlin declaration for Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities.

The National Library therefore welcomes the initiative from the European Commission to study the development of the scientific publication markets in Europe. The study overall demonstrates a good knowledge of the problem area. However, we also want to point out that it is not always obvious to whom the recommendations in the report are directed and thus how they are going to be translated into practical action. We will come back to this issue in some of the comments below.

We will not be commenting on the detailed analysis of the report but will focus on the recommendations.

The National Library supports Recommendation A1. Guarantee public access to publicly-funded research results shortly after publication, both action (i) and (ii). It is important that policies mandating open access to articles arising from publicly funded research are implemented both at the EU and the national level.

We want to stress that the ideal solution is immediate public access. Even a shorter embargo period should be seen as an exception to a rule. However, it would be acceptable to use the solution proposed in the Federal Research Public Access Act recently introduced to the US Senate by Senators Cornyn and Lieberman, which would mandate free online access to the final version of the author’s peer-reviewed manuscript "as soon as practicable, but not later than 6 months after publication in peer-reviewed journals".
Research libraries in Sweden and elsewhere are playing a central role in establishing open access repositories. The development of these open access repositories would be highly enhanced by a closer co-ordination between libraries, research institutions and research funders. Therefore we feel that it is important to include representatives of research libraries in the discussions on the development of open repositories, that are mentioned in action (ii) of this recommendation.

The National Library supports Recommendation A2. Aim at a ‘level playing field’ in terms of business models in publishing. We would welcome that research funding authorities allocated money to authors to pay for publication of their works in author-pay journals. However, we also realize that it will take some further analysis and discussion to find the most suitable models in each country.

The National Library supports the general idea of Recommendation A3. ‘Extended quality’ rankings of scientific journals. We think a development in this direction would be positive. Nevertheless, if the recommendation is to have any effect it must be clarified who is supposed to implement it.

As for Recommendation A4. Guarantee perennial access to scholarly journal digital archives, we recognize the important role for national libraries in securing long-term access to electronic publications.

However, to focus on one specific point, we fail to understand why providing access to born-digital publications that are no longer of any commercial value to the publishers should require the establishment of a “business model”, presumably including economic compensation to the publishers. For national libraries it would seem that fulfilling this task is the contrary of “business”.

Giving access to material which still bears a commercial value is, of course, another matter altogether. A sad observation is that none of the member countries of the European Union seem to have used the leeway given by the copyright directive to offer on-site access to non-purchased, e.g. legally deposited, publications in any publicly available, not-for-profit library.

It goes without saying that the most effective way for the European Union of promoting long-term preservation of and access to scientific information created within the union would be to forcefully support the development of open access initiatives.

The National Library supports Recommendation A5. Foster interoperable tools to improve knowledge visibility, accessibility and dissemination.

We have the following comments on Recommendation B1. Promote pro-competitive pricing strategies.

We recognize the problem with limited library budgets and prices for scholarly journals rising above inflation.
The overriding goal when designing pricing models for licensing consortia is to increase cost efficiency in providing information to the users of scholarly journals. Licensing publishers’ complete portfolios in so called big deals may very well be cost efficient if built on relevant parameters and with reasonable terms and conditions for use. However, we also recognize that this model does not fit all libraries or consortia and should not be the only alternative for purchasing access to electronic journals. It is our impression that most major journal publishers now offer alternatives to big deals as a response to feedback from libraries and consortia. We believe libraries and consortia should continue to take an active role in identifying the best possible models for subscription based journals. In parallel, exploring alternative access models which challenge the existing market situation for scholarly journals should be encouraged.


The National Library supports the Recommendation B3. Promote the development of electronic publications, noting that Sweden does not have the VAT problem. The unfavourable tax treatment of electronic publications in many European countries has seriously precluded and delayed the development of cost efficient pricing models for scholarly journals (see B1).

We also want to point out that the situation of the Swedish journals in the social sciences and the humanities has been the subject of a recent (2003) Nordic study, which underlines the need of financial support to make these journals easily accessible on the web. This problem will be addressed in the new Nordic Nordbib development programme and also in the OpenAccess.se programme co-ordinated by BIBSAM. However, there could be some potential for co-operation on the European level.

The National Library also supports the recommendations C1 and C2.

This contribution was prepared by Jan Hagerlid, Kjell Nilsson and Kari Stange at BIBSAM and decided upon by the Swedish National Librarian, Gunnar Sahlin, on June 1, 2006.