Study of the Nordic SSH Journal Publishing Landscape:

A Report for the Nordic Publications Committee for Humanities and Social Science Periodicals (NOP-HS)

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This report has been independently prepared by Mikael Laakso and does not as such reflect the opinions, policies (past or future) of NOP-HS.

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Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the landscape of Nordic scholarly journals in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). Of specific interest are journals that fulfill one or more distinct Nordic dimensions (journal scope, backing organization, content languages, or editorial board composition) which are defined more precisely in the methods section of this report. Outside of scope for this report are journals that fall outside of these criteria, and usually purely national or completely international journals. A substantial part of the work that has gone into preparing this report has concerned data collection since the information about scholarly journals is distributed across many databases with some key information not being recorded anywhere and must be collected manually.

The data for this report was collected through a bibliometric study as well as through a web survey, both during the first half of 2021. For the bibliometric part major international and national bibliographic databases were scanned for candidate Nordic journals within SSH. 1367 journals were identified and which webpages were consulted manually for further information, after which 353 journals remained in the final population of Nordic journals. An invitation to participate to the web survey was sent out to the editor in chief or primary contact address to each of the 353 journals. In the end 72 responses were received, giving a response rate of around 20%.

The results of the bibliometric study reveal that the landscape of Nordic journals in SSH is diverse, with strong presence of both professional publishers and universities publishing journals. 75% of the journals publish all their content open access (OA) immediately, with a further 4% doing so after a delay. The open source editorial management software Open Journal Systems (OJS) was being used by at least 42% of the journals. Though the web survey only received a limited number of responses it provides indication that many journals function with sparse resources, rely on volunteer work to a high degree, and would like to see long-term funding opportunities for journals to develop.

Overall the study demonstrates that journals facilitate Nordic interactions in many different ways, many explicitly so through the journal scope but also through allowed publication languages and/or editorial board composition. The Nordic journal publishing space is very much in a state of change, driven both by the Nordic countries having national OA policies but also factors that relate to consolidation that has been happening in the broader international journal publishing space as well as technology maturity of open source software to support modern journal functions. A large proportion of Nordic SSH journals are run with low direct monetary funding, relying heavily on volunteer effort and in-kind support from universities, making their operations sensitive to even small changes in editorial membership or organizational support.

There has been a distinct movement towards collaborating with international commercial publishers among journals that reach outside of national scope, a change that often is

accompanied by a name change and English-only publishing. Such journals are also often subscription-based while the rest of Nordic journals are more commonly OA. However, there is also another movement where universities and national journal portals publish journals on modern OJS-driven platforms and in such cases retain multilingualism in content. It would be important to align funding opportunities with this trend, allowing for cost-efficient OA journals to reach higher levels of operational and financial stability without necessarily involving a professional publisher. Funding for journal portals as well as directing scalable long-term funding for content-production related expenses in journals (e.g. copyediting, typesetting, proofreading) would free up volunteer effort for other tasks.

Recommendations to key actors

Researchers and research communities

Nordic journals are in a unique intersection of the national and the global, as forums that facilitate specifically research in the Nordic context or Nordic scholarly cooperation in other ways. By acting in editorial positions, as authors, and peer-reviewers for Nordic journals researchers and research communities help maintain the activities of these publications. Researchers and research communities should encourage and place value on involvement in journal operations as part of research careers, volunteering for hands-on editorial positions is demanding and should be acknowledged as a key part of scholarly knowledge production.

For research communities there is still a lot of potential to expand nationally oriented journals to also include select Nordic dimensions, which could benefit journals in many ways without sacrificing local relevance. There could also be potential in merging journals with very similar scopes across the Nordics, to pool limited resources and likely create even more attractive and well-resourced publication outlets and facilitate funding processes due to contact points in multiple countries.

There are now more active journals than ever before, and there is no shortage of commercially-driven wide-scoped English-language international journals. Maintaining forums that encourage publication of materials intimately relevant to the Nordics, allowing for Nordic languages in content, are aspects that are not a given when a journal becomes published by an international commercial publisher. This study found a recurring pattern of national and Nordic-oriented journals that had broadened their scope and were exclusively English language. Commercial interests and scholarly interests might be in sync so that such decisions and conditions benefit and are the desire for all main actors involved, however, it might not always be the case. Research communities operating Nordic journals should place high value on being distinctively Nordic in a global journal landscape that has become increasingly crowded but also homogenous.

Universities and research institutions

Many journals are ran entirely without the support of a professional publisher at very low costs, relying heavily on volunteer effort. Organizations should consider ways through which they could help support and fund the activities of journals that are relevant to the subjects that are researched and taught at their institutions. Organizations could question if funding Nordic SSH OA journals equivalent to what was paid for in subscriptions, which is often not

much, is enough in relation to the importance that these publishing outlets have for the researchers at their institution. In relation to what is spent on OA and subscription agreements per article/per title with international commercial publishers the amounts are likely small even though they would be increased.

The creation of university-hosted platforms running Open Journals Systems (OJS) has been a strong positive development for the support of Nordic SSH journals, pooling resources to achieve common goals together. Even more Nordic institutions should get involved in creating or supporting such services since they provide a cost-effective and technically mature foundation for journals to run all their core activities.

Research funders and policy-makers

The transition to digital publishing, based on an OA publishing models in particular, has been challenging for scholar-ran journals who have relied on subscription income to fund journal operations. It would be important for there to be accessible ways through which research funders and other institutions active in the landscape could contribute to help fund journals. Science policy should work towards establishing common inclusive technical platforms and financial models that collect and distribute money to scholar-ran journals.

A clear signal from the web survey was the need for more long-term funding - the constant uncertainty combined with application and reporting effort was for many perceived as very burdensome. Consider ways through which more long-term funding could be offered to journals. Without confidence in ability to keep journals running the enthusiasm for input of volunteer effort is likely also dampened. As such there is reason to believe that there is a multiplier effect at play, where invested money results in also increased effort and commitment from non-funded activities of the journal. This is in stark contrast to profit-maximizing publishing of many international publishers, where parts of paid prices are rather diluted into only partly supporting operations, with the rest going into shareholder profits.

Publishers and other service providers

The issue of content preservation is urgent and every journal should ensure that published content is archived through some reliable external service. Online-only publishing is increasingly the norm and the survey results of this study gave reason to be concerned for the longevity of published materials, where many journals reported lack of enrollment or lack of insight into preservation procedures. Small publishers using OJS should enroll into the integrated and free PKP Preservation Network service from the control panel of their system.

International professional publishers should strive to retain or introduce the option of multilingual publishing for Nordic SSH journals, offering the option for authors to communicate in a Nordic language if they so want. Nordic professional publishers have so far been good at enabling this, but there is no guarantee that the current publishers will forever retain their current ownership structure or strategies in the turbulent space that is scholarly journal publishing – journal owners should also see that their mission and interests are guarded if unexpected changes or pressure should be applied. More options for authors are generally a good thing, research can be communicated in both national and international languages.

A large share of Nordic SSH journals reside on modern technical platforms with OJS-based journal workflow systems making it easy for the editorial staff to take care of most activities related to publishing without a full professional publisher. However, based on the survey responses many journals are using both volunteer and remunerated efforts to copyedit articles. For journals that do not want or cannot engage in a full publication partnership with a professional publisher there seems to be demand for service providers offering lighter service packages that include copyediting, metadata management, and preservation for content to be published. Such costs are transparent for journals to request funding for, in comparison to the many other important intertwined stages of managing manuscripts and journals.

Introduction

For contextualizing the current landscape of Nordic journals within SSH it is necessary to briefly consider how the wider landscape of scholarly journals has seen change over time, resulting in the publishing environment we have today. The scholarly journal publishing landscape globally has been, and continues to be strongly shaped, by forces such as *evolving needs of scholarly communication, financial aspects, technical solutions, and science policy*. The age of journals active today are in some cases measured in centuries, but very often in decades, and journals active today have successfully remained active as consistently relevant communication forums to the scholarly community.

Over time scholarly communication has increased in both volume and speed, where new solutions are developed to meet the needs of disseminating knowledge among researchers and broader in the society. A recent practical example is the increase of preprints, i.e. non-peer reviewed research manuscripts, and services supporting their distribution in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic. Processes of peer-review and formal publication are slow and when the need for information about new contexts and changing circumstances emerge so does also the means of communicating most effectively. Increasingly journals will have to consider how they align with these new possibilities and pressures for OA before and after formal publication of a manuscript.

The presence and influence of financial aspects in scholarly journal publication is something that has been ramping up since the end of the Second World War, where commercial interest have become intertwined with the scholarly sphere (Fyfe, Coate, Curry et al 2017). The international scholarly journal market is at this point very oligopolistic in nature with a handful of large commercial publishers that publish a substantial part of all content produced, fueled largely by mergers and acquisitions (Larivière, Haustein & Mongeon 2015). In addition to the attraction of outsourcing publishing duties from scholarly societies and gaining additional prestige by being associated with a big publishing house, during the early years of digitalization professional publishers had an early advantage in being able to invest in electronic publishing platforms that were not freely available, as standardized, and of as high quality as they are today (e.g. OJS), making it especially attractive for scholarly societies and journals to sign agreements with these larger publishing houses.

The move from print to digital publishing and distribution was a huge leap in the sector that has permanently changed the circumstances for scholarly journals, suddenly the costs of physical production and logistics were not a given and the potential audience could be expanded in ways not previously possible. Digital publishing also enabled OA since costs of distribution were essentially eliminated so it was no longer a given that readers should have to pay in order to get access to published content, funding to support publication could come from other directions as well.

Science policy has become increasingly powerful and hands-on, instructing both national library consortia in how resources should be spent, as well as guiding authors in what type of outlets they should publish their works. The most recent example of research funder science policy is Plan S (which involves several Nordic research funders as will be described in the coming sections), where research funders from around the world have created common guidelines under what conditions financing of publication of funded research can happen.

Considering all of this, and how these forces intertwine, the life and times of Nordic-oriented journals that exist somewhere in the intersection between the national and the global have to stay adaptive as circumstances and priorities change on various levels of activity. This is also why it is so interesting to take a closer look at the current status of journals active in this space, there likely exists very different approaches and implementations of how journals have become positioned to serve and be served by the surrounding SSH research community.

The bibliometric and survey study presented in this report will be unique in the sense that no similar investigation of specifically Nordic journals has been conducted before. The most recent comprehensive overview study of scholarly journals in the Nordic countries is provided by Björk (2019), who focused particularly on aspects related to OA in charting the landscape. In that study there was no disciplinary distinction nor requirements for Nordic dimensions to be fulfilled, only that the journal was published in a Nordic country (or a Nordic-named journal published by an international publisher). Björk (2019) identified 437 OA journals of which 41% were registered in the DOAJ. Björk (2019) notes that around a third of journals published in the Nordics were OA as of autumn 2018, pegging the total of journals to around 1300 (no exact number is provided since focus in the study was on the OA subset). What was notable was that around half of the OA journals were hosted on journal portals hosting multiple journals, infrastructures that have become more common for supporting in particular non-commercial OA publishing in recent years (Björk 2017; Bosman, Frantsvåg, Kramer et al 2021).

Policies and strategies

This section summarizes the general status and major development of OA-related science policy in the Nordic countries.

Denmark

Denmark has had a national OA strategy in place since 2012 with the most recent revision from the year 2018 (UFM 2018). In contrary to many other European and Nordic countries Denmark´s strategy is primarily driven by green OA, though leaving the option open for gold OA when it does not incur any cost increase. In the 2018 strategy there is a separate paragraph outlining the importance of ensuring continued activity of journals that enable publication in Danish, and a plan for development of an OA platform for such journals is outlined. Tidsskrift.dk is a journal portal launched in 2008 and maintained by Det Kongelige Bibliotek. In the beginning the portal primarily functioned as a digitized archive for content for eight journals, but has over time become OJS-driven to support editorial workflows and is now home to content from over 170 active and ceased journals (tidsskrift.dk (n.d.); tidsskrift.dk (2008)).

Finland

Policies for facilitating open science and open access in Finland on a national level were set into motion in 2014 by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Open Science and Research project which ran until the end of 2017. Since then the Ministry has handed continued responsibility for coordinating open science policies and practices to the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. In 2019 the current national policy for OA to publications was launched, spanning the years 2020-2025 (Open Science Coordination 2019). The policy includes elements of and acceptance of both gold and green OA models, and outlines that a jointly funded and sustainable publishing model should be developed to enable immediate OA to research articles published in Finland. The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies launched the OJS-based journal.fi journal portal a few years ago which currently hosts over 100 journals which publish their content either delayed or immediate OA. OA to authored publications is also integrated into the recently updated university funding model, which incentivizes universities to facilitate OA to outputs authored by affiliated researchers. The national research funder, Academy of Finland, is an endorser of Plan S which is an international collaborative initiative among research funders to further OA to funded research through common OA requirements to funded research (coalition-s.org n.d.). While the Academy of Finland does not fund journals directly, journals active in Finland are likely to increasingly reflect on their OA policies to increase their compliancy with the requirements of Plan S.

Iceland

A summary of the key OA policies in Iceland are listed at openaccess.is (n.d.). Overall there is no strict national level policy or adherence to any particular model, but the major universities and the Icelandic Research Center have all published their own OA policies. The national portal for hosting OA journals and other digitized content is timarit.is.

Norway

An up to date summary of the national OA policies in Norway is summarized by Wenaas (2021). Even though smaller steps had been taken already years earlier, the most impactful national policy document was published in 2017 titled ”National goals and guidelines for open access to research articles” where it is stated that publicly funded Norwegian research articles should be made available OA by 2024. The policy describes multiple ways that this should be achieved through, from transformative agreements with publishers to researchers self-archiving in repositories. A separate measure described in the national policy is to ”Contribute to the development of new and sustainable models for the funding of OA publishing nationally and internationally.”. The Research Council of Norway (RCN) endorses Plan S which increases the pressure for journals in the country to align their OA policies to be compliant with the openness requirements (coalition-s.org n.d.).

Sweden

The Swedish National Library has worked with advancing OA to scholarly outputs since 2006. In 2017 the National Library received an appropriation directive from the Swedish

Government to act as a national coordinating body for increasing the share of OA outputs nationally. The goal of 2026 has been set for a full national transition to OA, adopting or developing whatever models necessary.(kb.se, n.d.) As part of this coordination work by the National Library there is currently work underway to develop financial and technical support for scholarly journals published in Sweden. An initial report has been conducted to establish the outgoing circumstances (KB 2019), but no concrete models or technical solutions have yet been published. Three Swedish research funders are endorsers of Plan S: Formas, Forte, and Vinnova (coalition-s.org n.d.). In addition to indirectly influencing how journals active in Sweden consider their OA policies, Forte is also a funder of journals (described closer in the next section) that requires funded journal to be immediate OA.

Existing funding opportunities in the Nordic countries

This section briefly reviews the major SSH journal funding sources present in the Nordic countries. These were identified based on web searches as well as based on the answers given in the journal survey that will be presented later in the report.

Denmark

Independent Research Denmark funds research activities in all scientific areas, and for journals the fund is dedicated to funding high-quality journals in the humanities. The fund offers three-year grants as a deficit guarantee, with a fixed sum of DKK 50 000 that can be applied for by digital journals. OA publishing with a maximum 1 year embargo without APCs is required for applying journals, as well as having editorial board members from at least two different academic institutions in Demark (dff.dk 2020). Between 2018 and 2020 calls the fund has funded 21 journals (dff.dk n.d.).

Finland

In Finland the major source of funding for journals active in the country are governmental subsidies that are channeled through the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies from which societies with publishing activities can apply for funding (https://www.tsv.fi/en/grants/publishing-and-international-activities-scientific-societies). The funding granted for one year at a time and intended to support publication series that do not have enough income to cover expenses. However, the grant has a limitation of only covering less than half of overall expenses, so other income is needed in order to be eligible to apply. Another limitation is that it is only available to scholarly societies and associations, and puts pressure on these organizations to retain members and membership fees if they publish OA as there is a need for other income to be eligible. No strict requirements regarding OA are given, only that journals should implement OA in a way they deem most suitable (e.g. allowing authors to self-archive with an embargo is acceptable). Since 2015 there has been concerted effort to create a new funding model for journals published in Finland that would be designed specifically with the circumstances of OA publishing in mind, however, the first major attempt at creating such a publishing consortium was not successful (Ilva 2018). In 2021 there has been a new national working group formed to restart the design of a new funding model, however, nothing concrete has been decided yet.

Iceland

From what can be gathered from the web and responses to the conducted web survey (presented later in the report) there is no central mechanism for funding journals in Iceland. Some journals get funded through their host Universities through funding that originates from the Ministry of Education.

Norway

The most notable journal funding source for Norwegian SSH journals has traditionally been the NRC which used to have yearly application processes for providing baseline journal funding which gave support to around 40 journals annually (Wenaas 2021). Since 2017 there has been a requirement that only OA journals are funded. In conjunction with this OA requirement a journal funding consortium has been coordinated by Unit (the Norwegian Directorate for ICT and Joint Services in Higher Education & Research) running in its first phase from 2018 to 2021. This funding model pooled money from NRC (~55%), The Ministry of Education and research (~40%), and most universities and university colleges in Norway (~5%). Journals applying for funding needed to be OA without an APC, where a committee of scholars evaluated applications. Of 41 journals applying 25 were granted support (22 of which from commercial publishers), where most journals flipped from subscription-based to OA publishing through this funding in 2018. (Wikstrøm 2019) The funding has required that journals be ranked at either level 1 or 2 in the national publication ranking scheme and 2/3 of the authors affiliated with a Norwegian research institution (openaccess.no n.d.). Based on the experiences from this first pilot funding round the following three-year period from 2021 onwards covers funding of 28 journals. In this new funding period part of the money for the consortium is no longer channeled through NRC but rather paid directly from the Ministry to Unit.

Sweden

For SSH journals in Sweden Vetenskapsrådet is a notable funder, issuing journal grants for between 1 to 3 years. Among the requirements is that the journal should publish OA with a delay of a maximum of 6 months, in a addition to being of high national or international scholarly standard. The funds can only be applied to and funded through a list of pre-approved public organizations (which includes universities) and is not paid directly to the journal. A panel of scholar assesses the applications at Vetenskapsrådet. In the 2017 call 17 journals received funding through Vetenskapsrådet (vr.se n.d.).

Another notable funder of journals in Sweden is Forte (The Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare) which is specifically funding journals publishing in Swedish and within the councils focus areas. Immediate OA publishing is a criterion for funding. Funding decisions are made by Fortes board based on pre-defined assessment criteria. Similarly to Vetenskapsrådet grants are organizational and can be applied for 1 to 3 years at a time. Prior decisions were not viewable at time of writing but the current call has reserved 10 million SEK where each journal can be awarded a maximum of 1,2 million SEK total for three years (forte.se n.d.).

Nordic level

The Nordic publications Committee for Humanities and social science periodicals (NOP-HS), a sub-committee to The Joint Committee for Nordic research councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS), is a very notable funder of journals at specifically the Nordic level. Since NOP-HS includes member organizations that also fund journals directly themselves the distinction of focusing on Nordic journals through this instrument is further highlighted. A total of 48 journals were granted funding in the 2019 and 2020 calls (aka.fi 2020). NOP-HS is an organisation set up to facilitate the cooperation of the Nordic research councils concerning Nordic scientific publishing and support to Nordic scientific journals within the fields of humanities and social sciences. NOP-HS commissioned this study.

Through its impactful role as a funder for Nordic journals in the SSH disciplines, the policies of NOP-HS have likely also shaped the landscape in how journals have designed their practices to become eligible to apply for a grant. For journals to be eligible to apply for a NOP-HS scientific journal grant, the journal must be externally peer reviewed, electronic and OA, have a broad Nordic editorial board with members from at least three Nordic countries, and have abstracts in English for all published articles.

In addition to these funders providing resources for operating journals on an ongoing basis, journals can commonly also apply for funds for specific projects (e.g. digitization, technical platform migration) from other foundations or professional associations within their countries. Overall, it can be summarized that the Nordic countries have differing approaches to funding of journals published in the countries, how OA is integrated into the requirements, and through which organizations and application processes the funds are channeled. In the open survey answers presented later in this report more reflection on the details of these funding mechanisms is provided.

Methods

This chapter describes how the two parts of the overall study were conducted, the bibliometric part and the survey-based part.

Bibliometric study

Identifying exclusively Nordic journals is a challenge considering the limitations in available bibliometric data for journals. If there would be well-structured data available concerning editorial board composition (affiliated organisations of primary interest) and author nationalities it would be possible to do quantitative analysis for excluding nationally-oriented journals and reliably identifying those that have a Nordic orientation. Relying only on international indexes for identifying journals is also not a viable option since, as the data gathering process documented earlier, many Nordic journals are not included in them.

In order to identify all potential journals relevant to the study, multiple bibliographic sources were used to compile a list of journals within SSH published in the Nordic countries. Unique journals were collected from the following databases:

- Ulrichsweb Global Serials Directory
- DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals)
- The Finnish Publication Forum
- Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals and Series
- Svenska vetenskapliga tidsskrifter (non-published list)
- openaccess.is
- Tidsskrift.dk
- Scopus (Free text search for journals)
- NOP-HS journal funding decisions 2019-2020

Since no single database provides a complete listing of relevant journals a mix of national and international sources was utilised. The Danish BFI-list (Den Bibliometriske Forskningsindikator) had to unfortunately be left out since the database does not provide any data concerning publisher country of the over 21 000 included journals and serials (the lack of this data point was also verified from the main contact of the database). Instead international sources as well as tidsskrift.dk were utilised to gather as much journals published in Denmark as possible.

Data sources

Ulrichsweb Global Serials Directory

Ulrichsweb is generally considered the most expansive international serials publication database, with records of over 300 000 titles. The main limitation with Ulrichsweb is the lack of stringent inclusion criteria (e.g. for peer-review) and lack of article-data. Use of Ulrichsweb

requires a subscription. Data was downloaded on the 5th of January 2021 with the following search criteria utilizing the advanced search alternatives: Active, Journal, Academic/Scholarly, Refereed/Peer-reviewed, Online, Country of publication: "Denmark", "Finland", "Iceland", "Norway", "Sweden", Subjects: "Social sciences and humanities". This search resulted in a total of 410 journals.

DOAJ

DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) is the definitive source of peer-reviewed OA journals, with over 15 600 active titles included as of January 2021. The main strengths of DOAJ are stringent inclusion criteria for journals and article-level data for many journals. The data is available for free to browse or download through doaj.org. Data was downloaded on the 5th of January 2021, when the database contained 15 691 journals, of which 243 published in the Nordic countries, and of which 209 in the SSH.

The Finnish Publication Forum

The Finnish Publication Forum is the Finnish national system for publication classification and ranking, spanning all disciplines and book publishers and conference proceedings as well as journals. The portal for browsing and downloading data for free among the over 34 000 records is found at tsv.fi (n.d.). Data for this study was downloaded on the 14th of January 2021 and comprised serials/journals on levels 1,2,3 (i.e. peer-reviewed) published in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland within the SSH. This resulted in 771 journals.

Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals and Series

The Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals and Series is similar to the Finnish Publication Forum in that it is a national system for classifying and ranking publications, containing over 35 000 records. The portal for browsing and downloading data for free is found at (dbh.nsd.uib.no n.d.). Data for this study was downloaded on the 7th of January 2021. After filtering to journals published in the Nordic countries and published within the SSH 838 journals were identified.

Svenska vetenskapliga tidsskrifter

There is no public authoritative national list similar to the Norwegian and Finnish examples for Sweden, and there is also not yet a national portal or listing for journals published in the country. A working group coordinated by the Swedish National Library has done initial work at compiling a list of scholarly journals as part of the study that is reported in KB (2019), and which has seen minor revisions since then. This list of journals published in Sweden was helpfully provided by Sofie Wennström from the Stockholm University Library on the 8th of January 2021. The list contained 219 journals of which 167 were found to be within SSH.

openaccess.is

Similarly to Sweden, Iceland has no national portal for comprehensively listing scholarly journals active in the country, however, openaccess.is is a national journal portal that contains 26 open access journals published in the country. Data was downloaded on the 15th of January 2021. 20 of the 26 journals were found to be within SSH.

Tidsskrift.dk

As explained in the beginning of the methods section the national BFI list could not be used for this study due to its lack of capability to filter journals by country, however, Tidsskrift.dk is a national portal that contained 165 journals on the 15th of January 2021 when the data was downloaded. 148 of the journals were found to be within SSH, journals without registered ISSN numbers were also excluded.

NOP-HS journal funding decisions 2019-2020

A good additional source for identifying potentially relevant journals is through grant information from The Nordic Publications Committee for Humanities and Social Science Periodicals (NOP-HS). On January 5th 2021 the page (aka.fi 2020) was accessed for information about the journals that had received funding in the 2019 and 2020 calls, a total of 48 journals.

Free text search for journals in Scopus

Since not all relevant journals are published by publishers based in the Nordic countries, Scopus, a commercial international bibliographic database owned by RELX/Elsevier, was searched for active journals within the SSH which included either "Scandinavian" or "Nordic" as part of their titles. 14 journals could be identified this way.

Table 1 presents a summary of the number of candidate journals identified from each data source.

Table 1. Summary of candidate journals identified from various data sources

Source	Journals
Ulrichsweb	410
DOAJ	209
Finnish Publication Forum	771
Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals and Series	838
Svenska vetenskapliga tidsskrifter	167
Tidsskrift.dk	148
openaccess.is	20
NOP-HS funded in 2019 or 2020 call	48
Scopus search	14

After the journal results were merged and deduplicated (based on matching title, ISSN or E-ISSN) into a unified dataset, a total of 1367 journal records remained. The following step was to manually visit each journal website to confirm they had an online presence, were actively publishing, a peer-reviewed journal, not a duplicate, and their subject being within the SSH. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the results of this manual verification process. The most common reason was the publication series not being a peer-reviewed journal, with many book, conference, and organisational publication series included among the records.

Table 2. Reason for excluding journals from the study

Reason for exclusion	Journals
Manually discovered duplicate entries	33
Inactive (Over 3 years without published content/announcement of ceasing)	132
Journals with no online presence	55
Not a peer-reviewed journal	283
Subject clearly not within the Social Sciences or Humanities	22

After this filtering 842 unique journals remained. For this study, journals were considered to be "Nordic" if at least one of the following criteria were fulfilled:

- Journal title or scope statement/about page indicates Nordic focus (as opposed to purely national)
- The journal originates or has a backing from a Nordic-oriented organisation
- Journal publishes full-text documents in two or more of Nordic languages that are not national languages of the country of the journal is based in
- The journal editorial board (or journals that have associate editors) has members affiliated with three different Nordic countries

This resulted in 353 journals that were included in the final population. 489 journals were excluded due to not fulfilling any of the above Nordic criteria, of which 327 had a national orientation while 162 had a global orientation.

Figure 1 presents a coarse overview of how the final 353 journals were covered by various data sources used. The figure was produced by using DeepVenn (Hulsen, de Vlieg & Alkema 2008).

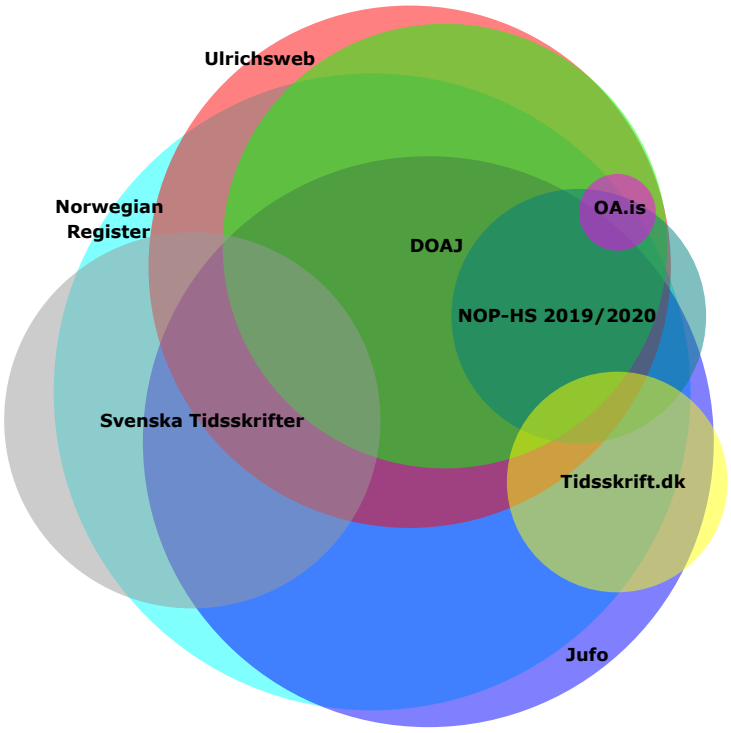

Figure 1. Overview of the key data sources where the final 353 journals were included. Some text labels are non-centered in order to increase legibility

Indexing inclusion in international bibliometric databases

In order to establish to what degree the Nordic journals were covered by the two main international bibliometric databases, Scopus and Web of Science, journal information (title, ISSN, E-ISSN) were matched to records from each database. The Scopus title list was downloaded on the the 15th of January 2021 with the list dataset dated October 2020 (Elsevier 2020). The Web of Science title list was downloaded on the 29th of January 2021 (mjl.clarivate.com 2021), with the dataset dated 25th of January 2021. The Web of Science title list covered inclusion in the three main Web of Science Core Collection indexes relevant for this study: Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), and Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).

Survey study

The second step of the study was to build upon the bibliometric study with a web survey sent out to the identified Nordic journals. An invitation to participate to the web survey was sent out to the editor in chief or primary contact address to each of the 353 journals. The survey link was active 31.3.2021-15.4.2021. The survey consisted of 31 questions, several re-used from the recent Diamond Open Access Journals study (Bosman, Frantsvåg, Kramer et al 2021). Answers were completely anonymous if the respondents so liked. In the end 72 responses were received, giving a response rate of around 20%.

The bibliometric data, the survey instrument, and anonymized survey data is aimed to be provided as open data through the Finnish Social Science Data Archive.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the study that was targeted on the 353 journals that were identified through the data collection process that was described in the previous chapter. The content is split into two main sections similarly to the methods chapter, the first one focusing on the results of the bibliometric study, and the second one on the results of the survey study.

Bibliometric study

Nordic dimensions and indexing

The 353 journals were selected to be included in the study because they each fulfilled one or more predefined dimensions of being Nordic (please see the methodology section for a longer description of each dimension). In Table 3 the distribution of how the journals fulfilled each of the four Nordic dimensions is presented. 70% of journals had editorial board members affiliated with institutions from at least three Nordic countries, 61% of journals had a title or stated focus that explicitly highlighted the Nordics, 48% of the journals accepted manuscripts in 2 or more Nordic languages (that were not national languages in the home country of the journal, and 16% had a connection to an organization that facilitated Nordic activities in some way. Journals that were included fulfilled on average 1.9 of the dimensions, with a median of 2.

Concerning inclusion in international indexing databases it was established based on matching journal title, ISSN or E-ISSN that 102 (29%) of the journals were included in Scopus, 82 (23%) in the Web of Science Core Collection, 63 (18%) were included in both.

Table 3. Fulfilment of Nordic dimensions of included journals

	Title/Focus	Nordic organsiation backing	At least 3 Nordic countries on editorial board	2 or more Nordic languages
Journals	215	55	246	170
%	61 %	16 %	70 %	48 %

Discipline

Since the records for the 353 journals originated from different bibliometric databases there was variation in the schemes that were used to record journal subject field categorization. In order to standardize the dataset the journals were manually reviewed by the author and re-categorized based on the top-level categories used by the Academy of Finland (aka.fi n.d.).

The results are presented in Table 4, where the three largest categories are social sciences, education, and linguistics.

Table 4. Subject field classification of journals

Subject field	Journals	% of Journals
Social sciences	54	15,3 %
Education	38	10,8 %
Linguistics	38	10,8 %
Art research	29	8,2 %
History and archaeology	28	7,9 %
Human geography	25	7,1 %
Theology	22	6,2 %
Law	19	5,4 %
Communication	15	4,2 %
Literature research	14	4,0 %
Political science	13	3,7 %
Psychology	13	3,7 %
Public health research	10	2,8 %
Economics	7	2,0 %
Business administration	6	1,7 %
Philosophy	6	1,7 %
Science studies	4	1,1 %
Women and gender studies	4	1,1 %
Design research	2	0,6 %
Environmental science	2	0,6 %
Development Studies	1	0,3 %
Environmental health research	1	0,3 %
Industrial management	1	0,3 %
Sport sciences	1	0,3 %

Content Languages

Information about which languages journals publish content in is also an aspect that required manual data collection since not all bibliometric databases contain such information, or if such information is available it might also be outdated. Table 5 presents a breakdown of languages across the 353 journals.

Table 5. Journal languages

Language	English	Swedish	Norwegian	Danish	Icelandic	Finnish	Other(s)
Journals	304	184	180	172	8	11	36
% of Journals	86 %	52 %	51 %	49 %	2 %	3 %	10 %

The results reveal that most journals (86%) invite content written in English, and nearly half of all journals (47%) of journals invite content written in Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish. Journals which publish content in Finnish or Icelandic were a distinct minority (3% and 2% of journals respectively). 10% of journals accepted manuscript in other languages, where the most prominent were German and French.

Publishers

For categorizing journal publishers the taxonomy provided by Solomon (2013) was utilized to place each journal into one of six categories. Around a third of the journals were published by professional publishers (128 journals, 36%), with approximately another third by universities (122, 35%), a fifth by government organizations (71, 21%), with the rest being published by societies (16, 5%), scholars (7, 2%), and others (7, 2%). Here information regarding the primary publisher was taken from the utilized bibliographic databases where available, or if not available, from the journal website directly. It is worth noting that there are variations to what the role of a publisher is, where some journals are published as a cooperation between a professional publisher and a scholarly society. In other cases a university might be offering a technical platform to be used for an otherwise scholar-ran journal, with the university reported as the primary publisher of the journal. Some of these new types of scenarios are covered in the later section of this report that concerns the survey study.

Most journals were published by publishers based in Norway (110 journals, 31%), followed by Sweden (83, 24%), Denmark (56, 16%), Finland (26, 7%), and Iceland (4, 1%). 56 journals (16) were published by publishers based outside of the Nordic countries. Of the 54 journals published by international professional publishers only 2 allow for publication in some Scandinavian language.

The five largest publishers were Universitetsforlaget (36 journals), Taylor & Francis (34 journals), Cappelen Damm Akademisk (11 journals), University of Oslo (10 journals), and Kobenhavns Universitet (9 journals). While not an individual publisher it is worthwhile to note that 15 journals were self-published.

As part of the data collection where journal websites were visited coding was performed to mark if a journal was related to either a university or a society/association. 43% (153) of journals were affiliated to a university, 36% with a society or association, with 26 (7%) affiliated to both and 98 (28%) to neither. This means that 72% of the journals were affiliated with a university or scholarly society/association which is considerably high proportion.

Journal age and publication volume

The earliest journal was founded in 1839, and the most recent one in 2021. The median starting year for the 353 journals was 2002 while the mean was 1989. This suggests that Nordic SSH journals are commonly well-established but that there are new journals being created, which is important to consider when designing e.g. funding mechanisms that would cater to support the activities of both old and new journals.

The article volume published annually by these journals had a median of 12 for the years 2018-2020 while the mean varied between 16 and 18 articles. In 2020 146 (41%) journals published 10 articles or less, while 28 journals (11%) of journals published 40 articles or more. These number takes into account what was considered to be the ”main” content of the

journals in question while excluding editorial content such as editorials and book reviews, in most cases being limited to peer-reviewed research articles.

Figure 2 presents a visualization over article volume in 2020 distributed over the different publisher types. Even though professional publishers were only responsible for publishing 36% of the journals they accounted for over half of the published article volume in 2020, suggesting that they publish on average larger journals than the rest of the population of Nordic SSH journals. Around a fourth of articles were published by university publishers, a tenth by societies and only substantially smaller shares for the rest of the three publisher categories.

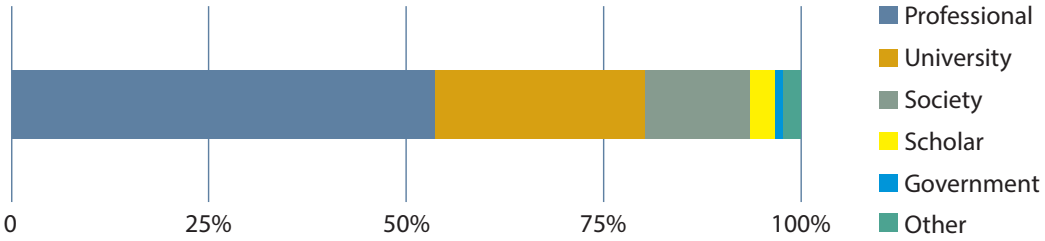

Figure 2. Article volume for 2020 per publisher category

Open access and technical platforms

263 of the 353 journals (75%) were found to publish all of their articles immediately on the web as OA, with an additional 15 journals (4%) doing so after a delay/embargo period. Around half of all identified full OA journals (136 journals) were found to be included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

The vast majority of the 263 full OA journals were free for authors to publish in, with only 17 (6,5%) of them asking for an article processing charge upon acceptance of a manuscript. Converting all currencies to EUR based on the mid-market exchange rate as of 17th of April 2021 and assuming a 25% VAT rate 11 of the journals had a maximum APC of 1000 EUR while six journals had an APC over 1000 EUR, with the highest being 2300 EUR.

Some trends could be discerned by inspecting the relationship between OA status and publisher category. 65 of the 75 journals (87%) that were found to be restricted to subscription access were published by professional publishers. It would seem that societies/associations have adopted delayed OA to a higher degree than other publisher types since 11 of the 15 delayed journals (73%) were published by this publisher category. Though no hard evidence to prove causation can be proved a hypothesis is that this is due to societies including immediate journal access (digital or in print) as an incentive to retain membership in their organizations.

Figure 3 visualizes the distribution of articles published in 2020 based on access mode. 59% of articles were available immediately with an additional 3% available through a delay. 37% of articles were restricted to subscription-access.

Being free to read is only one dimension of what OA to content can provide, as also other rights might be granted. For full immediate OA journals and delayed OA journals data was collected concerning which license is used for content made available OA, which results are summarized in Table 6. Around a third of the journals provided no license information, while

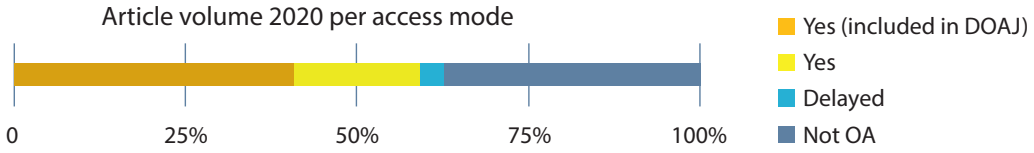

Figure 3. Article volume 2020 per access mode

another third utilized the CC BY license which grants liberal rights to reuse and distribute the content as long as attribution is provided to the original authors. More restrictive CC-license variants that prohibit commercial use (CC BY-NC, 14%) or prohibit both commercial reuse and production of derivative works (CC BY-NC-ND, 12%). 7% of journals utilized their own non-CC license while the rest 8% of journals utilized some additional variant of a CC license.

Table 6. Licenses for reusing content for all OA and delayed OA journals, 278 journals in total

License	Journal count	%
No information given	83	30%
CC BY	81	29%
CC BY-NC	38	14%
CC BY-NC-ND	34	12%
Own license	18	7%
CC BY-SA	11	4%
CC BY-ND	6	2%
CC BY or CC BY-NC	6	2%
CC BY-NC-SA	1	0%

135 of the journals (38%) invited new manuscript submissions to be sent in by e-mail, while the rest had some kind of manuscript handling functionality implemented on their websites.

Table 7 presents the breakdown of platforms that journals use for access and storage of manuscripts. The different types of OJS hosting and publisher proprietary systems are presented separately in order to better convey under what type of hosting and management they are under. A total of 149 journals were running on OJS, representing over 42% of all identified Nordic SSH journals. What generates uncertainty and potential concern for the future technical resilience of some journals is the amount of journals that are using either a generic content management system designed for blogs and other websites (7%), using a custom-made/self built website (7%), or journals that utilize organizational sub-pages for hosting their journal (4%).

Overall this bibliometric information provided a useful view into what can be perceived from the surface of the journal websites themselves as well as what can be gathered through various bibliometric indexes.

Table 7. Platforms for access and storage of manuscripts (only platforms with 5 or more journals individually listed)

Platforms for access and storage of manuscripts	Journals	%
OJS (university-hosted)	74	21%
Publisher proprietary - Idunn	36	10%
Publisher proprietary - T & F	34	10%
OJS (self-hosted)	31	9%
OJS (tidsskrift.dk)	31	9%
Generic CMS - Wordpress, Wix, CMS Made Simple, Joomla, Drupal	26	7%
Custom made/self-built	24	7%
Organisation webpage	14	4%
OJS (journal.fi)	13	4%
Institutional repository - DiVA	12	3%
Publisher proprietary - NOASP	11	3%
Publisher Proprietary - Miscellaneous	11	3%
Publisher proprietary - Ubiquity Press	10	3%
Publisher proprietary - Sage	5	1%
Publisher proprietary - De Gruyter	5	1%
Other	16	5%

Survey study

This section presents the results of the survey component of the study where journals that were identified as a result of the bibliometric study were asked to participate in a web survey in order to obtain more insight their circumstances as Nordic journals. 72 responses were recorded with more information about the methodology being available in the dedicated methods chapter earlier in this report.

The sample of responses is too small and non-random for reliably conducting statistical inference and generalizing across the entire population, which means that a qualitative descriptive review of the results is provided where emphasis is placed in particular on answers to open questions. Most questions were mandatory and answered by every respondent, where responses from optional questions are given a separate note of the number of respondents is provided.

Background questions

Most journals participating in the survey reported to be published by a learned society, university or a for-profit publisher (around 20% of respondents for each). University presses, other non-profit publishers, and other research organizations having 11% of respondents each. Only single journals were reported as being published by government agencies, individuals, or other publisher types. This distribution approximately followed the distribution of the full population of Nordic SSH journals.

In another question ownership of the journal was queried where 35% of respondents indicated that a learned society owned the journal, 19% of journals other research organization, 18% universities, 8% responded other, 7% other non-profit publisher. For-profit publishers and university presses 4% each, individuals 3% and government agencies 1%.

The representation of OA journals responding was roughly in line with the population of Nordic SSH journals, with some skew towards more open journals responding. 79% of journals reported being fully and immediately open, 8% being open after a delay, and 4% having partial content permanently behind a paywall. 8% of journals were completely subscription-based.

96% Journals that responded accepted English language content, 60% Swedish, 58% Norwegian, and 58% Danish. Finnish 8%, Icelandic 7%. German (13%) and French (10%) were the most notable non-Nordic languages, with an additional 7% indicating some other language. Here again the distribution was approximately the same as for the full population of identified Nordic SSH journals.

The disciplinary coverage was broad, with the two top disciplines being the Social sciences (17%), and Education (15%) similarly to the population identified through bibliometrics for all identified Nordic journals. History and archaeology (14%), Linguistics (13%), and Literature research (11%) were the following largest disciplines of respondents, with the rest 16 having 4% or below. There was representation of respondents from each discipline outside of Philosophy, and Women and Gender studies. 1 respondent reported not perceiving the journal discipline as belonging to the social sciences or humanities.

Journals were asked if they had a digital archiving policy in place, to ensure long term preservation of published content. 35% of journals reported to archive through a National Library and 11% through an international preservation services such as e.g. CLOCKSS, LOCKSS, PKP PN or Portico. Concerningly 14% had no digital archiving policy in place and 15% did not know if they had one. The remaining 25 % of respondents responded "Other" where the open text answers were a mix of uncertain and negative responses, some archiving through an institutional repository or the Internet Archive, and some counting on the publisher to take care of it.

Article-level information concerning the content of journals is lacking and therefore it was not feasible manually collect data for what degree of authors are affiliated with an institution in a Nordic country. Hence, in the survey respondents were asked to "Approximate share of articles published last year with at least one author from the Nordic countries". 70 responses were received for this optional question, where the mean response was 74% and the median 86%. As the review of funding instruments earlier in this paper revealed some funders have a requirement that funded journals should have a particular share of authors affiliated with domestic institutions in order to be eligible, something which might influence some of the background to this number.

Through the bibliometric study data was collected for the annual publication volume of research articles during the last three years, however, many journals also contain other types of content to varying degrees. To estabilish to what degree other content types appear the optional question of "Approximate the proportion of content published by the journal that is peer-reviewed research content" was posed, which received 71 responses. The mean response was 89% and the median 95%.

Only observing published materials of a journal gives a limited picture of the work that goes into managing all the manuscripts that come in, since often a substantial amount is

either desk rejected or rejected after peer-review. Respondents were presented with the following optional question "What is the approximate acceptance rate of research article manuscripts submitted to the journal, i.e. what share of all such content sent in is ultimately published?" to which 66 responses were received. The mean response was 53% and the median 50%. From the bibliometric part it was established that the median number of articles published during the last three years was 12 per year, suggesting that journals then process around 24 manuscripts per year if around half of the received ones get rejected at some stage.

When asked about the number of downloads or visitors to the journal the number of responses was low. 28 respondents gave a number for the number of approximate downloads that the journal has per year, the numbers varied a lot from 500 to 369429 with the mean being 16000 and the median 49708. When asked about unique visitors respondents gave values between 986 and 130000, with the mean being 64213 and the median 22500.

Journal funding and operations

One considerable part of the survey instrument was dedicated to exploring aspects related to funding of the responding journals. To help map the economic dimensions of Nordic journals the survey included a question relating the total annual costs for the last year of the journal, a question that was mandatory for all respondents to give a response to. The responses are visualized in Figure 4. 18% of respondents did not know the total annual costs. The most populated cost bracket was 10 000-50 000 EUR with 39%, followed by the two smaller cost brackets of 1000-10 000 EUR with 18%, and 0-1000 EUR with 15%. 7% of respondents responded 50 000-100 000 EUR, and 3% more than 100 000 EUR.

In order to gain insight into the scale of paid staff involved in running the journals respondents were asked to answer a multiple choice question "What is the size of paid staff for editing & operational work for the journal (in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)?" 50 journals responded to this optional question, with 69% answering "Less than 1 FTE", 10% "1-2 FTE", 4% "3-5 FTE" and 17% selecting the "I don't know" option.

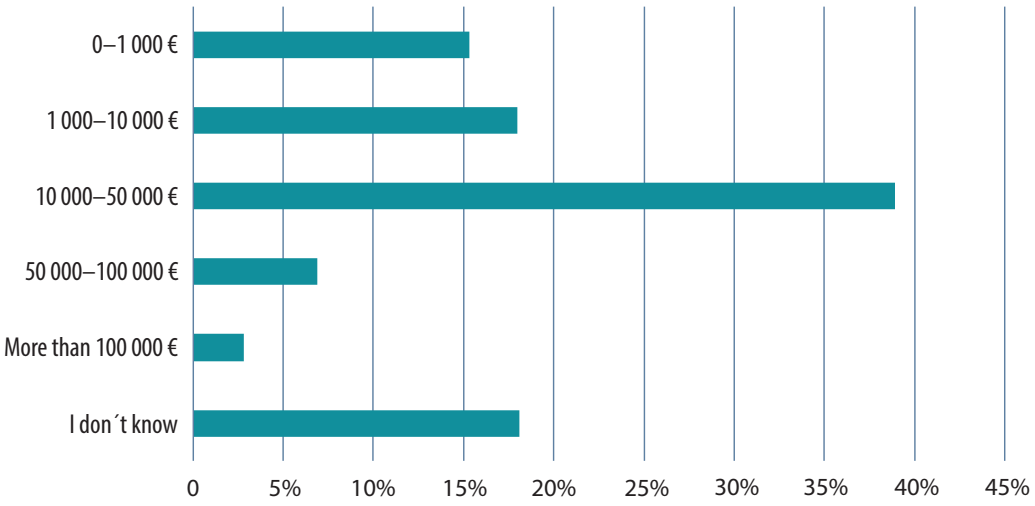

Figure 4. Responses to the question "What were your total annual costs last year? Please also include in-kind institutional contributions."

One key question in this section was "How do you currently fund the journal? What funding mechanisms do you use? (Tick all that apply)" where respondents could select as many or as few options as they saw fit for the situation for their journal, with the option to also specify their own option if a suitable entry was not present among the predefined ones. Among the open answers were journals with income from APCs, subscriptions, institutional and governmental funding as well as journals that reported no use for funding since they run entirely on volunteer effort. An overview of the results are available in Figure 5. 4 out of the 72 journals did not tick any funding source. Most responding journals reported multiple funding sources, with the average number of funding sources being 1,6 with a median of 2.

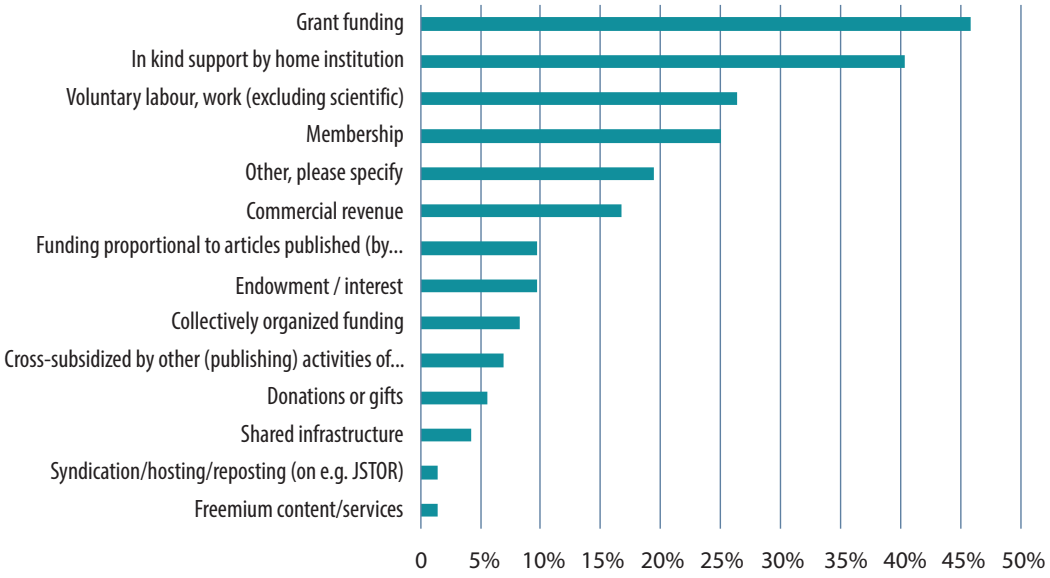

Figure 5. Responses to the question "How do you currently fund the journal? What funding mechanisms do you use? (Tick all that apply)"

An interrelated aspect to funding mechanisms concerns the source of the funding, which was explored through the following question "Who has financially supported the journal (can also include support in form of salary costs) over the last 2 years? (Tick all that apply)". An overview of the responses to this question is found in Figure 6. 61 journals (85%) ticked at least one item. Scholarly or Learned Societies was the most common source with 30% of responses ticking that option. The second most common option was "Other" with 26%, where most responses indicated university/home institution funding the journal, followed by government-supported funding sources, learned society, and publishers giving subscription income. Many journals receive funding from multiple sources, with the average being 1,6 sources and median 2.

The following question queried journals regarding use of an external publisher or publishing service to perform certain functions. The results of this question are found in Figure 7, where the top 3 services were typesetting (73%), submission system (54%), and copyediting (54%).

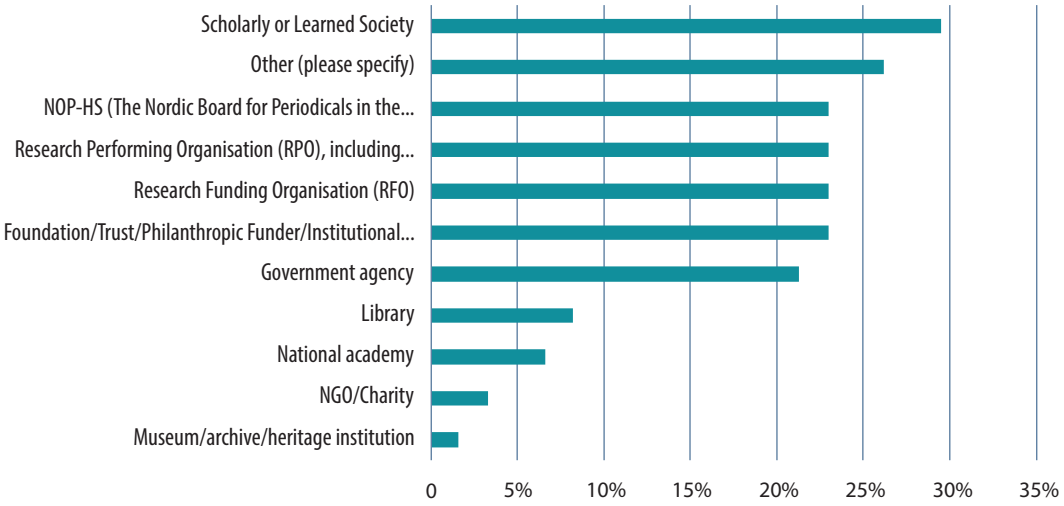

Figure 6. Responses to the question "Who has financially supported the journal (can also include support in form of salary costs) over the last 2 years? (Tick all that apply)"

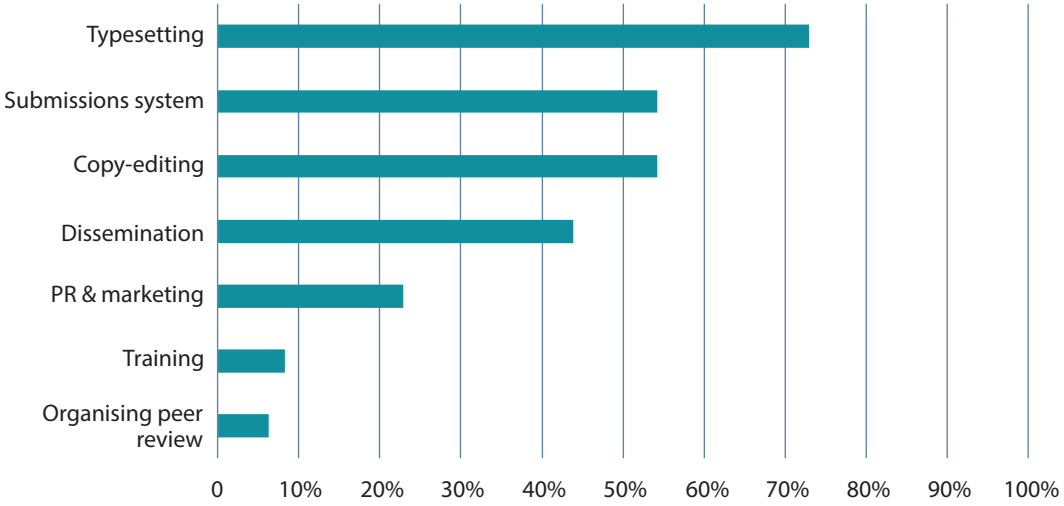

Figure 7. Responses to the question "For editorial management, does the journal use an external publisher or publishing service to perform certain functions? This includes commercial or non-commercial services. (Tick all that apply)"

In order to find out how reliant responding journals were on volunteers to run the journal the following multiple choice question was presented "To what extent do you rely on volunteer effort?" with the alternatives of Low, Medium or High. 56% of respondents answered High, 31% Low, and 14% Medium reliance on volunteer effort. In order to dig deeper into understanding what volunteer effort is used for, a question where multiple predefined options was presented. The results are presented in Figure 8 where the top three tasks were Editing (73%), Proofreading (51%). 33 (46%) journals did not respond with any option. The open text responses to "Other" were in this case against the instructions of the question and only two responses out of 10 did not have to do with peer-reviews, where the 2 remaining ones were about preparing grant applications and volunteers doing "everything". The jour-

nals that did respond with an option did so in fairly high numbers since even accounting for almost half of the respondents not selecting any option the average was 1,8 tasks with a median of 1. This last calculation only included the one open response referring to grant writing. From the results there can be seen a degree of polarization of the journals into either no or very high use of volunteer effort.

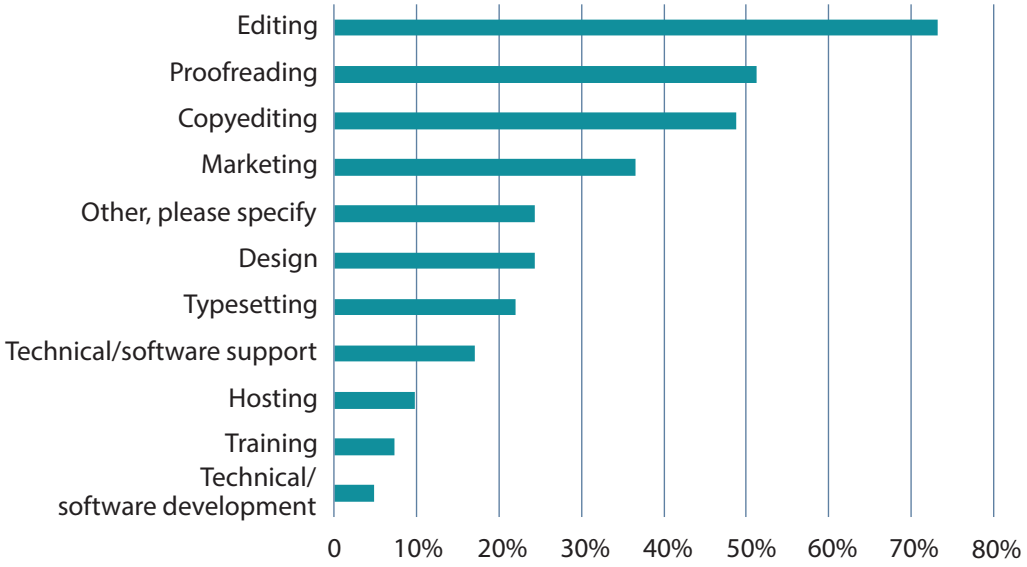

Figure 8. Responses to the question "If you have volunteers, what do volunteers do? (Tick all that apply) Note that peer reviewing and editorial board membership are excluded."

Respondents were presented with the following multiple-choice question to query their current financial situation "Which of the following options describes the current financial status of the journal?". 57% responded with the alternative "Break-even", 24% with "Loss", 15% with "Unknown" and 4% with "Profit". Here again the design of the funding instruments available to journals lay the frame for the economic circumstances, where many funders give grants only to cover expenses or a potential loss rather than the journal being able to save up on resources through profit. This also makes grant-funded journals vulnerable in cases when funding cannot be obtained, the economic buffer is likely small to non-existent.

Respondents were asked to look ahead and evaluate "How sustainable do you consider the journal in the next 3 years? On a scale of 1-10 (where 10 is very secure)". Here the vast majority considered the journals sustainable or very sustainable, with the mean score being 7.7 with only six respondents indicating a score less than 5. A testament to the resilience of these journals also comes the age of these journals as evidenced by the bibliometric investigation, where the median age of journals was close to 20 years old.

Open questions

The end of the survey presented the respondents with five open questions relating to how the respondents perceived the current and future circumstances for their journals. Many responses were received and they were often long and informative. In order to present a qualitative analysis of the content that also facilitates succinct reporting through written text the thematically similar responses for each question were grouped in order to identify common themes in the material. Select individual quotes (sometimes abbreviated as marked in the quote in such cases) have also been extracted, in order to offer more direct insight into the responses and their formulation. The quotes are presented as submitted with no modifications or corrections to the original text.

Research funder support

"How might research funders support the financial sustainability of the journal?"

This question received 42 responses. Many responses (15) called out for **increased funding** for journals, where most stressed the need for more long-term funding.

> *"Small journals and societies would benefit from long-term funding to cover basic expenses like webhosting services and publication management platforms. Having a reliable, long-term source for such expenses would free up other funding resources for development and promotion."*
>
> *"It would be helpful if research funding organisations had midterm calls for journal support that would secure a large share (for example 50 %) of the costs for publishing an academic journal for the period of three to five years."*

Based on the answers that mention some specific timeframe, the 3-5 year span appears most often, motivated by enabling more predictable and stable operation while reducing the work that goes into preparing and reporting grant applications. From the scan of the major funding opportunities in the Nordics most funders commit to funding for 1-3 years at a time. Few responses mentioned any particular amounts but based on the survey responses concerning annual costs and the quote below even smaller amounts of long-term funding could in many cases go a long way in securing operations.

> *"For a very small amount - 5-10.000 Euros annually - in external support the journal could be kept afloat for many years to come."*

A small grouping of answers (4) were **satisfied with current research funder support**, mainly hoping that the current funders would continue their support and the journals retain their current status in governmental publication ranking schemes which also aids in obtaining funding.

Another grouping of answers (6) were **dismissive of increased funding from research funders**, either placing more responsibility on universities for support or dismissing financial support overall.

> *"As I have repeatedly said: we do not need funding, since EVERYTHING is done by volunteers"*
> *"More national or local university support is needed"*

Many answers contained **concrete suggestions for distribution of funds** (17). Within these responses one suggested direction of funding through the national library consortium. One sub-group of responses (5) suggested **funding for direct content-creation expenses** such as editorial work, proofreading, and copyediting. Another sub-group (3) called out for **modifications to prevailing funding criteria**, not placing such weight on rankings and not to not force either Nordic or international dimensions upon journals for the sake of becoming eligible for funding.

> *"And not use "Nordic" content or authorship as a support criterion, when the journal is a top-level international journal. It seems strange that we should have to prioritize and come up with special schemes to support authors from the most privileged part of the world and not simply the best possible articles."*

> *"The criteria for evaluation must be adapted to the specific conditions of the scientific field in which the journal functions. For example it makes no sense to push English as main language of publication, when the object of research is Swedish language art."*

Another common sub-group within concrete suggestions concerned **open access** (8), where respondents called out for specific financial support to cover costs to enable the journal to publish OA without APCs for authors, or to fund authors to pay for such fees in journals that have them.

> *"Gold standard OA creates regular costs. Without reliable grants the editor in chief and the editorial team spend far too much time on looking for funding. This withdraws time from the editing work (that also is done in volunteer work)."*

> *"Securing the payment of publication fees for an article that has been accepted + an annual grant so scholars from universities with fewer resources may also get their work published."*

On the other hand one response called out for not only creating funding opportunities necessitating OA.

> *"To also support journals that are not Golden Open Access. Todays policy threatens many journals."*

Perceived threats

The question of *"What do you perceive as the greatest threats for your journal in the future?"* received 51 responses. Many responses concerned different aspects of **journal attractiveness** (16), within which three distinct sub-groups could be identified. One sub-group was responses perceiving **threats in the context of rankings and indexation** (4), where the journals inclusion and performance in relation to others was highlighted.

> *"Lower ranking among journals"*

> *"The weak position for humanities in major citation-data bases"*

> *"[…]We have for example applied for being included in Scopus and Web of Science and were turned down, because we had too few quotations. Not being included in Scopus means getting less quotations. From our perspective, we are located outside a circle and cannot enter these systems (Scopus, Web of Science) as a smaller, relatively young journal.[…]"*

Competition over high-quality manuscripts (7) was the second sub-group within the domain of journal attractiveness.

"Not attracting the most qualitative articles and finding competent and engaged peer-reviewers"

"The problem of attracting high-quality manuscripts in the future."

"Low interest from authors to develop papers that match the scope and style of the journal"

The third and final sub-group relating to journal attractiveness were responses that mentioned **threats concerning language** in some shape or form (5). The main concern among these responses was the move towards international English-language publications among researchers.

"Attracting high-quality manuscripts in Scandinavian as the journal mainly publishes scientific articles in Norwegian, Danish and Swedish and many researchers find it more attractive to publish in English."

"The decreasing number of subscribers and the decreasing prestige of Danish - and other small languages - as an academic language."

"It is increasingly difficult to sustain a journal for scholars that read and write in Icelandic. The academic world encourages international publications at the cost of the domestic market."

A completely separate group of responses concerned **threats relating to people** aspects of running a journal (9), mainly with attracting and retaining editors who are willing to work on the journal with no or low compensation.

"Locating editors to replace those currently in position."

"Non-paid work is often relying on certain individuals. If they leave academia, or stop working for the journal, it will be very difficult to uphold the journal."

"[…] It is also a paradox that the Norw. government ensures that contributing to journals is rewarded, but not editing and peer reviewing. Recruiting new editors may become difficult."

A large group of responses concerned the **threat of changes to funding** (12).

"Potential cuts to university funding that could make continuation of the journal invalid."

"Not getting funding again at the end of these 3 years."

"Lack of minimal financial support to ensure core manangement services. Cumbersome, resource demanding and, frankly, political funding processes (e.g. having Nordic authorship as a criterion)."

Threats related to the theme of open access were also numerous enough (7) to form an individual grouping. Here the concerns were diverse, touching many interrelated perspectives.

"Not attracting high quality manuscripts when competing journals go full Open Access"

"Demands for gold open access."

"That people will stop paying for subscriptions since the journal is now full Open Access. Then we will have no founding"

"The Golden OA policy creates insecurities among editors and publishers of how journals will be funded in the future. This policy is enacted without a proper system for funding high quality journals. Our fear is that only authors with money will be published."

The last cohesive group related to **threats concerning organizational aspect**s related to journals (6). In such responses journals raised concerns related to changes occurring in the ownership of the journal or organizational support that the journal receives.

"If home institutions do not support the journal any longer considering paying the work of editorial group."

"That the university finds it to be be of no prestige and thus will deny us server space."

"A buyout (forced or not) by some predatory (or not) big (or not) publisher"

The rest of the responses either identified no major threats (2) or miscellaneous threats (4).

Greatest opportunities

The question of *"What do you perceive as the greatest opportunities for your journal in the future?"* received 50 responses. The respondents had many types of positive outlooks for their journals.

Open access was a clear and large group of responses (15) that journals saw opportunity in for the future.

"A smooth transition to a non-commercialized, non-predatory form of truly open access"

"Open access and international outreach and dissemination, combined with the possibilitiy to publish research in national languages in Scandinavia, thus contributing to the sustained development of a national professional language.

"With open access I think that the individual articles may research much larger audience, but it also puts a greater responsibility on us (editors, authors, board members) to make the journal visible for potentially interested readers. It is especially important to reach out to university students since they are the ones that have grown up with online journals and are less likely to read our printed editions."

One response group related to **opportunities for increased attractiveness** from various perspectives (10).

"getting the journal on level 2 at the national ranking scale."

"Attracting manscripts from neighboring fields"

"We are looking into gaining further visibility in our field and using tactical funding opportunities as well as free online tools to develop our journal and its processes.[…]"

There was also a group of answers that related to **technology-enabled opportunities** (5).

"[…] Making use of a video or voice recorded abstract is on our to-do-list. In addition, we want to see how we can make use of digital options in new and innovative ways."

"Digitalization offers a lot of possibilities for better indexation, dissemination and citation."

"Moving to a National Library website with workflow support and archiving."

Another group were responses that related to **opportunities to strengthen the profile of the journal** (11).

"To disseminate high quality Nordic research to an international audience, and to have international scholars engage with Nordic research."

"The journal has changed to accommodate the changing nature of the field: it can survive and prosper if it continues to meet future challenges.

"We have a stable base or readers and contributors, and hope to tighten these bonds by organising more workshops, conferences etc."

The fifth and last identified group was made up of responses that communicated **a desire to maintain the current status and direction of the journal** rather than suggesting change (13).

"To continue to contribute to the development of the quality of education, learning and teaching in Norwegian and Nordic higher education, through publishing empirical and theoretical high quality research articles.

"Business as usual would be fine, really! -- I wish we had more contributors from outside of the Nordic countries. However, this is in part an effect of changes in the universities of Europe, and clearly nothing our journal can influence."

"We are very proud of producing a high-quality interdisciplinary journal with interesting articles which is actually read by many outside the academic world.

"The non-bureaucratic publishing process and infrastructure and the fact that it is very much driven by collective efforts rather than commercial goals."

Balancing national, Nordic, and global interest

The question of *"How do you perceive the balancing between national, Nordic, and global interest, participation, and content for you journal?"* garnered a lot of activity with 52 responses, and in comparison to the previous ones grouping the received answers into distinct themes was difficult due to the many complex and long answers given. The largest group of responses was journals that **perceived their current Nordic orientation as well-balanced** (25).

"Generally not an issue, as we are quite happy with our good mix of Nordic and international content and participation in the editorial board"

" The journal makes a Nordic voice heard on a global level"

"We have a very strong Nordic profile which helps to distinguish us in the international journal market"

"We have found a suitable balance. The Nordics have many of the top researchers in our field, and for international researchers our journal represents a window into an important line of research (social science in a field dominated by the medical and psychological sciences)"

One thematic group was formed by responses **that dismissed the concept of having to consider any specific target audience** for either readers or authors (6).

"No balance is sought: the only criterion for the acceptance of papers is quality. The journal is only a Nordic journal by accident of ownership; otherwise, it is international."

"I honestly don't see why this focus on the Nordic (or the national) should be a concern. And it is not, for us, only research quality matters […]."

"There is no such thing as purely Nordic research, all research should be universal."

Another group responses reflecting on the balance of audiences for the journals was journals that are **Nordic but would like to be more global** (8)

"Need more British scholars to climb in ranking."

"It's a challenge. The thematic scope is Nordic, but the goal is to also reach a non-Nordic audience."

"Our journal has a good reputation in Nordic countries and people are offering articles to be published in it. However, we might try to raise the interest in the journal in some of the countries."

Two responses from journals indicated mainly **national orientation and that being the sought-after status**, while a slightly larger group of responses (5) came from mainly **nationally oriented journals that strived to be more Nordic or global**.

"More contributions from Nordic and surrounding countries would be preferable"

"We could consider to expand somewhat from the national and go more actively into the Nordic area."

"Too much focus on Finland."

An interesting smaller theme was **journals that were reaching international audiences but desired more Nordic interaction** (3)

" [...] We have had a decrease in nordic contribution but INTERESTINGLY a significant increase in contributions from UK, USA, Australia, Canada (and the global south writ large).

" We would like to include more Nordic articles, but we receive more material from non-Nordic scholars."

"Recently we have had to refocus more on the Nordic relevance, as we are "drowning" in international content--Covid is creating a surge of submissions, and we are struggling to handle all. However, the quality is not necessarily improving."

Open response

The last question of the survey read *"If there is anything else that you think could be relevant for better understanding the operational circumstances for your journal, please note them here."* Even after the fairly lengthy survey and multiple open questions, 29 responses were given to this blank canvas question. One group of responses was formed around the theme of **highlighting the history or uniqueness of the journal** (5).

> *"Our journal has been in operation almost a hundred years."*
>
> *" The journal is unusual in having been produced for more than 20 years (1995-2017) with no external funding, operating on a purely voluntary basis."*

A group of responses could be identified that related to **highlighting publishing arrangements** or changes within them (7)

> *"We have been faced with offers from Routledge and other commercial publishing houses who would like to take over the journal. Likewise, we have been facing demands from deans at universities who wanted to enroll the journal in their institutions."*
>
> *"From our perspective, the marketization of academic publications is a huge concern. Our publishing house has been sold recently to a larger publishing house. This might in a midterm perspective challenge the organisational and financial model of our journal, for which we have worked hard during the last decade. It is also a risk that this jeopardizes our possibility to publish OA according to the gold standard."*
>
> *"We have been surprised to find how difficult it is to get a deep archive solution for our content. Our local solutions do not easily accommodate a journal that is not based at a national institute of higher learning, for example. Joint, low-threshold services for the smallest journals are needed to solve issues like deep archiving as well as promoting visibility and indexing."*

Another group of responses highlighted **editorial work and the high degree of voluntary effort** that goes into producing many journals (6).

> *"We rely on people's good will. The more bureaucracy becomes necessary to run a journal, the less good will is to be found."*
>
> *"Journal edotirial work is all about free work. As is peer review. But the publishers profit, and the researchers (and research funding agencies) are dependent on this free work. In face, the very research institution is dependent on non-paid/ underfunded labour. If the conditions do not change we and many other journals will collapse."*

One group of responses related to **peer-review**, and mainly the difficulty in finding experts to do the task (5).

> *"If one could make it more attractive for peer reviewers to do their unpaid and unglamorous job, that would be a great step forward"*
>
> *"This is difficult to find peer-reviewers (for one article, you can have until 10 refusals). It is something that should be reflected."*

Three responses called out for **additional funding**, where all three mentioned the need for funds in order to market and brand the journal among other things.

The last response group contained comments relating to **miscellaneous topics** (6) where one comment in particular stood out.

> *"Being a Nordic journal means being too regional to be able to compete with the big international journals, but also too international to be regarded as a top national journal (which means these get ranked higher in some journal rankings used by researchers)[..]*

As the last few pages covering the open answers to the survey have shown there are a lot of intertwined issues at play which makes it hard to distill universal conclusions or recommendations. The following chapter will attempt to tie together and discuss what has been presented so far in this report and direct some conclusions to the degree possible.

Discussion and conclusions

The bibliometric study provided a new perspective on a subset of journals that has not been subject of a dedicated delimited study before, Nordic SSH journals as based on pre-defined inclusion criteria. The narrative around journals is often limited to separating between national and international/global journals, without proper consideration for the levels that exist in between, and how a journal might serve the needs of many different user groups simultaneously. Though the web survey only received a limited number of responses it provided indication that many journals function with sparse resources, rely on volunteer work to a high degree, and would like to see funding opportunities for journals to develop and grow.

Overall, the study shows that journals enable Nordic input in many ways, many explicitly so through the journal scope but also through allowed publication languages and/or editorial board composition. It would likely be worthwhile for some nationally oriented journals to consider what steps they could take to potentially open up for Nordic input, as well as for Nordic SSH journals to consider moving towards expanding their implementation of Nordic dimensions, e.g. if Scandinavian languages are allowed but the editorial board is purely national there could likely be benefit in moving into diversifying towards Nordic collaboration if that is compliant with the purpose of the journal.

OA was a frequent and recurring theme in responses to the open questions of the survey. While most responses were positive in tone towards the publishing model there were also mixed feelings expressed concerning economic feasibility, science policy enforcement, and implications for society membership if such a model would be adopted for specific journals. The deliberations that society journals often go through are complex when committing to OA publishing (see e.g. Neuman & Laakso 2017) and there is a need from journal funding instruments to see that they are aligned with the economic realities of OA publishing in different types of organizational contexts.

One major cause for concern raised by this study is the indication that many Nordic SSH journals have no procedures in place to ensure long term preservation of their published content. Despite all its benefits, digitally published materials are vulnerable in a way that widely distributed paper copies are not. If anything would happen to the journal website, be it technical failure or just the journal becoming inactive and neglected, even OA materials do not ensure that the complete contents have been stored and made available somewhere else. This is not a phenomenon exclusive to Nordic SSH journals but something that OA journals worldwide should focus on to reduce the loss of published content in the future (Laakso, Matthias, Jahn 2021). A recommendation to funders of journals should be that funding is only provided to journals that have committed to long-term preservation.

The study demonstrates that the Nordic SSH journal publishing space is very much in a state of change, driven both by the Nordic countries having national OA policies but also factors that relate to consolidation that has been happening in the international journal publishing space as well as technology maturity of open source software to support modern

journal functions. There is an ongoing movement where universities and national journal portals adopt and publish journals on modern OJS-driven platforms. Many journals are ran entirely without the support of a professional publisher at very low costs, relying heavily on volunteer effort, and through the web survey expressed a strong desire to see funding opportunities for journals to develop and grow. Journals collect funding from a variety of sources and spend most of their expenses and volunteer effort on typesetting, editing, and copyediting.

When it comes to journal funding and funders of Nordic SSH journals this report provides with some observations. It is understandable that journal funders often restrict their funding to only cover direct expenses so as not to fund non-essential activities or outright profit, however, this in combination with relatively short funding periods granted by funders (1 to 3 years) introduces a lack of buffer for periods that might occur in years between being able to secure a grant. The Finnish model managed by the Federation of Learned Societies, which limits the grant to only constitute a minority of the journals income is also a challenging design in the age of OA and lack of subscription income - if one gives away the key product for free where should the money come from? Scholarly journal publishing is changing but many of the surroundings are still designed around the circumstances of an older environment.

One of the key recommendations for this report is to create long-term funding instruments that would tap into the most time consuming yet manual stages of running a journal - technical maintenance, copyediting, and typesetting. For journals that do not want or cannot engage in a full publication partnership with a professional publisher there seems to be demand for both funding instruments and service providers offering copyediting and technical management for content to be published. Such costs are transparent to request and report funding for, can be competitively tendered for, and what is paid for has a direct connection to output. Such services can also be provided and purchased for the journal portal level, reducing the number of individual agreements and invoices by centralizing the process. This and other factors suggest that funding could be directed both at the journal portal level as well as the traditional journal level, since that is a cost-effective way of hosting multiple journals with a single point of technical maintenance. Volunteer efforts would be freed up and could rather be directed at journal activities that carry more intellectual value since they are often performed by highly trained scholars.

Funders should also carefully reflect on how their specifications for journal eligibility shape the journal landscape. In the survey responses a number of journals demonstrated pushback from strict funder requirements to journal authorship affiliation or other factors related to how the outlet interacts within the scholarly communication space. Though such requirements are tied to national science policy and help to ensure that there are journals for domestic authors to publish in, the restrictions can at the same time make it hard for a journal aspiring to introduce more Nordic or international interactions to go ahead and do so. Since there are only a few large funders of journals in the Nordics it is risky and disadvantageous for journals to purposefully abstain for being eligible to apply for such funds by going against the set requirements, which can potentially lead to such journals seeking growth and stability through the help of an international professional publisher instead. As part of the manual scanning of over a thousand journal websites a distinct movement towards international commercial publishers among journals could be observed, a change that was often accompanied by a name change and English-only publishing. The Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication (helsinki-initiative.org n.d.) has recently been

launched in order to raise awareness of the importance of allowing and valuing scholarly communication in all languages, something that also funders of journals could keep in mind so as not to prescribe circumstances for journals that go against diversity in languages.

The open dataset to be made available as part of this study should facilitate future investigations into the Nordic SSH journal space, be it to follow up how the landscape changes over time or to expand the perspective in various directions. This report provides a new but still incomplete overview of Nordic SSH journals, there are many aspects that were either outside the scope of this report or should be investigated more closely with e.g. a specific discipline focus. Something that would likely be fruitful in the short term is investigating survey response data as horizontal slices rather than vertical, so rather than summarizing all responses to instead do a case study approach of some/all journals to see how the circumstances for individual journals are reflected through all the responses for specific individual journals.

There is power in collaboration, economies of scale work particularly well in a digital environment, and the Nordic SSH journal landscape should leverage these benefits to their full potential. This requires that technology and funding is set up smartly to maximize the limited input resources there are for running journals, pooling resources so there is less redundant work overall, preferably over country borders to reach common goals. Concerning technology and the detachment from print a lot has happened only in the last decade, and OA publishing has really taken of for Nordic SSH journals, but funding instruments are still often designed with subscriptions in mind. Long-term models designed with digital and OA first would ease the concerns of many journals currently active in this space.

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