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Art as Academic Output: Quality Assessment and Open Access publishing of Artistic Works at the University of Gothenburg

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Abstract

How is artistic research and practice output within academia to be quality assessed and made available open access on the internet? Is it possible to integrate artistic research within a framework of bibliometrics, to allocate research funding at an institution? At the University of Gothenburg, a model for addressing these questions has been implemented at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, through close collaboration between faculty representatives and the University library. The institutional repository of the university now holds a growing collection of openly available output from artistic research and practice.

Introduction

The notion of artistic research could be seen as a consequence of art academies entering into traditional academia, a process coinciding with the higher education reforms known as the Bologna Process, which is being implemented in many European countries.¹ As art academies enter academia, they are also expected to adapt to its systems of research funding. The resource allocations for research are increasingly performance-based and often in part dependent on bibliometric indicators of faculty publications registered in databases and repositories.² In the case of artistic research and practice output, challenges remain in exactly how the output should be registered and in setting up a model for quality assessment. There are also challenges in establishing a publishing infrastructure, not least regarding open access. Open access in the field of artistic research and practice is an emerging area, though still not as mature as within the domain of text-based scientific publishing.³

Following a decision by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Gothenburg in 2011, the allocation of faculty research resources is in part based on bibliometric indicators and the amount of external funding. Each faculty has decided on bibliometric indicators reflecting their specific subject field and their publishing culture. The Faculty of Fine, Applied and

Performing Arts has, beside traditional publications, also decided to focus on artistic works, resulting from both artistic research and practice. In our repository the works are presented with substantial descriptive and reflective metadata. This model has been in place since 2012.

The Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg

In Sweden the situation for art institutions is not uniform. Some faculties of fine art, music and theatre are part of larger universities, while some are autonomous schools with a university status. A new artistic doctorate was introduced in 2010 and the number of doctoral candidates in all fields of art is steadily growing. In 2013 there were 49 doctoral students in the fine, applied and performing arts in Sweden, ten of which were studying at the University of Gothenburg.⁴

The Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg offers undergraduate, master's and doctoral education, and also conducts research and artistic development work within disciplines such as film directing, photography, music, drama, design, crafts, fine arts, and literary composition. The Faculty is organized into three departments, Academy of Music and Drama, HDK - School of Design and Crafts, and Valand Academy (fine art, photography, film, and literary composition).⁵

There are eight libraries that constitute Gothenburg University Library. The Music and Drama Library and the Art Library supplies services for students and researchers at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts.

Open Access at the University of Gothenburg

In Sweden, at least 15 universities have an open access policy or mandate, of varying strength.⁶ The University of Gothenburg is as yet not one of these. However it recognises the importance of open access as it is explicitly mentioned in the University's *Vision 2020*. In the area of cooperation one of the identified strategies is 'increased research dialogue', which includes the activity to 'increase the access to documented research results through open access publishing[...].'⁷

Gothenburg University Library actively supports open access through its Digital services division, where systems and services are maintained and developed, supporting electronic

publishing and open access. Librarians are also involved in outreach activities towards faculty concerning open access.

The University library operates two databases for scholarly publications. GUP (Gothenburg University Publications; gup.ub.gu.se) is a bibliographic database for registration of scientific publications by researchers at the University. Through a decision by the Vice-Chancellor in 2007, all researchers at the University are required to register their scientific publications in GUP. It is also possible to self-archive full text copies of journal articles and conference papers in GUP, hence making them open access. The software used for GUP is developed in-house.

GUP also provides source data for the bibliometric part of the yearly faculty resource allocation. In the case of artistic works from the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, the workflow also involves GUPEA (Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive; gupea.ub.gu.se), the institutional repository for e-publishing of doctoral dissertations, research reports, student theses and other material. GUPEA is an installation of the open source repository software DSpace (dspace.org).

In Sweden open access pertaining to art and artistic research has not been the focus of discussions or policies, as indeed seems to be the case in most countries. This could now be changing. In 2013, the Swedish Research Council was given the assignment by the Government of drawing up national guidelines for open access to research results and research data.⁸ The proposal for the guidelines was delivered to the Government in January 2015. Besides scientific publications they also take artistic works into account. The proposal first establishes a strategic objective – from 2025 all scientific publications and artistic works resulting from publicly funded research should immediately be published open access.⁹ To obtain this strategic objective, the proposal states that open access to artistic works ‘should be investigated, starting from the specific character of the field, taking into account that the output of this scientific field differs from other fields of study.’¹⁰ The proposal mentions the Gothenburg model for registering artistic works as being of interest. At the time of writing, the Government has made no final decision on the proposed guidelines.

Art in digital repositories

Although still in its infancy, the (open access) publishing of art and artistic research output within an academic context has received increased attention in the past few years. Some initiatives have developed out of digital repositories, focusing on capturing and presenting the

artistic output of a specific institution or community. Thus they have extended the task of institutional repositories from handling traditional scientific publications to handling more complex digital objects. In Sweden the University College of Borås was among the first to present a pilot study for handling complex digital objects in open archives with reference to research in art and design.¹¹ In the UK, the KULTUR project developed a repository model for visual arts based on the Eprints software.¹² The e-artexte repository in Canada have made visual arts publications available, offering services to individual authors and artists as well as publishers. The e-artexte project is also explicitly committed to open access.¹³

A further project, *Journal for Artistic Research* (jar-online.net), was launched in 2011 by the Society for Artistic Research. JAR is an international, online, peer-reviewed open access journal for identification, publication and dissemination of artistic research and its methodologies, from all arts disciplines. JAR is underpinned by the Research Catalogue (researchcatalogue.net) which is a searchable, documentary database of artistic research. The RC presents art as ‘expositions’, meaning to ‘expose art as research’.¹⁴ Suitable expositions can be submitted to the editorial board for peer-review and publication in JAR. As noted by Amez, van Kerckhoven and Ysebaert, the RC ‘represents a shift from object-centred repositories to a research-centred repository’.¹⁵

Artistic research and research evaluation

The Swedish Research Council defines artistic research in the following way:

The point of departure for artistic research is found in the artistic process and works. Research, regardless of art form, is practice-based and includes intellectual reflection aimed at developing new knowledge. The results of artistic research are usually presented both as creations and in written form.¹⁶

Artistic research is to a large extent published as text: articles, reports, books. However, it also includes an important part of purely artistic output in the form of exhibitions, concerts, performances and the like.

The evaluation of artistic research within academia is still new territory, and in most countries ‘non-existent, problematic or questionable’, with experiments ongoing in Flanders and the UK.¹⁷ In Australia work has been done to include artistic research in the national evaluation of research.¹⁸ Using traditional research output such as scientific publications as an indicator for allocating research funds is more common. This is done in Sweden on a national

level, but also at some higher education institutions, among them the University of Gothenburg.¹⁹

The Swedish national model for research evaluation is currently being redesigned. The Swedish Government has given the Swedish Research Council the assignment of proposing a model for the allocation of resources to higher education institutions. A proposal of the model, called FOKUS, was put forward to the Government in December 2014. According to the proposal, artistic research will be included in the model for the first time.²⁰

The model is based on evaluation panels, which will review different research areas. Research publications will be assembled through the national publication database SwePub (swepub.kb.se)²¹ to give a basis for publication volumes and profiles. Areas like artistic research, that are not suited for citation analysis will have samples of output externally peer reviewed.²² As with the open access guidelines, the Government has not made a final decision on the FOKUS model.

Bibliometric indicator for artistic works at the University of Gothenburg

In accordance with the request for all faculties to formulate a bibliometric indicator, the Dean of the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts commissioned a working group in January 2011 to deal with the bibliometric issues and to suggest an indicator for the artistic works as well as for the scientific publications produced at the Faculty. The group consisted of researchers and administrators from the Faculty as well as a librarian from the Art Library. A proposal was presented and accepted by the Vice-Chancellor in May 2011.

The model consists of a system of ranking the Faculty publications, including artistic works, based on traditions within the humanities, social sciences and arts. Like the other faculties' models it is progressive over time. This means that it uses the development in terms of its own bibliometric system over a four-year period to provide the basis for the redistribution of part of the university's funds.

The artistic works can qualify to one of two quality levels, as can be seen below.

Ranking scale

<i>Artistic work – refereed</i>	5p
Book - national or international publisher	5p
Article - refereed	3p

Conference paper - refereed	2p
<i>Artistic work</i>	1p
Book chapter - national or international publisher	1p
Article	1p
Research review	1p

A platform for handling the artistic works for the quality assessment and bibliometric process was needed. The institutional repository GUPEA was considered the most natural choice and a collaboration with Digital services at the University library started. GUPEA was also best suited for the additional purpose of providing open access to the deposited works.

Quality assessment

Certain criteria have to be fulfilled for an artistic work to qualify for 5 points. The work should hold a high artistic level internationally and/or make an original contribution to the artistic knowledge field. To establish this it was deemed necessary to implement a model for reviewing the artistic output of the Faculty.

The process of reviewing has been subject to discussion. One way of assessing the quality of art is judging the quality of the channels, i.e. where the art has been made public: art halls, galleries, concert halls, and theatres. In the humanities and social sciences, this way of weighting the channels or the publishers is an established practice, in the so-called Norwegian model.²³ However, translating this model to art does not seem immediately possible. A list of qualitative venues for exhibitions and performances would be too large in relation to the relative smallness of the field. Also, art performances and exhibitions of excellent quality can be shown in small cultural institutions with little recognition.

The peer review process starts with a preliminary quality assessment being made by the Heads of Departments or subject coordinators. Only works with a basic qualitative level should be deposited in the institutional repository GUPEA for review. After deposit, the peer review group, which typically consists of artists and experts from within the Faculty, examines the works and makes the final assessment. The group should consult external experts if needed.

Metadata and depositing of the artistic works

There was a pragmatic approach to the question of metadata. Art works are complex objects,

where often multiple digital files, in various media types, represent the work. The relations between parts of the work, roles that people involved may have and the wider context of the work, are other complex factors. This complexity is a challenge for institutional repositories, which mainly have been developed for text-based documents. The Gothenburg model has focused its metadata on the needs of the reviewers. The principal question is: what information is needed for reviewing the work? Questions of interoperability and adoption of standards were thus not regarded as a priority. The Faculty working group required metadata which would give full and rich descriptions of the works, and to capture their context.

The following parts should be documented in the registering process:

- The question or problem being the ground or basis for the work
- The context/relation of the work to other relevant works of art, or the dialogue with or distance from/to other works of art
- The context/place of the show
- Documentation of the work (e.g. the different pieces included in an exhibition)
- Documentation of the show (e.g. pictures of the environment where the exhibition/performance is shown)
- Documentation of the reactions to the work (e.g. reviews, debate articles)

In the peer review process there could be recommendations to the artist to change certain aspects in the description of the work. It is also important to upload as many digital files to the repository as are needed to give a good representation of the work. These can be in any format, and will be available open access.

There is only one publication type, 'Artistic work', to cover all art manifestations. Contemporary art today transgresses borders and is difficult to capture in pre-selected categories. Further specification is however possible in the free text field 'Type of work'. An important field is 'Description of the project', where the artist/researcher should present in length and depth the grounds and context of the work. This information is crucial for the evaluation. An example of a record showing metadata and deposited files is the work *Describing Labor* by Esther Shalev-Gerz.²⁴

As mentioned previously, the national database SwePub is proposed to provide output data for the national research evaluation model. The metadata records from the university publication database GUP will be harvested by SwePub for this purpose. New national

guidelines concerning metadata delivery to SwePub is currently underway and to be implemented during 2015. These guidelines will include metadata for artistic works. It is likely that the metadata in the Gothenburg model will have to be revised in conjunction with or at least mapped towards the new national categories.

The workflow

After a few years of trial, the workflow now runs relatively smoothly. The original intention was to let the researchers deposit their material into the repository themselves, supported by the library. However, the working group decided, for the sake of efficiency, to let librarians at the Art Library and the Music and Drama Library do the actual deposit, at least to start with. Time and resources, which otherwise would have been spent on educating more than 100 researchers on how to deposit, could now be saved, and the Faculty could focus on informing the researchers about the peer review process.

The researchers still have to submit their works and the descriptive metadata to the librarians. A guide was created, informing what type of metadata that had to accompany the digital files.

The artists/researchers themselves decide what files they want to submit. The Faculty guidelines for deposit clearly state that the artistic works are to be made open access and that every submission will be publicly available. The artists and researchers have so far not questioned this demand for open access. The requirements are continuously communicated by the library in different ways to create a general awareness. The main focus, however, as we have mentioned earlier, has been to use the publications as a basis for financial allocations. This means that the open access aspect has not been given the same attention in communication with the researchers.

After the deposit, and when the review process is finished, the records are imported into GUP, the publication database. The records are entered either as 'Artistic work – refereed' (generating 5 bibliometric points) or 'Artistic work' (generating 1 point), in accordance with information provided by the peer review group. The records in GUP contain less metadata and no digital files but provide a link to the full representation in GUPEA. The GUP data is then available for the bibliometric process as well as being harvested to SwePub.

At the time of writing, a total of 335 works of art have been deposited since 2011. For the years 2011-2014, there are 285 artistic works deposited, 106 of which have been given the higher ranking of 5 bibliometric points.²⁵

The visual aspect of the repository was very much discussed in the beginning and the working group would have liked to develop an attractive interface design to present the art works. This could not be given a high priority due to several factors and there remains a wish to improve the visual design of the repository. Hopefully this will be possible further on.

Final remarks

What will happen in the near future?

The University of Gothenburg is so far the only university in Sweden that registers artistic research and practice output in the institutional repository and local publication database. The other art institutions will be required to start this work to comply with FOKUS, the expected national research evaluation model. The new national metadata model will have to be tested and time will tell exactly how registration of artistic output will be handled.

It has recently been decided by the Faculty to have the peer review model externally evaluated. This will be done by experts from Konstfack (The University College of Arts, Crafts and Design) and The Royal College of Music, both institutions located in Stockholm. The evaluation is expected to be finished during the autumn of 2015.

The University library continues to be responsible for registration and quality control of metadata. Information and communication on a regular basis about registration requirements to old and new staff is of utmost importance. This is handled by the research coordinators together with the library.

The Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts in Gothenburg is also the sole higher education art institution in Sweden that systematically makes artistic works open access. It is hoped that our example can inspire others to follow suit. Art librarians as well as librarians working with scholarly communication have an important supportive role in this emerging area. The growing open access collection in GUPEA is the result of a close collaboration between the Faculty and the University library and we perceive it as an important new step for artistic output within academia. In time, the collection which is part of Swedish and international cultural history, could serve as a valuable source for studies in contemporary art.

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