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EIFL-OA: Open Access

Removing barriers to knowledge

“OPEN ACCESS INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN” PROJECT A CASE STUDY FROM GHANA

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Results of the EIFL-funded project “Open Access Institutional Repositories Advocacy Campaign” implemented by the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana c/o Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, in partnership with Association of African Universities

INTRODUCTION

The objective was to create awareness of Open Access (OA) institutional repositories (IRs) as essential to scholarship and research; demonstrating OA’s benefits to researchers, institutions, the country and the society as a whole, and also the significant economic, social and educational benefits of making research output available without financial, legal and technical barriers to access.

Primary audience: government officials, lecturers, researchers and information professionals

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- A high-level meeting, backed by the Association of African Universities (AAU), was attended by about 100 heads of tertiary institutions, directors from Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and researchers and librarians from Ghana and other African countries; they gained a better understanding of OA policies and OA IRs and they are now empowered to discuss a national OA policy.
- Two radio talk shows for the general public, government officials and scholars to inform them about OA/IR issues.
- Distribution of flyers and bookmarks at conferences, workshops and other gatherings of scholars.
- The [Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology \(KNUST\) repository](#) was designated as the national OA repository for institutions currently without OA repositories.
- KNUST introduced an OA theses mandate.
- An [OA IR at the University of Cape Coast](#) was launched and another one containing research outputs funded by the ministry is in progress.

STRATEGIES, TACTICS, AND TOOLS

A radio talk show took place at the two major radio stations -- one in Kumasi (FOCUS FM) on 6th July 2011 and the other in Accra (UNIIQ FM) on 19th July 2011. Dr. Helena Asamoah-Hassan (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Librarian) and Richard Bruce Lamptey (KNUSTSpace Librarian) discussed OA IRs and their importance and the need for Ghana to have a national OA repository. The discussions emphasized the fact that there is a great deal of publicly funded research done in Ghana and Africa which is inaccessible. Also when all the universities in Ghana have IRs, this could minimise plagiarism.

The two-day workshop “OA IR Advocacy: From Theory to Practice” was the main activity for the project. This was organised together with the AAU and in collaboration with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), the Netherlands, on 18-19 July 2011 at Best Western Hotel, Accra, Ghana. The workshop was attended by about 100 participants from Ghana and other parts of Africa. The participants included heads of tertiary institutions and libraries in tertiary institutions.

Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, Secretary General of the AAU stated in his opening remarks that Africa cannot attain sustainable development without access to knowledge and information sharing and also that knowledge sharing is important to higher education to facilitate national development.

There was more financial support for the workshop as a result of AAU and KIT being partners in the project. The workshop provided the opportunity for government officials, the academic and research community to learn about the benefits of OA, to share ideas with colleagues, to inspire wider participation in establishing OA as a norm in scholarship and research and to encourage the development a national policy on OA. In addition, the meeting served as a platform for participants to discuss creating and managing OA IRs, IR policies and licenses, copyright issues, and the need for a national OA repository. All the presentations were given to the participants to take away to enable them to advocate for the development OA/IR Policy in their own organisations.

Flyers and bookmarks explaining the importance of OA IR development were designed. The flyers and bookmarks were distributed in July 2011 during the training workshop in Accra, and in August 2011, a month after the workshop to librarians, lecturers, researchers and some government officials at the Ministries and Agencies in Accra which serve the southern part of Ghana, and Kumasi serving the northern part of Ghana. In addition, they were distributed in October 2011 during the Open Access Africa 2011 conference which was organised by BioMed Central in collaboration with KNUST and Computer Aid.

SUCCESS STORIES

- Teaming up with AAU, the project changed from a nationwide one to an international one by bringing participants from outside Ghana.
- The aspect of OA that was the easiest for the target audience to understand and resulted in the greatest value during the workshop, was the session that explained the need for publicly funded research to be made freely accessible and that setting up an IR is critical to the dissemination of local research
- By the end of the workshop the target group – Government officials in Ministries, Departments and Agencies, academic and research community – understood OA policies

(mandates), which ensure that research funded by institutions/ government is made freely available, and they are now more empowered to discuss a national OA policy.

- Suggestions and feedback from the participants indicate that there is great potential for increased participation in OA by African universities and research institutes. For example the Deputy Minister of Education of Ghana praised the cordial relationship between the AAU and his ministry and lamented the fact that even though a lot of research is done in Africa, African research output is not readily available, unlike what is happening in Europe and North America. He therefore stressed the need to showcase African research output to the world and that efforts like the workshop were an important right step.
- The workshop resulted in press coverage in “Ghana News Agency”; which included interviews with professors and the representative of the Deputy Minister of Education discussing the importance of knowledge sharing and open access publishing; read the article: [“African can ensure sustainable development through knowledge sharing”](#).
- A workshop for IT staff on how to install Dspace – free and open source software for running OA repositories – took place and DIY DSpace installation toolkits were provided to the participants. Many participants became very interested in setting up IRs at their institutions and have since followed up with questions.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is important to develop the OA IR policy first; it will help in advocacy activities.
- It is important to seek support from already established OA IRs so that one does not waste time experimenting.

THE FUTURE

Now that the target group is aware of OA policies (mandates) which ensure that research funded by institutions / government is made freely available, as well as about the importance of setting up OA/IRs in institutions and organisations to contain such information, it will be easier for them to advocate for setting up repositories in their organisations. The top management is now more aware of OA and will support OA policies and any future OA related projects that are presented to them.