The Role of Open Access in Fostering Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration: A case study

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Researchers often invest a lot of time, energy, money and intellectual effort in producing knowledge in the form of scholarly articles. They forecast trends, create efficient and better working models, design systems and help to improve work and processes. To publish their intellectual works on peer-reviewed journals, they transfer their copyright to the publisher (Swan, 2008a). The goal of the authors focuses on creating a meaningful impact with their research work and in return expecting intangible gains such as peer recognition, academic rewards and promotion.

In the current reader-pays publishing model it is ironic that the knowledge creator i.e. the author, “rarely benefits as the subscription fee usually remains the revenue of the publisher” (Glover, Webb & Glaehorn, 2006:197) and “academic authors are interested primarily in wide dissemination of their publications and seek no direct financial reward” (Park and Qun, 2007:57).

While the digital divide continues to widen, the disparity in access to scientific publications between the scholars from developed and developing countries also continues to expand. Open access is claimed to be one of the solutions to bring scientists on a relatively equal footing in terms of access to knowledge Hence researchers in developing countries can disseminate and access scholarly knowledge. Nonetheless, the question which open access models work better for these countries and how open access can be harnessed to improve research uptake needs to be explored.

There exists no research on open access in Ethiopia. The main impetus for this research came from an observation that Ethiopian scholars in universities have lagged behind in terms of publishing their research work. This research was initiated to answer those questions by collecting evidence in Ethiopia mainly from researchers and librarians in Ethiopia.

The study looks at how open access fosters knowledge sharing and collaboration among scientists in Ethiopian universities. Articles and book chapters, news and blogs, Web sites and online directories are reviewed and analyzed to discuss and present the current status of the open access movement and contextualization will be made to the situation in Ethiopia. This is an ongoing master thesis that is expected to be completed in the course of April 2009.

A study of Major Institutional Repositories in India

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Institutional repositories (IR) are digital collections that capture, collect, manage, disseminate, and preserve scholarly work created by the constituent members in individual institutions. The establishment of IR in the developing countries ensures that their national research becomes mainstream and contributes on an equal footing to the global knowledge pool.

The paper presents the Indian scenario in developing the Institutional Repositories. The authors depict the main bottlenecks for setting up of IRs in various Indian institutions and come up with appropriate suggestions.

Total number 33 Institutional Repositories in India have been analyzed based on selected study criteria like software used for repositories, size of the items, content included, languages, description and Country.

Open Access: Latin-American Caribbean Style

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Latin-America and the Caribbean include 27 countries, and have a history of over 35 years in bibliographic networking. Agricultural Information Network (AGRINTER) and Health Science Information Network (LILACS) are good examples of such networks.

The primary objective of these networking initiatives was to contribute to the information needs of the region by creating regional bibliographic databases on specific disciplines. As Information Technologies became available, these databases were lifted to a new paradigm making Open Access (OA) possible to address emerging research communication issues in the region.

BIAREM, a branch of the Pan-American Health Organization is the Coordinating Center for LILACS. BIAREM proposed the Virtual Health Library (VHL) concept in 1998 to the LILACS membership to create an OA platform to all research papers.
published in the region using modern information technologies. Since then, BIREME developed tools to facilitate a number of aspects of the research communication process. Among these, SciELO provided the “Gold Road” for journals within the membership countries.

SciELO is a platform for electronic publication of scientific journals that provides statistical indicators of usage and impact factor, archival and preservation. SciELO selects the journals it publishes on the basis of international, scientific journals evaluation criteria.

This ensures quality. SciELO’s second module facilitates visibility and access to these journals via thematic and national Web portals. The third module is to collaborate with all players in the international scientific communication process. SciELO now publishes 611 journals with 200,000 articles that produced over 3.8 million citations and numbers continue to grow. SciELO is also used in a number of Spanish speaking European countries and is a representative element of the VHL on OA.

VHL concept has been accepted as Global Health Library by the World Health Organization for global use. The concept is replicable in any discipline.

**Cyberthesis style page application for producing digital theses in two Peruvian universities**

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Objective: This paper describes activities that were carried out in order to implement the Cyberthesis style page for the producing of undergraduate and graduate digital theses by students from Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC) and Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM). Methodologies developed in both institutions vary according to their respective regulations. UPC is a private university, UNMSM is a public one.

Methodology: In UPC it is mandatory for students to follow the Cyberthesis style page; workshops were implemented there at all academic levels. In UNMSM, pilot workshops were conducted with researchers, faculty and senior undergraduate students, in order to considerate the utilization of this style page.

Results: In both cases results are considered a success. In UPC the style page is now a tool used for producing digital theses and its use is considered as a requirement by the Regulations for obtaining degrees and titles. In UNMSM, pilot workshops have given their organizers the opportunity to show the need for implementing a style page, so now there exists a formal proposal presented in order to make this application a mandatory step when producing digital theses at all academic levels.