

Access and Output

The establishment and development of an institutional repository at the University of Nairobi

Rosemary Otando, 2010

Institutional repositories can provide a number of benefits for the research community. They can help to: enhance scholarly communication through improved access; improve visibility of both the researcher and their institution; increase the research and scholarship ranking of an institution; and preserve an institution's intellectual output. However, an effective repository isn't something that can be created overnight. This case study examines the work that has gone into an institutional repository at the University of Nairobi.

The information world has realized that scientific findings do not belong to a country but to a global audience. Over the years, momentum has been building in the world for libraries to embrace Open Access (OA) to capture their local scholarly content and provide free online access to scientific and scholarly research literature. Currently there are approximately 1992 repositories internationally listed on the Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR). Of the 34 African repositories listed, 62% are found in South Africa.

The OA movement in Kenya gained momentum in 2009 when two members of the Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) were funded by INASP to attend an OA workshop and, later, a one week attachment at the University of Pretoria. At the moment Kenya has more than ten institutions that have established, or are in the process of establishing, an institutional repository (IR).

An Institutional Repository at the University of Nairobi

Why Institutional Repositories?

There are four key benefits of the IR at the University of Nairobi (UoN):

1. Enhancing and advancing the process of scholarly communication
2. Preserving the intellectual output and memory of UoN
3. Increasing visibility of the UoN and the profile of the researcher
4. Increasing the UoN ranking in research and scholarship

Progress

The UoN is in the initial stage of implementing the IR using Dspace open source software. In April 2009 DSpace software was installed and in July 2009 the Digital Repository was established. Due to the expected rapid growth of its content, the project has already acquired a server of its own.

An IR Project Committee, consisting of five library staff,

“We have created channels of communication where we detail how we want the IR to work and what we expect from our users, staff and faculty. The response [has been] very positive.”

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was constituted by the Library Management to initiate the development of the repository. The committee was mandated to formulate policies related to the system, establish procedures, publicise the products, provide training, participate in the negotiation of funding and make recommendations regarding the services. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Librarian. The library plans to incorporate the University Legal Officer, University Administration, Head of UoN Students' Union, and faculty heads to ensure the success of the project.

Various workshops have been organised to sensitise and enhance staff skills in Dspace software and IR in general.

Currently, the collections available in the repository include the inaugural lectures, distinguished lectures, conferment of honorary degrees/awards, workshop presentations, library manuals and guides, and image collections of distinguished staff, monuments and buildings. The library plans to add other materials to the collection after dealing with copyright issues. The materials will include: theses/dissertations; open lectures, television broadcasts, and teaching modules; conference papers and proceedings; discussion and working papers; book chapters and newspaper articles. The total number of full-text documents submitted is 50, and we expect an increase after the procurement of a commercial scanner.

Usage of the Collection

Access to the database is initially limited to members of the institution (LAN) but once the project is launched, the database will be access and open on the web. It can be accessed on <http://dspace.uonbi.ac.ke:8080/jspui/>. Users are allowed to search and access bibliographic data and abstracts. It is also possible to retrieve the full text of the research documents.

“The activity was an eye opener. It was informative and very soon more IR’s will be developed in Africa thus improving access to information as well as preservation.”

Impact review feedback

- identifying ‘champions’ in academic departments who can encourage their colleagues to take part is often the most valuable approach
- taking up the opportunities of School/College Academic Board Meetings to publicise the service
- writing a press release announcing the launch

Challenges

Policy Issues

For the IR to be effectively established, the Committee, in collaboration with the University Administration, is expected to spearhead the enactment of OA policies. These policies shall be implemented in due course.

Required Equipment

The library has realised the need for more computers and scanners. At the moment the unit uses a small scanner which is unsuitable for this kind of project. A high connectivity scanner has been ordered, however, and is expected soon.

Staffing

Inadequate staffing has hampered the progress of the project. The project needs an IR Administrator to coordinate and manage the system and to assist end users with searching the repository; a Digitization Specialist to serve as knowledge expert for digital preservation issues; and ICT staff for technical issues. So far these positions have not been created. At the moment the Electronic Resources Librarian manages the repository while simultaneously managing other units in the library. While we do expect the above information specialist to be involved with users, we believe that relying totally on existing staff would be far too fragmented for the launch of this new service that needs concentrated attention. As the IR expands in scope, management and support, resources will have to increase simultaneously.

Promotion

The adoption rate of the concept by the academics has been very low. The library must develop strategies to combat the challenge. Perhaps, as we work with faculties who need to submit their content to an institutional repository, we need to encourage them to retain copyright of their work or at least retain rights to publish their work electronically to increase the adoption rate.

Future Plans

Raising Awareness at the University

The library plans to come up with strategies to sensitise all staff and to present the project to the university community before the launch. The strategies include:

- organising workshops and training, and visiting colleges and departments to sensitise academic staff and researchers on the need for submission of their research into the IR
- using posters; presentations; brochures; university magazines; library newsletters; and UoN and library websites to publicise the service

Copyright Issues

The library plans to convince the management to mandate their funded researchers to deposit a copy of their articles in the IR. The library will consult with the legal officer to understand the institution’s existing policies on copyright ownership for this is vital to the development and success of the repository. We also plan to offer presentations to academic staff and researchers on topics related to copyright and intellectual property rights in the digital age.

Providing for sustainability

To ensure that the IR is embedded in the university’s information systems and services, the library plans to develop an IR budget. The library is in the process of soliciting for funds to buy facilities that can be used to establish the IR.

Other future plans involve enhancing staffing and skills, collaborating with other institutions to share technical skills, increasing collections in the repository, and providing access via the Wide Area Network (WAN).

Conclusion

The creation of an IR should be encouraged, as the benefits are widespread and long term. However, it is important to consider the cost and resources a project of this scale requires. Time and dedication from staff is essential from the beginning of the planning process to the implementation and the ongoing maintenance. The development of a fully functioning IR at UoN is still at an early stage — taking the better part of two years to achieve. It is anticipated that it will be several more years before it is fully developed with new staff required for the long term.

A journey of a hundred miles begins with one step and, in this case, the destination is worth every one. The University Digital Repository has been established and, though still in its initial stage, the library is committed to its development.

Rosemary Otando

Electronic Resources Librarian, University of Nairobi
rosemary.otando@uonbi.ac.ke

Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR)

<http://roar.eprints.org/>

Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR)

<http://www.opendoar.org/>

Dspace

<http://www.dspace.org/>