EIFL-OA: Open Access

Removing barriers to knowledge sharing

Promoting open access through the implementation of OJS (Open Journal Systems) for the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) research community

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Results of the EIFL-funded Open Access Project

INTRODUCTION

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) was the first University in Ghana to set up an open access (OA) institutional repository (IR) KNUSTSpace and to introduce mandatory OA to theses and dissertations (OA theses mandate). It also leads national-level OA advocacy campaigns (see OA IR Advocacy Campaign case study 2011).

In 2012 KNUST Library together with Department of Publishing Studies (collaborating with the Public Knowledge Project and seven journals in Kumasi (KNUST Journal of Science and Technology, KNUST Business School online Journal, KNUST Law Journal, Building and Road Research Journal, FORIG Journal, Journal of Horticulture and Agriculture and Food Science Journal) launched an OA publishing project encouraging the use of Open Journal Systems (OJS) software in the journal publishing process.

Out of 14 scholarly journals currently published in Ghana and listed by AJOL (African Journals Online), only three are OA journals: West African Journal of Applied Ecology, University of Ghana; Ghana Medical Journal, Ghana Medical Association; and Journal of Medical and Biomedical Sciences, School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University for Development Studies.

The project targeted journal editors and reviewers, staff of the university press, faculty, researchers, post graduate students and research administrators.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 28 journal editors, staff of the University press, lecturers, researchers, information professionals and IT specialist from Kumasi based research institutions as well as KNUST publishing students and journalists attended meetings at which they were introduced to OA publishing and the benefits of OJS. Suggestions and feedback from the participants indicated that there is great potential for OA publishing and the use of OJS in KNUST and in Ghana.

- OJS was installed for publishing KNUST journals. The Journal of Science and Technology (JUST) became the first pilot project (still in progress migrating from subscription-based journal to OA journal) and other six journals expressed their interest to follow this example.

STRATEGIES, TACTICS AND TOOLS

Outreach strategy

- Two meetings with staff of the KNUST university press, journal editors and reviewers, researchers, students, journalist and research policy makers were organized

- A two-day workshop for journal editors and research institutions in Kumasi (KNUST, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Kumasi Polytechnic and the University of Education, Kumasi Campus) was hosted. More information is available on the KNUST website here.

- A radio talk and phone-in session took place at the Campus based radio station in Kumasi (Focus FM) on 18th and 23rd October 2012. Richard Bruce Lamptey (KNUST IR Librarian) together with two postgraduate students from the Publishing Studies Department of KNUST discussed OJS and the need for academic and research institutions to have their journals published in OA. The discussions focused on the fact that there is a great deal of research output in/on Ghana which could and should be made freely and openly available to all.

- Publication and distribution of flyers on the benefits of OJS.

The project team successfully collaborated with the Department of Publishing Studies. The Department invited postgraduate students to the workshop so they could learn about the OJS publishing platform. The online submission and review of manuscript features were the easiest for the target audience to understand. This session won the hearts of many during the workshop.

The OJS software was downloaded for the participants. They were then taken through the process of installing and configuring OJS for journal publishing. IT personnel were able to install the software easily. Participants were excited that OJS was easy to learn and that it will make their publishing work easier. Many participants left committed to advocate for OA publishing at their institutions.

The link to the platform and other OJS trainings is also available here.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Using flyers as well as face-to-face discussions proved to be an effective way to raise awareness of the benefits of OJS to journal editors.

- It is important to seek support from already established online journals that use OJS so that one does not waste time in experimenting or re-inventing the wheel.

- Always keep in mind that to use OJS successfully to publish you need the assistance of IT personnel to install, to monitor and install software updates, and to troubleshoot.

- Always carry out advocacy with the persons who will actually use the software (submitters, editors, reviewers).

THE FUTURE

The Journal of Science and Technology (JUST) will fully migrate to OJS and will become an OA journal followed by other KNUST journals: Business School Online Journal, Law Journal, Building and Road Research Journal, FORIG Journal, Journal of Horticulture and Agriculture and Food Science Journal and hopefully some other journals published by research institutions in Kumasi.

KNUST journal editors and reviewers have become OA advocates and will help in advocating for OA policy for KNUST publications. Hopefully other research institutions in Ghana will follow the KNUST example.