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12 January 2021

Supporting the publishing of African-centric research – new platform

The University of Cape Town (UCT) Libraries has developed a new a [continental platform](#) for open access publishing in Africa. The platform allows the African research community to take ownership of creating and sharing its own scholarly content (including open access journals and open access monographs and textbooks), which contributes to the growth and development of local research for African society.

The publishing platform is driven by social justice principles and addresses the challenge of Africa's low production by practicing diamond open access, that is knowledge is free to access for the reader and the author does not pay to publish. In this model, diamond open access is a community-based publishing alternative model that disrupts the commercial publishing system. This shift returns the control of publishing back to the researcher community; free from third-party publishers imposing their restrictions to access. The global north centric flipped model of academic publishing exacerbates the inequality in the publishing landscape by further marginalising the research voices from the global south.

The project is the brainchild of Dr Reggie Raju, Director: Research and Learning Services at UCT Libraries. Raju recognised that many African institutions simply lacked the funds to publish open access and also lacked the institutional funds to set up their own services.

“Financial challenges and lack of technical infrastructure shouldn’t be a barrier to being able to disseminate good research widely,” he shared.

“At UCT we are lucky enough to have the infrastructure and skilled staff available. Therefore, we decided to host the platform and train library staff at other African universities. After all, we must work together if we want to demolish the barriers to African research so that our institutions are able to produce and publish their own knowledge.”

The platform seeks to offer an alternative to the dichotomous ‘publish globally and perish locally’ or ‘publish locally and perish globally’ by providing a platform for African institutions

to develop their own journals and have ownership of good academic rigour in publishing outside of global north influences.

“African-centric content is often not deemed as global enough for international journals. Through this service, we hope to address issues of: social justice driven sharing of research output, active participation in the contribution to the world’s knowledge production and the knowledge produced impacting the world’s research agenda to a point of including research emanating from the global south,” added UCT librarian Jeremiah Pietersen.

A key consideration for Raju was that African institutions who opt into the platform do not lose their identity and thus all institutions retain their branding that is then hosted by UCT’s IT infrastructure.

“This must not be a UCT thing. We started this to help Africans take charge of their own knowledge and of their own systems and we are committed to this,” said Raju.

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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