Research4life and Open Access: Impact on access to e-resources in Africa

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The ancient libraries of Africa
The “University” of Timbuktu, was established in the 12th century. Teaching included Islamic studies, geography, mathematics, the sciences and medicine.

700,000 collections
Library of Alexandria (285–246 BC)
The al-Qarawiyyin Library, Morocco
Still in operation

The oldest library in the oldest university in the world, 859 AD
Oldest and most complete Bible

Ca. 650 AD
Research in Universities in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

50 Countries SSA Universities before independence 1944

Only six (6) universities in SSA excluding S. Africa

SSA Universities at Independence 1950’s -80’s

Limited mandate of training professionals to run the newly independent state apparatus

... SSA Universities included research in their mandate ...

... not much research ...

Ibadan (1948) Ghana (1948) 1950


1980 - 1987

Mandate expanded to include research
Subscription to hardcopies of journals

% of worldwide publication output in the international peer-reviewed journal literature

Africa’s World publication output reached 1% in 1987

Research in Universities in SSA contd.

1980’s and 1990’s: A period of lost opportunity for research

- Periods of economic decline
- Donor dependent economies
- Imposition of SAP by World Bank and IMF

- Reduction of funding to universities in favor of basic education
- SSA universities thrown into financial crisis
- SSA universities introduced austerity measures
- Forced to increase enrollment without commensurate increase in funding
- Reduced funding's for laboratories and libraries
- Subscription to journals stopped in 1989 (UoN)

SSA share of world scientific papers declined from 1% in 1987 to 0.7% in 1996!
Challenges of accessing scientific literature in Africa Pre R4L and Open Access era – personal journey

MSc (1997), PhD (2004)

... insufficient research is a major hurdle to growth and development in Africa ...

... conduct research to solve local challenges and contribute to global knowledge ...

“this requires standing on the shoulders of giants”

Journal subscription had stopped in 1989 following SAP.

- Furthering knowledge was therefore difficult
- A lot of hustle to access scientific literature
- Visit University of Potsdam, Germany, 2002/03, to access the latest scientific literature for the writeup of thesis and publications.
“WHO survey undertaken in 2000 showed that 56% of institutions in countries with a gross national income per capita (GNIpc) of under US$1,000 had no current subscription to any international journal”.
Africa is 1.3 billion strong, the majority of whom are young capable of pulling the continent out of the myriads of challenges it is facing.

Addressing the barriers to conducting research, such as access to scientific literature, in Africa is a key step in attaining SDG’s.
Initiatives Geared Towards Improving Access to Scientific Literature
Research4Life is the collective name for an initiative which encompasses five public-private partnerships.

- **HINARI** (Research in Health) - 2002
- **AGORA** (Research in Agriculture) - 2003
- **OARE** (Research in the Environment) - 2006
- **ARDI** (Research for Innovation) - 2009
- **GOALI** (Research for Global Justice) - 2018

Access to Research to the Developing World

Access to 85,000 journals, books and databases

This empowered libraries with access to scientific literature like never before.
Countries, areas and territories eligible for Research4life

Group A (free access, 69 countries)

Group B (USD 1500 per annum, 56 countries)
Some of the major academic publishing partners

Close to 195 publishers participate in the program.
Impact of Research4life on Research in Africa

1. Access to research journals like never before (85,000)
2. Institutional capacities of SSA universities to support research improved
3. Researchers engage in state of the art research problems with shoulders of giants to stand on
4. Write journal articles and reviews in high impact journals
A sharp increase in Research Output in R4L Countries since its Introduction in 2002

Africa’s share of world publication output more than doubled from 1.5% in 2005 to 3.2% in 2016, the fastest growth in the world.

Open access challenges in Africa

I. Access to Internet

Internet Penetration in Different Regions of the World

- Kenya: 89.80%
- World average: 57.30%
- Oceania/Australia: 68.40%
- North America: 89.40%
- Middle East: 67.90%
- Latin America/Caibean: 68.90%
- Europe: 87.70%
- Asia: 54.20%
- Africa: 39.80%

https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
II. High cost of internet connectivity

The Cost of Broadband Internet

Internet access in Africa is very expensive

III. Lack of awareness of the R4L program
R4L usage pattern between 2017 and 2019
How to improve the reach of R4L

- Persuade more partners to join the program
- Recruit and train R4L ambassadors/champions
- Sustained awareness campaign
- Reach out to graduate students thorough graduate schools
- Conduct discipline specific campaign piggybacking on scientific events
My own campaign

E-Library Resources

Citations and Reference Management Tools

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Mar 05 2020
Seminar: E-Resources and Reference Management Tools
VOI, Kenya
Taita Taveta University

May 08 2020
Seminar: E-resources and Reference Management Tools
Bondo, Kenya
Bondo University
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