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EIFL-OA: Open Access

Removing barriers to knowledge

INSTITUTIONAL OPEN ACCESS ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN TO REACH OUT TO RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

A CASE STUDY FROM MALAWI

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Reports about the results of EIFL funded project “Awareness Campaign for Kamuzu College of Nursing Library / University of Malawi Research Repository” implemented by Kamuzu College of Nursing Library / University of Malawi in partnership with the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST)

“Last week when we had international visitors during the NEPI conference and launch the only places we could take visitors to were the library and ICT section. They had something to show. The library showcased the research repository, electronic journals among other things” College Principal, Associate Professor Address Malata

INTRODUCTION

Results of a study conducted by Harle (2010)¹ reported that Malawi has good access to international journal literature. However, the same study reported challenges in access to local content.

Kamuzu College of Nursing has researchers who have gained international renown such as Professor Chrissie Kaponda, Associate Professor Address Malata, Associate Professor Ellen Chirwa, Dr Angella Chimwaza and Dr Abigail Kazembe; their groundbreaking research has shaped the discourse and practice of international nursing. While these excellent pieces of work, published in international journals, are easily accessible to students, lecturers and researchers in institutions outside Malawi, Malawians are required to pay journal subscription fees to access works of their colleagues. Usually these fees are out of reach to most Malawian scholars and researchers.

Institutional repositories (IR) contribute to the visibility and ranking of universities. It is envisaged that the IR at Kamuzu College of Nursing will be a platform for disseminating research conducted at the College. Theses will be uploaded there as well as gray literature. Currently, Kamuzu College of Nursing is planning to establish a peer reviewed journal.

¹ Jonathan Harle (2010) Arcadia Report, “Growing knowledge: access to research in east and southern African universities”

http://www.acu.ac.uk/member_services/professional_networks/libraries_network/growing_knowledge

Kamuzu College of Nursing Library is building an Open Access (OA) repository for research in nursing, midwifery and reproductive health. Before the outreach campaign, when the library requested researchers to submit lists of their publications so that archiving policies of the associated journals could be checked and where necessary permissions to archive sought, only one researcher, the Vice Principal, responded. The College Principal was also in support of the project.

There are many misconceptions by researchers at the College about OA and copyright issues. For example, they are afraid of their work being stolen if they publish in OA.

This project has laid the ground for a better understanding of OA publishing.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 35 researchers attended two 'research lunches' (one at Lilongwe Campus and one at Blantyre Campus) where they learned about OA and its benefits.
- The most distinguished researchers of Kamuzu College of Nursing have now deposited their publications into the repository: Dr Address Malata (Associate Professor of Nursing) who is the Principal of the College and Dr Ellen Chirwa (Associate Professor of Nursing) who is also Vice Principal, Dr. Angela Chimwaza and Dr Abigail Kazembe.
- Launch of an OA Malawi Nursing Journal has been proposed.
- After the advocacy campaign, the library received 15 journal articles and one book chapter for deposit into the IR (prior to the campaign, when they put out the same request, they only received one publication).
- The project raised the profile of the library. Traditionally, the library is viewed as a passive supporter of curriculum implementation.
- The Principal proposed that the importance of IR and OA publishing should be shared with other colleges in the University of Malawi. She further proposed that University of Malawi should be requested to consider amending rules and regulations for promotion of academic staff to recognise depositing in OA IR.
- Funding was secured to purchase a new and high specifications server for the IR. As a result the project changed from an advocacy to implementation and advocacy.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal of the project was to create a team of OA IR champions at Kamuzu College of Nursing.

The project audiences were researchers, lecturers and postgraduate students.

The advocacy project assisted the library to create a team of OA IR champions. This was done by organising a one day workshop for lecturers and for library staff at Kamuzu College of Nursing. In addition, the project produced fliers and pens for marketing the OA IR.

In the course of the advocacy campaign new ideas came up. One major idea that came up was the proposal to establish an OA Malawi Nursing Journal. The College Librarian was invited by INASP to a journal editor's workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the library opted out and requested INASP to invite the Vice Principal, Dr Ellen Chirwa, instead since she is an experienced and well published researcher at Kamuzu College of Nursing.

STRATEGIES, TACTIC, AND TOOLS

For the project to succeed the primary tactic was to involve the highest authority in the College, College Principal and Vice Principal. When the project was presented to the Principal and Vice Principal they agreed to be champions of the project. Since that time, the Principal and the Vice Principal have submitted all their articles to the library.

In an effort to advocate for OA publishing, the library proposed two strategies to achieve this; an OA repository and an OA Malawi Nursing Journal.

When EIFL approved a grant to Kamuzu College of Nursing to carry out advocacy campaigns for the College's IR, the College Principal was made the grant holder. Being the grant holder the Principal helped to ensure that the project was a success. She also approved the purchase of a new high specifications server. As a result the project changed from an advocacy to implementation and advocacy.

In order to market the IR, the library created branded pens (learning from the publishers who use them to effectively promote electronic journals).

RESEARCH LUNCH

In the planning stage a one day training workshop for researchers was proposed, however this was not possible due to changes in the College calendar (the College decided to start the 2012 academic year for new students early in order to speed up the harmonisation of academic calendar with those of other colleges and academic institutions as requested by Government).

This affected the work schedule of researchers. The project therefore decided to organise a research lunch instead. These were one-hour meetings which were followed up by one-to-one meetings with researchers in their offices.

The venue for the lunch was in the library. The major activity was demonstration of the IR to researchers. The lunch was well attended and the Guest of Honour was the Principal at Lilongwe Campus and Vice Principal at Blantyre Campus.

After the demonstration participants asked questions such as: Can young researchers who have not yet published their work register in the IR?; What are the benefits of Kamuzu College of Nursing having the IR?; Can one be promoted based on publications in OA IR or journal? Librarians were able to answer these questions, thereby re-assuring the researchers that depositing their publications in the OA IR is a good choice. In Blantyre, Dr Angela Chimwaza, Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Research requested that Masters students dissertations should be included in the repository.

SUCCESS STORIES

The advocacy project was planned to be conducted at Kamuzu College of Nursing only. However due to the popularity of the materials that were used, including branded pens, the campaign was informally done at the University's Central Office.

In looking for strategies to obtain management buy-in, the project staff decided to make the College Principal the grant holder. As a grant holder, the Principal closely followed all activities of the project. By being so involved, she became well informed about OA IR.

Skills obtained from implementing the project were using in an OA national repository for research be implemented by Malawi Library and Information Consortium through Malawi National Library Services.

LESSONS LEARNED

Justifying the project was easy. Many of researchers at Kamuzu College of Nursing are familiar with problems of accessing journal articles published by local researchers.

For library projects to be successful there needs to be management and faculty buy-in.

Advocacy projects for IRs succeed when you start from the top.

There should also be active engagement of the target audience. Engagement should not only be in a group but also one-on-one; go to the researchers' offices and talk to them about the process and ask for their support. There could be senior researchers who are not comfortable with technology and they feel comfortable being training as individuals where they can ask personal questions and expose their ignorance in private.

Research lunches were the strongest project elements we can continue to build on. Researchers at Kamuzu College of Nursing are busy people and usually they don't have time for long and protracted meeting. The project team found that it was an attractive arrangement for researchers to take their lunch while listening to a presentation.

THE FUTURE

In the University of Malawi academic staff are promoted based on publications in peer reviewed journals or book chapters. During one of the research lunches organised as part of the advocacy campaign the Principal proposed that the importance of IR and OA publishing should be shared with other colleges in the University of Malawi. She further proposed that University of Malawi should be requested to consider amending rules and regulations for promotion of academic staff to recognise depositing in OA IR.

Research lunches were such a success, the library is planning to continue organising them to provide a forum for researchers to meet.