

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA OPEN ACCESS MANDATE

The first African open access institutional mandate story

In May 2009 Senate of the University of Pretoria adopted a policy for mandatory submission of research papers by its staff, students and other affiliates (<http://www.library.up.ac.za/openup/mandates.htm>).

This fortunate event was the culmination of a process that started in 2000 when the university's ETD programme was launched. "*We build the road by walking it*" was the slogan for a very tentative beginning which quickly gained momentum as the campus community became enthusiastic about it. In 2003 submission of theses and dissertations became mandatory and it is now regarded by everyone as a normal link in the postgraduate chain of events. The University of Pretoria Electronic Theses and Dissertations (UPeTD) repository (<http://upetd.up.ac.za>) currently contains 1407 full text doctoral theses and 3243 research master's dissertations. In the period September 2008 to August 2009, 3155958 files were downloaded from the repository: it is indeed a very convenient resource for the UP community and other researchers worldwide, showcasing the excellent postgraduate research of the university. In a 2007 survey it was found that the availability of these documents has very positive outcomes for their authors (<http://repository.up.ac.za/upspace/handle/2263/3405>). UPeTD was ranked 112 on global visibility and impact in the July 2009 world ranking of institutional repositories (<http://repositories.webometrics.info/index.html>).

Research and conference papers were next on our agenda. The serials crisis has been a reality in South Africa for as long as anyone can remember: too poor to afford what our researchers need, but not poor enough to qualify for support to developing nations and often at the mercy of fluctuating exchange rates created a sense of powerlessness. No wonder that Stevan Harnad's evangelism was music to our ears. In 2006 the library implemented DSpace as a platform for an institutional repository (<http://repository.up.ac.za/upspace/>) where research papers could be archived. We used our theses expertise as a starting point but allowed ourselves a long period of experimentation, ironing out of problems and building infrastructure and support systems. The repository was demonstrated at departmental meetings, in one-on-one talks, quick guides were written and submitters were trained. In the mean time we set up alerts and cajoled authors to submit articles whenever something new was published. We also targeted prominent academic leaders and created personal collections for them such as the Jonathan Jansen collection, which absolutely delighted the dean of Education (<http://repository.up.ac.za/upspace/handle/2263/108>;<http://repository.up.ac.za/upspace/handle/2263/606>) and created a lot of word-of-mouth marketing for our efforts.

In 2007 the library's Open Scholarship Programme (<http://www.library.up.ac.za/openup/index.htm>) was formalised with an office, two full time staff members and four areas of activity to cover a broad spectrum of open access concerns

- Archiving of research papers ([openUP](#))
- Archiving of theses and dissertations ([UPeTD](#))
- Collaboration with Dept Research and Innovation Support on the university's [Research Report](#)
- Advice and facilitation of open access journal initiatives on campus.

(see strategy map at <http://www.library.up.ac.za/openup/docs/Strategy%20Map.pdf>)

By now the collection of articles was growing steadily and the first round of research reporting collaboration demonstrated the repository's ability to create a complete record of the research output of the university in easily accessible form and the possibility to simplify research reporting.

The time was ripe to develop policy and get commitment from researchers and administrators. Even though the library established itself as an ally we approached this stage with trepidation: an open access mandate means extra work for already overburdened researchers and we were going to drive this process when it was clear that nobody from the research community was going to take the lead.

A policy was drafted, debated and compared against those of other universities available at <http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/>. It was rewritten dozens of times in both English and Afrikaans to make sure that it was clear and conveyed the right message: deposition is required, not just requested. The university's legal department checked it for legal

consistency and accuracy. This was followed by a road show to all faculties to explain the policy and to discuss the concerns of researchers and research leaders. As expected many people feared that the process will jeopardise their chances to be published by prominent publishers. The copyright addendum in particular was greeted with so much apprehension that we eventually toned it down and merely recommended that it be used.

These very rewarding talks provided an opportunity to once again explain the benefits of open access, the contribution that each of us can make, the library's supportive role and the need to adopt the mandate as an expression of **our commitment to an initiative so totally in line with a basic academic value**. We were fortunate to have the wholehearted support of management, particularly the vice-chancellor.

The collection now contains 3306 articles and we contributed even more successfully to the 2009 research reporting, but as expected the mandate did not create an overnight change of heart. Academics seem to have a tendency to ignore policy and regulations as much as possible. We know that policy implementation will only succeed if we keep on reminding and prodding them gently and supporting their submissions by making everything as simple as possible until it becomes second nature. Currently we target the postgraduate students as the new generation who should get into this good habit right from the start. We do not plan to enforce the policy at this stage and are indeed in *the season of the purple carrots!*

Recommendations

- Play around and get as many people as possible to experiment and to give feedback. Submit many articles yourself in the beginning to make sure everything works well and you know how to deal with problems.
- Create good infrastructure and support structure that works well. Every subject librarian should be marketing the repository and OA and should liaise with researchers.
- Build good demonstrators and do extensive lobbying. Use every opportunity to explain the value of open access. Recruit individuals and departments to champion the experimental an implementation phases.
- Do not underestimate people's misgivings and misperceptions about OA and self-submission: it means extra work.
- Beware of overpromising. The verdict is still out on the impact of open access on citation. Think of other advantages for them and make it as painless as possible.
- There is a lot in it for the university: sell these advantages to management and get their support.
- Communicate regularly with all stakeholders, share good news and celebrate success.
- Combine with other campus activities such as research reporting and demonstrate the value and time-saving abilities of the repository.
- Do not hurry policy-making activities: wait until you know that things work well and you have enough support. But this final commitment of the university cannot be postponed forever.
- The mandate will mean nothing if it is not backed by adequate resources for infrastructure and support depending on the needs of your organization.

Comments:

Prof Robin Crewe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Postgraduate Studies)

*The opportunity to pursue scholarly activities in a free and unfettered manner is crucial to the development of knowledge based societies. One means of achieving this is through open access to scholarly material, particularly for scholars from poorly resourced developing countries. In addition, OA can make the work of scholars from these countries more widely accessible in both the developed and developing worlds. **The University of Pretoria is committed to this goal.***

Dhesigen Naidoo, Director of the Department of Research and Innovation Support

*I do and will continue to support open access. It's key to a more universal dissemination of research products to a range of audiences and stakeholders. It has huge potential for a wider and quicker uptake of new knowledge to better inform policy, develop and activate solutions for community development to eradicate poverty, to entrepreneurs to develop smarter products and services to create new and enhance existing industrial platforms to create sustainable livelihoods and improve our competitiveness. **Open access is a key empowerment tool.***

Prof Irma Eloff, Dean: Faculty of Education

*It was HG Wells who said **Human history becomes more and more a race between Education and catastrophe**. I believe that the catastrophe can be avoided if we equalize access to knowledge and research - and open access goes a long way in achieving this goal.*

Prof Phil Botha, Department of Ancient Languages

Significant advances in knowledge can only be attained if researchers have immediate access to almost everything that has been published on a particular subject, especially the most recent contributions. Open Access is a quantum leap towards attaining this goal.

Prof Neil Roos: Director of Postgraduate Research

Dare we hope that in light of its potential to disrupt conventional patterns of scholarly publication and transform the readership of scholarly research, open access will invest research in the humanities and social sciences with new boldness, vitality and relevance?

Prof Mokubung Nkomo, Extraordinary Research Professor : Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Knowledge is the global currency of our times; it gives us the purchasing power to enjoy life's many wonderful gifts. Without it, we are reduced to nothingness. Thankfully, Open Access has opened the doors to an incredibly vast wealth of knowledge which is there for us to exploit without charge. What a fabulous moment in human history! Wa lala wa sala. (Zulu: If you are asleep life will pass you by)

Prof Venitha Pillay, Associate Professor : Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Open access opens up vistas of knowledge at the click of a button, it saves trees, it saves time, it saves money, it takes knowledge out of the ivory tower and puts it in the hands of anyone who chooses to use it!

Prof Alan Brent, Graduate School of Technology Management, University of Pretoria and School of Public Management and Planning, Stellenbosch University

Researchers in developing countries face many challenges; one being the availability of (financial) resources to gain access to information. The consequence is the potential limitation on the research work that can be undertaken in these countries. Open Access addresses this challenge directly and levels the platform for researchers from all countries to collaborate meaningfully.

Prof Theo Bothma, Head: Department of Information Science

Open access "publishing" through interoperable institutional repositories provides researchers with an excellent platform to showcase their research publications to the world. Exchange of research information is greatly enhanced and this may have a huge impact on especially the developing world. Open access publishing therefore requires that publishers, researchers and readers carefully rethink current scholarly publishing models.

Dr Eran Dvir, Junior Researcher of the Year 2008

I support Open Access as this is the best method of ensuring that relevant research results are taken from the tip of Africa to the front screen. Young researchers should be able to keep up-to-date with the latest research as well as participating in sharing knowledge.

Robert Moropa, Director: Library Services

One of the key objectives of the University of Pretoria (UP) is to be an internationally recognized research university. In line with this objective the UP Library Services has taken initiatives and implemented appropriate measures to enhance the impact of the research generated by the University community of researchers. One such step was to facilitate the adoption of the Open Access Mandate by the University in 2009. We are convinced therefore, that the OA Mandate will contribute immensely towards the attainment of this objective.

James van Sandwyk, PhD student

The UP Open Scholarship Programme (openUP), powered by Open Access, provides both students and researches at the University of Pretoria a new dimension in the acquiring and spreading of knowledge which will entitle them to achieve greatness in their respective fields. The findings of which can be once again accessed by the next generation of researches at UP, and elsewhere, thus feeding the cycle of turning information into knowledge, which makes this a truly great university, not only in an African context but globally.

Dora Ramatla, Undergraduate student

OA makes a lot of sense for us young people. This is how we think about information - available everywhere and at all times to be shared, used and to create new stuff.

Text written and quotes collected by Monica Hammes and Elsabé Olivier