Establishing an Institutional Repository at the University of Zambia Experiences and Challenges

Fabian Kakana

University of Zambia Library

Email: fabian.kakana@unza.zm

Francina Makondo

University of Zambia Library

Email: fmakondo@unza.zm

Abstract

The IR was established as a new way to disseminate UNZA’s research output. However, the establishing and implementation of this institutional repository has been surrounded by a number challenges which this paper has brought out. The challenges include lack of awareness, unwillingness to submit, lack of IR, phobia for open access. The purpose of this survey was establish the reasons why faculty were reluctant to deposit their work in the Institutional Repository and also highlight the challenges faced by the Library in establishing and implementation of the institutional repository at University of Zambia and how these challenges were overcome.

**INTRODUCTION**

Research excellence of any university is measured by evidence of how much research is going on in that institution. A lot of research is carried out by University of Zambia staff but this research output is disjointed and not much is disseminated globally apart from the few published in international journals. For any learning institution to improve its profile and rating globally, its research results need to be effectively distributed, making them accessible and for use by other scholars. UNZA lags behind in the world university ratings due to limited evidence of its research activities. It is against this background that a way to disseminate this intellectual output was put in place in order to make known to the world what UNZA has to offer. The UNZA institutional repository, therefore, is intended to assist researchers by facilitating the production, use and dissemination of their intellectual output.

According to Lynch (2000), a repository is “a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members”. Digital repositories offer possibilities for new ways to publish and share information. Lynch (2000) further argues that “research paid with public money, should be made available to the broadest public possible and an institutional repository makes that possible”.

The University of Zambia (UNZA) being an institution mandated to create knowledge through conducting research, has developed a research policy to promote research dissemination in many ways including, establishing mechanisms for data processing, information storage and retrieval systems and ensure that the creative research outputs are reviewed and communicated widely. The University of Zambia Library has since taken up the challenge to establish and implement an institutional repository that will help to fulfill the implementation of this policy.

This paper, contends that though a lot of research is carried out by University of Zambia academic staff and students most of its unpublished research output is not visible or accessible and not much 102 *Library and Information Association of Zambia Journal*

is disseminated globally. This scenario has had a negative impact in terms of profiles and rankings for University of Zambia. The researchers strongly believe that UNZA’s low rating has a lot to do with limited visibility of its research activities on the global scene, since some of its research output is not published in international journals. It is against this background that a way to disseminate this intellectual output has been put in place in order to make known to the world what UNZA has to offer.

***Statement of the Problem***

One year after establishing the Repository, and despite some effort to publicize its existence, not many members of the faculty have submitted their work in the IR. This paper therefore, highlights issues surrounding the willingness by faculty to buy into the IR concept and also some of the challenges faced by the Library in the establishment and populating of the IR. Others have to do with copyright issues and just the phobia by both academic staff and students of accepting the open access concept and open up materials that have been kept under lock and key for a long time.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

An institutional repository (IR) is a ``digital archive of the intellectual product created by the faculty, research staff, and students of an institution and accessible to end users both within and outside of the institution, with few if any barriers to access (Crow, 2002).

Despite its potential value to the academic community, a study by Chawner (2010) academics indicate that academics have been slow to embrace the concept of institutional repositories, and show little interest in using repositories for increasing the accessibility of their own work, or to access the work of others. The number of deposits remains low, mirroring patterns throughout the world.

Among other factors of the slowness to embrace the concept of IR, were the ongoing concerns about copyright and plagiarism (Westell, 2006). Chawner (2010) also adds that the academic community has not yet been persuaded to overcome its reluctance to deposit, and repository staff indicated that their academics remain concerned about plagiarism and intellectual property rights (especially their right to deposit, post publication)

On the other hand, there is also evidence of some positive attitudes to repositories, and some studies show that not only do academics favorably disposed to repositories declare a willingness to deposit in order to enable other scholars to find, use and cite their work (bringing a personal and institutional benefit), but that some have a more altruistic attitude, are in agreement with open access polices and principles, and believe that knowledge should be openly shared and that publicly funded research should be made publicly available . A study by Sawant (2011) revels that about 92.86 % of respondents felt that the implementation of the IR enhances their institution’s prestige/visibility.

Anticipated benefits of institutional repository are listed in Sawant’s study include:

• Enhances your institution’s prestige/visibility

• New services to learning communities beyond your institution

• Maintaining control over your institution’s intellectual property

• Capturing and maintaining the intellectual assets of your institution

• To encourage open access

• A reduction in the amount of time between discovery and dissemination of research findings to users scholarly communities

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The study further reviewed that some of the challenges included the following

• Contributors’ lack of knowledge about how they can benefit from IRs

• Lack of on campus technical expertise in IR systems

• Contributors’ concerns about intellectual property rights for digital materials

• Absence of campus-wide mandates regarding mandatory contribution of certain material types, e.g. doctoral dissertations, master’s theses, etc.

• Competing for resources with other priorities, projects, and initiatives

In countering the negative attitude of the academics, promoting the repository with faculty is identified as crucial factor. It requires that librarians tirelessly promote the IR. Westell (2006) recommends that the goals for the repository should be aligned with institutional academic plans. She further explains that beginning in May 2005, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had done just that, mandating that all NIH-funded research be archived in PubMed Central (http://grants. nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-022.html). Policy therefore compels the faculty to deposit their work in the repository.

***Objectives***

This study sort to meet the following objectives:

1. Establish the reason why members of the faculty are reluctant to deposit their work in the IR
2. To highlight some of the challenges experienced during the establishing and implementation of the institutional repository at University of Zambia and how these challenges were overcome.
3. To share the findings/experiences with some of the universities which are in the process of establishing institutional repositories.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized face to face interviews with selected academic members of staff who have had an experience of using the repository. Questionnaires were also be administered to 200 lecturers and 30 randomly sampled graduate students to supplement the views gathered from the academic staff about the positive and negative experiences they have had in using the IR.

The questionnaires used were open and closed-ended questions. Open ended questionnaires were suitable for the study because they helped the researchers to collect data from a large number of respondents in the shortest possible time. Closed-ended questions helped reduce the possibility of obtaining ambiguous answers from the respondents and also helped the researchers obtain straightforward answers. On the other hand, a few open-ended questions allowed the respondents to include any vital information that could be left out in the closed-ended questions.

The data that was collected from the respondents coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to have accurate analysis. The open-ended questions were also analyzed using content analysis in Excel to allow patterns to be identified.

**RESULTS**

The findings that prominently came out were that the slowness in populating the IR was due to inadequate bandwidth (68 %) which made it difficult for the University to support the accessibility of the IR via Internet, lack of interest (51 %) by the university community to take steps in self archiving of their research work, lack of adequate technical staff (62 %) who sometimes seem to be overwhelmed by so many responsibilities rather than those to do with the IR, poor publicity by library staff responsible for IR. Lack of adequate computers (46 percent) in school laboratories for those students with no personal computers to access the IR contents.

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***Awareness***

The study revealed that awareness of the concept of institutional repositories was quite low amongst the faculty. Asked whether they were aware of the existence of the IR at the University of Zambia, the 68% of the academic staff interviewed mention that they were not aware. This meant that this unawareness could have contributed to not submitting to their research output the IR. On the other hand, awareness among students was higher as the majority of the students (70%) indicated that they were aware of its existence. This meant that it was more likely that most students knew about the IR as compared to academic staff because students visited the library more often than staff thereby noticing new services in the library.

***Willingness to deposit***

When asked how willing academic staff were to submit their research work in the IR, 67% of the respondents were not willing to submit for various such as not being sure of what will happen to their work after submission.

***Reasons for unwillingness***

Most of the academic staff interviewed indicated that they would have been submitting more if there was some form of policy to compel them to submit, 62% mentioned that they needed more training on how to submit while 43% of the them indicated that they would not want students to plagiarize their work if put on open access facility without copyright. Interestingly 10% of the respondents indicated that they did not have any work to submit.

The results therefore indicate that there is need for the Library and champions in the University to educate the community on the issue of open access and publishing. The open access movement argues that publicity funded research should be made available for free to anyone who needed it.

***Challenges in Implementing the Institutional Repository at UNZA***

The major challenges faced in the establishment and implementation of the University of Zambia Institution Repository include:

1. Lack of IT expertise stationed in the library

2. Lack of clear understanding by the ICT department on the role and value of the repository

3. Not adequate bandwidth which up to now can allow the IR to be accessed on Internet

4. The University management’s bureaucracy to approve the IR policy

5. Inadequate funding for the Library to acquire enough machinery for scanning

6. Inadequate staff dedicated to digitize materials

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researchers have recommended that the library should come up with a feasible plan or programme to market the IR among the university community members. Secondly, the university management should consider acquiring more bandwidth to carter for the open access facilities and services such as the IR. Another suggestion is that more technical staff both librarians and ICT personnel to be trained in order to smoothly manage the IR. It is further suggested that the IR manager and staff should find ways of convincing university staff and student to adopt a new culture of archiving and preserving their work electronically in the IR. Last but not least, there should be an IR policy to act as a guide in day to day running of an IR. The policy must clearly address pertinent issues such as copyright, funding, staff responsibilities etc.*Establishing an Institutional Repository at the University of Zambia: Experiences and Challenges* 105

**CONCLUSION**

Changing the culture of scholarly communications is not an easy job and uptake remains slow in the academy. Many repositories are using the “if you build it, they will come” philosophy. Through developing the infrastructure and encouraging early adopters, a critical mass of content will attract other researchers and illustrate to administration how the repository will meet institutional needs.

The challenges experienced during the establishment and implementation of an IR at University of Zambia were presumably common to many institutions implementing of IR especially in developing world. Problems such as inadequate bandwidth, lack of IT skills to manage IR, lack of funding, phobia for OA among academic staff etc. All these, however, could be overcome by convincing management and make it understand the importance of IRs in information management & retrieval.

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