

Running Head: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

International Development and Research Capacities:
Increasing Access to African Scholarly Publishing

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Abstract:

This paper examines the evolving relationship between Canada and the African academic research community through the promotion of a concept known as Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) and with an eye to its implications for increasing the circulation of research through such means as Open Access (OA) publishing models. We analyze the programmatic discourse of Canada's International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) African research initiatives, and report on an IDRC research and development project assessing the means of increasing access to African scholarly journals through the use of open source software platforms and Open Access publishing and archiving models. Consistent with IDRC's multi-year effort to contribute directly to university-based research capacities by investing in ICT infrastructure in Africa, our survey of Africa editors, librarians, and faculty from five African nations reveals a similar interest in developing those capacities, despite numerous challenges, through the use of online publishing systems and OA publishing models, which hold some promise of increasing access to research published in Africa.

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Introduction

Increasing research investments in African countries has been identified as a key recommendation for achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals in Africa (MDG Africa Steering Group, 2008). In addition, investments in information and communications technologies (ICT) for both research and economic development have been endorsed by the Global Knowledge Partnership and the United Nations Group on the Information Society (Leye, 2009). As part of a global interest in increasing ICT infrastructure as a way to enhance social and economic participation, a strategy known as Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) has emerged in the international development community, particularly in the period since the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society (ICT4D Collective, 2009). While the ICT4D movement has identified several key areas for implementation, such as healthcare, ICT4D has also been explicitly linked to research development in African universities (Colle, 2005) and Open Access publishing (Fourati, 2009).

With many of the themes that now make up the ICT4D strategy in mind, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) created the Acacia Initiative in 1997 to "support research on ICTs that improve livelihood opportunities, enhance social service delivery, and empower citizens while building the capacity of African researchers and research networks."¹ Now, after a decade of funding and research

¹ Acacia Initiative, International Development Research Centre, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-5895-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

(1998-2008), the Acacia Initiative's projects have demonstrated both the potential benefits and challenges that the effective use of ICTs pose for African universities and scholarly communication. The importance of this initiative has only been increased with current moves to improve scholarly communication through efforts to increase Open Access to the scholarly literature and through locally developed Open Access journals, with both new titles and existing print journals that are moving online and considering making their online editions OA (Willinsky, 2006).

In this article we explore the particular contribution that ICT4D might make to Open Access publishing in the African context through the discussion of data gathered during a Canadian-funded IDRC project titled, "Strengthening Scholarly Publishing in Africa: Assessing the Potential of Online Systems" (Willinsky & Esseh, 2006). We consider the contribution and challenges posed by digital technologies for increasing and improving scholarly communication, as a means of analyzing local issues and topics, building research and review capacities, and establishing a more globally-based knowledge exchange (Carmichael & Honour, 2002). These new technologies and communications infrastructures clearly hold the potential to greatly increase access and knowledge sharing through such developments as open source (free) online publishing software (such as Open Journal Systems²) and Open Access publishing models (Willinsky, Fischman, & Metcalfe, forthcoming). Yet, there is no shortage of challenges to be addressed, as we will make clear, in realizing a greater part of that potential in the African context.

² Open Journal Systems, Public Knowledge Project (PKP), <http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/>. Note that Willinsky is founder and director of PKP, and Esseh is an active member of the project as well.

Following Willinsky's "access principle" (2006), we contend that "a commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it a responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit by it" (p. xii). We begin our discussion with a focus on several factors that influence the development of research capacity and academic productivity in sub-Saharan Africa. We then analyze the programmatic discourse of Canada's International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) African research initiatives. Our findings show that by adopting the digital development strategy known as ICT4D, the IDRC has embarked on a multi-year effort to invest in ICT infrastructure in Africa, much of it contributing directly to university-based research capacities and telecommunications, which is a necessary step in the ability to access the growing number of Open Access scholarly resources, as well as the development of Open Access journals in Africa. However, we note that some of the criticisms made of ICT4D apply directly to such efforts in the African university context, and we share a concern over the potential for increasing dependencies in this region.

R&D Meets ICT4D

The amount spent on research and development (R&D) has been a common method for describing a country's research capacities, often expressed in relation to the country's gross national product (GNP). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2007), most non-OECD countries spend about 0.25 percent to 0.1 percent of their GNP on research and development, but "R&D intensity in sub-Saharan Africa is

generally less than 0.3%, with the exception of South Africa, which invests 0.9%” (p. 3).³ However, due to the extent of international investments into Africa’s social and economic infrastructure, particularly in the area of information and communications technologies (ICT), developmental expenditures that contribute to expanding African research capacities are often not measured or reported by these R & D statistics.

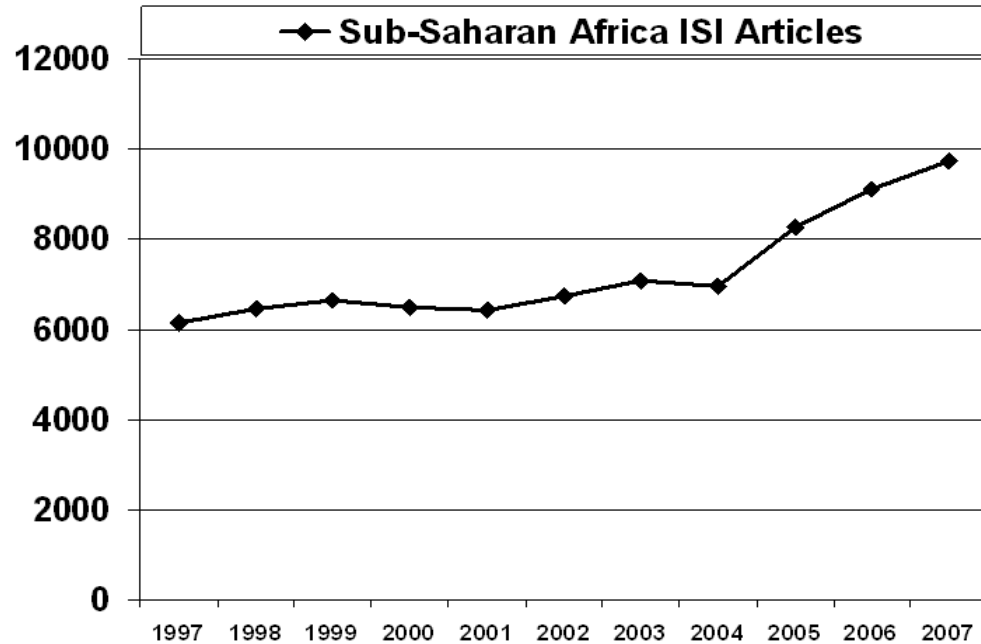
Thus, we resorted to another measure, one that deals directly with research output in scholarly articles. We reviewed the publication rates for sub-Saharan African countries from the period between 1997 and 2007, using the ISI Web of Science database, which includes the Science Citation Index Expanded, the Social Sciences Citation Index, and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index. While this index is a selected view of research output, given the careful screening of journal titles admitted⁴, we found that the number of articles indexed by the ISI written by authors employed in one of 45 sub-Saharan African countries rose from 6,144 in 1997 to 9,730, a change of 58 percent (see Figure 1).⁵

³ In contrast, Canada spends about 2.0% of its GNP on R & D, while the United States spends 2.7% (UNESCO, 2007).

⁴ For the ISI Web of Science selection process for the inclusion of science journals, see <http://science.thomsonreuters.com/mjl/selection/>.

⁵ At least one of the authors on each article was employed by an institution in the following sub-Saharan African Countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Zaire), Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Figure 1. Journal article publication rates by author's national affiliation for Sub-Saharan African countries, 1997-2007, as indexed by the ISI Web of Science.



Source: ISI Web of Science.

A study of African Journals Online (AJOL), the world's largest online database of African-published, peer-reviewed scholarly journals, reported that readership of this important body of African research is on the rise (INASP, 2006). Only a minority of these journals offer Open Access to their content, although that number is growing as AJOL extends its technical support for this approach.⁶ As well, AJOL's Document Delivery Statistics (DDS) provides a pre-internet version of Open Access by sending out copies of requested articles at no cost to those working in developing countries, and a small fee for others, and it shows a steady increase in African scholarship but also

⁶ A still unpublished survey of OJS users in Africa suggests that were slightly under a 100 Open Access titles within this group of journals (Edgar and Willinsky, 2009).

provides an indication of the global and continental interest in African scholarship. The DDS provides an important indicator of the actual use of published research from Africa, and also points to a rise in readership of African journals. The DDS data show a geographical distribution of document delivery requests fulfilled by AJOL (see Table 1).

Table 1. Geographical Distributions of Document Deliveries in AJOL.

Region	2003	2005	% Change
Africa (excluding South Africa and Nigeria)	302	1,426	372 %
South Africa and Nigeria	211	579	174 %
USA/Canada	63	152	141 %
Central & South America	4	53	1225 %
Europe (excluding UK)	14	76	443 %
UK	42	54	29 %
Australasia	12	20	67 %
Asia	46	635	1280 %
Total	694	2,995	332 %

Source: INASP, 2006, p. 9.

The percentage increase of document delivery from Africa to Asia was 1280% from 2003 to 2005, the highest regional increase. The percentage increase of document delivery to Canada and the US was 141% from the year 2003 to 2005. Central and South America also showed an increase in the number of African articles requested (1225%). On the other hand, the percentage increase in document delivery within Africa was just 290%, but the total number of AJOL-indexed articles requested within Africa remains the highest overall (2,002 documents in 2005).

The rise in African representation in the ISI Web of Science and the increases shown in document delivery of African scholarship are likely in part due to the growth of the number of African journals, especially those that are indexed online in AJOL, and in the expansion of Internet connectivity throughout the continent. Both in terms of

increasing communication, which in turn affects researcher collaboration, and in terms of the ability to utilize previously published research, access to the Internet has been a factor in building research capacity in developing nations (Dodania & LaPorteb, 2008; Wu, 2008). In addition, the rise in publication rates for sub-Saharan researchers over this ten-year period (1997-2007) has been influenced by particular research activities in South Africa, which has benefited from strategic, post-Apartheid university mergers (Jansen, 2002). South Africa has also increased its research spending over the last decade, with an annual average growth rate of 8.5 percent in its gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) between the years 1997 and 2004 (OECD, 2007).

However, several factors affect the ability of African university researchers to disseminate their scholarship, whether through traditional print journals or online publications. Open Access publishing models represent one promising direction for increasing the circulation of knowledge, although it also poses challenges for journals publishing in the developing world that involve not only infrastructure but sustainable economic models as well (Evans & Reimer, 2009). While increasing telecommunications connectivity contributes greatly to research capacities in African universities, there are important political, economic, and social conditions that must be considered before these technological development, as well as innovative approaches such as Open Access, can be successfully implemented and utilized. Key among these are the political landscape, the international donor community, infrastructure and human capital development, and university-industry relationships. These are briefly described in the following section.

Political Landscape

The political environment has greatly affected the direction of research policy and research capacity development in Africa. A few years after many African countries attained political independence, they were plagued with political instability. To date, the continent's political structures have been characterized by poor governance and limited capacity for the creation, sustainability and implementation of strategic policies (Mwiria, 2003). The frequency at which political leaders change results in a limited appreciation for the utility of long-term goal setting and policy analysis among politicians. This appears problematic if long-lasting, dictatorships are taken into consideration, e.g. in what used to be known as Zaire, or in Ivory Coast, etc., as most of them wrestle with or become preoccupied with security and length of their term in office. This point is well articulated by Wubneh (2003):

Policy analysis can pose a threat to insecure regimes or politicians and those with vested interest. Particularly, the elite benefiting from inefficiencies and mismanagement of resources would not like to rock the boat; they would like to maintain the status quo. Policy analyses or recommendations with a likelihood of reducing or eliminating the benefits accruing to these elite are likely to be rejected; hence the underlying reason for a weak demand for use of internal capacity in policy analysis and development management. (p. 173)

In one of the few empirical studies on this subject, Wubneh identified some of the major constraints to capacity building in Africa. His study showed that in addition a “non-conducive economic and political environment,” a “lack of funds” and “lack of necessary facilities such as library materials, computers, etc.” were major constraints to academic policy formulation. The study concludes that “political instability” can result in a

“constant erosion of capable and experienced senior officers at the policy formulation level” (p. 190).

Those areas in African currently suffering a dysfunctional political environment pose a special challenge for those committed to improving research practices in local universities. Universities in Africa are largely a post-independence phenomenon, precipitated and sustained by the dreams and demands of patriotism, nationalism and developmentalism (Adewolewa, 2001). Universities and research institutions were seen as agents of change—to convert the once reviled “native” subjects to respected national citizens, and transform their societies from underdeveloped to developed (Zezeza, 2002). For a period of time, the shared goal and aspiration of nationalist ideology by the government and scholars of higher education institutions created a symbiotic relationship between the state and the universities, which ensured extensive government funding (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). However, the deteriorating economic state of many African countries in the 70s and 80s, affected by local and global factors (such as currency fluctuations), paired with the daunting task of nation-building and the ensuing repression and starvation of higher education as well as undue interferences from the state, soon soured the relationship between the universities and the government (Adewolewa, 2001; Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Zezeza, 2002). The universities were considered by the state as having failed in their mission, perhaps because universities were seen as a source of potential opposition to military rule. Teferra and Altbach (2004) have noted, perhaps a little too harshly, that, “most governments in Africa are intolerant of dissent, criticism, nonconformity, free expression and academic freedom” (p. 40). As Altbach (2003) has described academic freedom as an essential component of “world-class” higher education

institutions, efforts to increase faculty autonomy and free expression should be included in research-capacity strategies. Indeed, academic freedom and a free society are important factors in the ability to sustain Open Access software development (Wyles, 2009) and a culture of autonomous research (Schulze, 2008), just as Open Access has been shown, in turn, to contribute to academic freedom (Willinsky, Murray, Kendal, & Palepu, 2007), as well as the growth of research readership (Hitchcock, 2009).

The International Donor Community

It is impossible to discuss African research policy and research capacity building without discussing the important role of the donors and international agencies, the first and foremost being the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, the counter-intuitive role played by the policies of donor organizations in the escalation of Africa's socio-economic crisis (and thus the ability to build a formidable research capacity), has not been well-documented. The World Bank's influence in compelling African leaders to accept conditionalities, as well as promote a neo-liberal agenda, and how that has affected not only policy formulation but also research capacity development in Africa, deserves greater attention (Munene & Otieno, 2008).

Since the 1980s the World Bank and the IMF have consistently compelled African countries to adopt and implement structural adjustment policies, designed and packaged by the WB and IMF. The first impact of WB policies was experienced through the implementation by African governments in the 1980s of what is known as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), coordinated with IMF. This program included the removal of subsidies to student education, the introduction of cost-sharing measures in higher education (including user fees), the privatization and diversification of the higher

education system, and currency devaluation. The educational reform by the WB/IMF insists that Africa should promote primary and vocational training because Africa “lacks both intellectual and technological capacity to sustain higher education” (Federici, Caffentzis, & Alidou, 2000, p. 39). Perhaps, most damningly, in terms of donor investment, WB had argued, in effect, that “higher education in Africa was a luxury ... and that most African countries were better off closing universities at home and training overseas” (Brock-Utne 2003, p. 8). Only since the turn of the century has the WB begun to get behind what it now calls “knowledge societies,” placing greater emphasis on higher education around themes of “knowledge sharing” as part of its direction for future support (World Bank, 2002, p. 107).

Infrastructure and Human Capital Investments

The implementation of SAP led to the reduction of expenditure on education by 26 percent; enrolment rates declined, and books from primers to biology textbooks became scarce commodities (Federici, Caffentzis, & Alidou, 2000). Life on university campuses across the region was marked by overcrowded classrooms, collapsing and dilapidated buildings, a shortage of current journals and books at libraries, lack of educational supplies and failing water and electricity. University faculty lived and worked in similar conditions with below subsistence wages.

Another of the WB policies, which proved counterproductive to research capacity development in the region, was the program for human capital development overseas (Brock-Utne 2003; Thulstrup, 1994). This approach has had a negative impact on human capital development efforts of many countries in Africa. Despite the good intentions of the overseas institutions offering training to Africans, the usefulness of the acquired

knowledge to the local research and innovation systems was sometimes a mismatch. Often the graduate's overseas research program has no connection with the issues of higher priority in the developing country. Upon returning, the scholars soon realize that they have become square pegs trying to fit into round holes. They are unable to use the training they received, because it lacks relevance in their home country. When disillusionment sets in because of lack of intellectual stimulation in their field of specialization, they often return to the industrialized countries where they can be more useful. Brock-Utne (2003) lamented that "the brain drain from Africa will continue, and the need for expatriates will increase [even] when institutions of higher learning are financially starved" (p. 9).

University-Industry Relationships

The link (or lack thereof) between the universities, government and industry in Africa is a concern to many writers and policy makers (Boersma, Reinecke, & Gibbons, 2008). Most governments and policy makers in Africa have treated research, particularly that coming from the university, as an "esoteric enterprise whose real value in terms of addressing the critical and urgent problems that confront society, is not easily recognizable and appreciated" (Benneh, 2002, p. 249).

In many sub-Saharan African countries, the linkage between research and national economic development activity has been ineffective. Consequently, traditional policy models for socio-economic development have de-emphasized research capacity as the principal engine of economic growth. However, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) provide an opportunity for partnerships between African universities and the private sector in the area of information and communication

technology (ICT). Goal 8 of the MDG is “Develop a global partnership for development,” under which Target 8.F is to, “in cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies” (MDG Africa Steering Group, 2008, p. 29). The recommendation points to an area within the MDG that can benefit both research capacity efforts and scholarly publishing in sub-Saharan Africa, with obvious implications for the role that Open Access initiatives might play in supporting this increased capacity. The next section describes some of these efforts, which have been part of a multi-year international development strategy.

Canada, ICT4D and Scholarly Publishing in Africa

Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the African academic research community have begun a partnership through the promotion of ICT4D. This strategy ties academic research and knowledge dissemination to a global policy agenda (e.g., the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals stated above) that is intended to promote international development through North-South collaboration.

IDRC in Africa

In 1970, the IDRC was created by the Canadian government “to help developing countries use science and technology to find practical, long-term solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems they face.”⁷ During a time when support for higher education was flagging, as reviewed above, the IDRC’s mandate was to foster research activities in developing countries by funding in-country researchers and scientific infrastructure, and through cross-border collaborations with Canadian scientists

⁷ International Development Research Centre, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-8513-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

and scholars. Unlike the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the IDRC was not intended to operate as a relief agency or aid organization. Rather, the IDRC was designed to build scientific and technical capacities in developing nations through long-term and locally-based projects aimed at training indigenous researchers, constructing information and telecommunications networks, and fostering evidence-based local problematization met by local solutions. This “empowerment through knowledge” strategy is continued in the current programs of IDRC.

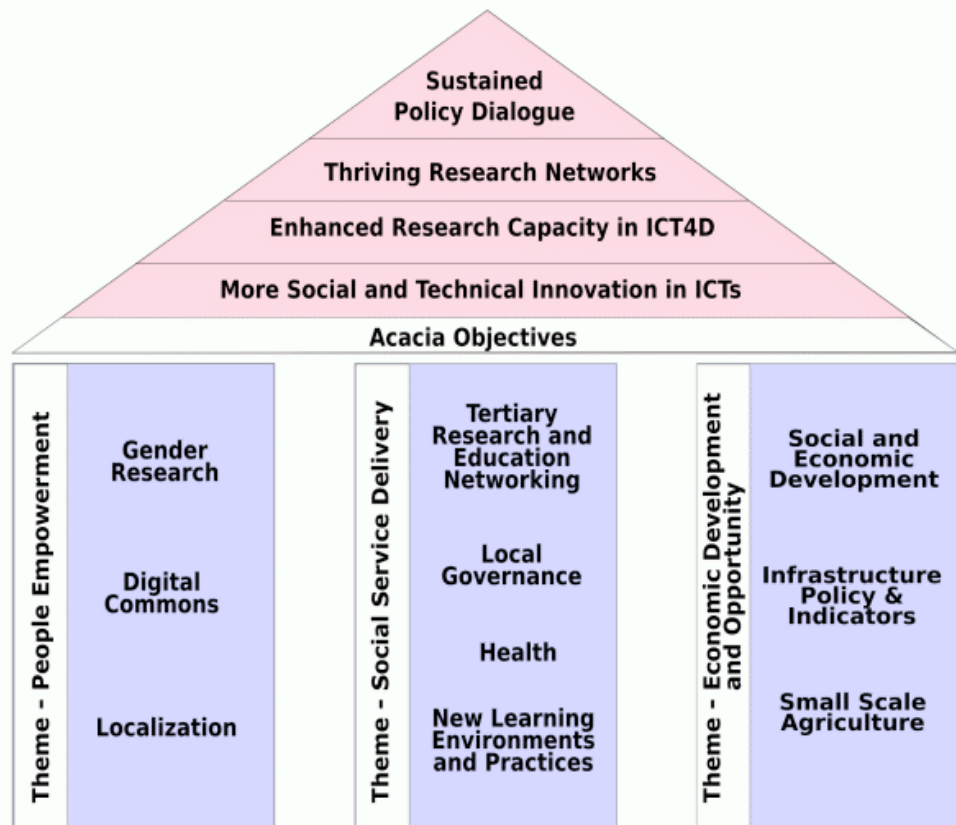
Since the mid-1970s, IDRC has had regional offices in Africa. While the agency continues to support research and development in the areas of health, economics, and environmental resource management, over the years it became evident that knowledge dissemination and communication were central to all of the initiatives that IDRC supported in Africa. Thus, in 1997, the Acacia Initiative was created to direct funding toward information and communications technology (ICT) capacity-building, information policy development, and knowledge dissemination.

Acacia Initiative Goals and Higher Education

Our analysis of the IDRC mission and goals for the Acacia Initiative shows that higher education holds a central position within the research themes of the program, both in terms of the stated objectives and also in the overall development framework utilized. The Initiative has three central themes: people empowerment, social service delivery, and economic development/opportunity. Open Access publishing models, as well as other aspects of ICT and scholarly communications, are included in the “Digital Commons” under the first theme “People Empowerment.” Higher education is explicitly mentioned

within the second theme, “Social Service Delivery” as “Tertiary Research and Education Networking” (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Themes, Research Networks, and Objectives



Note: From “*Acacia Prospectus, 2006-2011*,” by International Development Research Centre, 2006. Ottawa: IDRC Program and Partnership Branch. Copyright 2006 by the IDRC.

The Acacia Initiative’s *Prospectus* for 2006-2011 describes its emphasis on assisting higher education in Africa develop intellectual capital:

Improving research and education Internet infrastructure for tertiary institutions in Africa is therefore a necessary condition for gaining an equal footing with their

counterparts around the world. It would help to create an environment that keeps African scholars home and attracts those from the North. It would help African universities fulfill their role as nurturers of the intellectual capital needed to address Africa's development challenges. (2006, pp. 16-17)

The Acacia program's *Prospectus* describes a technological solution for building African research capacity, but it does not address the effect of IT on African research culture. In other words, the Acacia Initiative documents refer to building research networks, both scholarly and technological, but the specific focus of the ICT4D strategy for higher education is on the digital more often than the social. In many ways, the intellectual work of African researchers and the means of circulating that knowledge, is overshadowed by the development of an externally-financed technological infrastructure.

Acacia Initiative's Funded Projects

In the period between 1998 and 2005, the Acacia Initiative funded 128 projects. In the Digital Commons theme, 13 projects were funded, and under the Tertiary Research and Education Networking theme, five projects were funded. While these projects represent only 14 percent of the total funded by the Acacia Initiative, the role of higher education in the IDRC's development strategy is apparent, as shown in the IDRC's description of the tertiary education projects:

Improving research and education Internet infrastructure for tertiary institutions in Africa is a necessary condition for gaining an equal footing with their counterparts around the world. A solid information and communication infrastructure — that includes bandwidth comparable to that of Northern universities — could enhance the capacity of African universities to draw and

retain its scholars. Notwithstanding the importance of stable political and economic contexts in African countries, improved ICTs and increased bandwidth to African universities could become more attractive places for Northern researchers and educators as well, reversing the flow of intellectual capital out of African universities and deepening the exchange of knowledge between North and South. (http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-127999-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

The connections between the so-called “global north” and the “global south” (Rigg, 2007) are made explicit in this description, although Canada is not identified as by name as part of the North. Indeed the North/South binary may not be completely fixed, as evidenced by the rapid expansion of research capacities in South Africa noted above. As Kleine and Unwin remind us, “ICTs can be used to reinforce the position of those in power, be they individuals, companies or countries, by they can also be used to subvert that power” (2009, p. 1060-1061).

ICT4D has increased the flow of research and scholarship from the North to the South and has served as a first step in improving the global exchange of knowledge. If left at that, with no development of local scholarly publishing capacities through local journals, the strategy of ICT4D would have the unintended consequence of reinforcing existing power inequities among knowledge societies. Altbach is among those who notes the parallels between the global aspects of science and the larger inequities of globalization:

The paradox of global science is similar to globalization in general.

Globalization—through information technology, better communications, the worldwide circulation of highly trained personnel, and other factors—permits

everyone to participate in the global marketplace of science, scholarship, and ideas. At the same time, globalization subjects all the participants to the pressures of an unequal global knowledge system dominated by the wealthy universities, and imposes the norms and values of those institutions on everyone. (2009, p. 21)

Efforts have been made to increase the distribution of locally-situated knowledge to the broader academic community through Open Access initiatives. Programs such as HINARI, AGORA and OARE are providing free online access to thousands of journals in life sciences, agriculture, and environmental research, respectively to qualifying countries (Long, 2006). The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) has negotiated highly reduced subscription rates for electronic access to a much wider range of journals for research libraries in the South.⁸ Once this increased access to the published literature has been made possible – albeit limited by infrastructure weaknesses that include periodic power outages, limited bandwidth availability, and a shortage of adequate computers (see for example Villafuerte-Gálvez, Curioso, & Gayoso, 2007) – the prospects of being able to draw from and build upon this research, with a focus on areas of local interest and need, have been greatly increased. A critical part of this next stage, which does not so much subvert existing power structures, as Kleine and Unwin (2009) suggest, but create greater balance, is the development of scholarly communication principally through journal publishing on the African continent (Teferra, 2004). The next section describes one such project in attempting to understand

⁸ INASP's Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information, <http://www.inasp.info/file/d823e4728f59bedea7b975aba08e66cd/perii-library-development.html>

the current state of journal publishing and the potential for change in an “exchange of knowledge between North and South,” per the IDRC directive.

Examining Scholarly Publishing in Africa

Providing a specific instance of the IDRC policy in action and North-South collaboration, the second part of our paper describes a research and development study funded by the Acacia Initiative, which focuses on scholarly publishing in Africa using ICT. The IDRC award was carried out by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), which is a collaboration between two Canadian universities and one U.S. university. The project allowed Samuel Smith Esseh, one of the authors of this paper, to conduct a study assessing the potential of online publishing systems for African scholarly publishing. The goal was to both inform editors, librarians and faculty members about the potential of these online systems, based on the PKP’s freely available open source software, Open Journal Systems (OJS), which is designed to manage and publish established and new journals online. The software reduces publishing costs and is also intended to assist journals in publishing online, as well as in print, and to make Open Access publishing a viable option for journals. At this point, OJS is being used by approximately 4,500 journals around the world, including close to 400 in Africa, through the African Journals Online (AJOL) program, which utilizes the software, although as noted above most journals are not using the software to provide Open Access. Still, the vast majority of journals using this software do make their content freely available, raising questions about the viability and advantages of African journals going Open Access, as part of their online publishing strategy going forward, with a small number of African journals beginning to take this approach.

The IDRC-funded study included a series of eight workshops held in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda from 2005 to 2007. The workshops were attended by journal editors and staff, potential journal editors, librarians and library IT personnel, university IT administrators and researchers, faculty and postgraduate students, from universities, university colleges and research institutions across the continent. Although the workshops were coordinated in eight universities, the workshops were organized in such a way that universities and research institutions within traveling distance of the host institutions were all invited to participate in the workshops. In total, 312 representatives from over 32 universities and 25 research institutions participated in the workshops.

Participants were introduced to online strategies for scholarly journal management and publishing, which included a practical demonstration of how the free software (OJS) can be used to reduce costs and improve the circulation of journal content through various models of Open Access, with an eye to ensuring a journal's economic sustainability while increasing access to knowledge. The workshops provided participants with the opportunity to critically debate and review a series of the current challenges facing scholarly publishing, with a focus on publishing budgets, technical requirements, editorial and peer review processes, authorship and readership benefits, as they relate to Open Access and the current AJOL document delivery service, based on online access to journals' table of contents and abstracts. Finally participants were asked to complete one of four survey questionnaires, specifically designed for editors, librarians, faculty, and IT personnel, on current publishing practices in Africa.

Results from the study indicated that although online publishing is gradually

taking hold in Africa, Open Access publishing has not been fully embraced as the way to proceed with online publishing. Of the editors who answered the question on the mode of journal publishing they employed, 9% stated that their journals offered immediate Open Access, while 7% offered delayed Open Access, and 84% were subscription-based journals (Table 2).

Table 2. Mode of Journal Publishing ($N=77$).

Mode of Publication	No. of responses	Percentage responses
Open Access	7	9%
Delayed Open Access	5	7%
Subscriptions	65	84%
Total	77	100%

While there is no accurate count world wide of what percentage of journals are Open Access, one recent measure placed the annual scholarly output at 20% from both Open Access journals and authors self-archiving work published in subscription journals (Björk, Roos, & Lauri, 2008). This suggests that the African journals in this sample are not so far out of line with the degree of global embrace of Open Access.

What the workshops also made clear is that while it was recognized that Open Access publishing may well offer many benefits to developing economies, many journals in Africa are reluctant to fully embrace this new mode of publishing because of the challenges that they face – technological, ideological, economic, regulatory and policy challenges. In addition, human resource development factors in terms of the training and experience in working online, as well as questions of quality assurance when journals

appear only online, are perceived to be barriers to moving entirely online production and publication in Africa, which is itself a necessary first step for then considering Open Access publishing models.

However, workshop participants were also very clear in their support for moving toward an online publishing approach. They saw it was clearly a better alternative to print when it comes to scholarly publishing in today's world. By the same token, the librarians were one in their opinion that online publishing is a better alternative to print publishing and the libraries in Africa are in a better position to support online publishing than before. A majority of IT administrators in this study indicated that, considering the progress that African universities have made in the development of IT infrastructure within the past five years, these institutions can make a big leap in knowledge production if they embrace online publishing. The journals editors, faculty and students agreed that online publishing is the way forward to scientific publishing in Africa. They believe that Africa can catch up with the rest of the world, if Africa takes advantage of what the Internet offers. On the other hand, university administrators were more sceptical about online publishing, as they felt it had not yet established, in the African context, a strong reputation of quality scholarly work, just as they were concerned that it had yet to establish a substantial record of research productivity in this context.

It is important to point out that in spite of the overwhelming agreement among participants that online publishing holds a key to Africa scholarship, there remains some trepidation among participants about the future of online publishing. The concerns stem from the fact that these new technologies and initiatives are coming from the North, and that this is another opportunity for the North to exploit African intellectual property. This

has the effect of tempering the interest in Open Access models, even as the interest in building up a readership among the editors was also strongly felt. This spoke to the need to demonstrate in readily available forms, and as part of any program of support for scholarly communication, the ways in which Open Access is contributing to a global exchange on more equitable grounds, providing some levelling of the “access” playing field.

A second, closely related source of anxiety relates to uncertainties about the sustainability of the economic model for the one channel of online publishing that seems to hold the most promise for ensuring that African research and scholarship is widely shared with the world, namely Open Access. One way to characterize the question that underwrote the workshops is to ask whether OA is a model that will allow African scholars to assert their financial and intellectual autonomy over the publishing system without continuing to depend on donor agencies for survival? It was made clear that open source software for scholarly publishing, as part of a global community initiative, only one piece of the puzzle.

The larger questions revolves around the legacy of the centre-periphery dichotomy (Salager-Meyer, 2008) in the research community, which is being addressed, in part, by the growth in local journals with global access. By the same token, Open Access and online publishing in the global North is permitting greater involvement of authors and editors throughout the world to a greater extent than previously possible. A complicating factor for African-centric knowledge production is that many African scholars have left their countries to find academic training and positions in places like the

UK and the United States, as noted above. The centre-periphery dichotomy is thus less of a binary than a blended reality.

For example, 2009 saw the launch of *Critical African Studies*, a journal whose “editorial office,” although virtual, is hosted by the Centre of African Studies (CAS) at the University of Edinburgh. The Open Access model that the journal employs could permit the involvement of a great number of African and Africanist scholars throughout the world who can readily access the journal’s content without subscriptions, as well as participate as editors, reviewers, and other roles because of the journal’s completely online operation through the use of OJS software. However, the editorial team’s geographic location in the UK may pose world-view challenges to the world-wide integration of African scholarship in the journal, particularly given the post-colonial political economy of African nations, which is interestingly an area that the journal notes as part of its scope (Nugent, 2009). While Open Access can permit a greater level of global exchange within the scholarly arena, editorial practices and networks for peer review are not necessarily altered by the technology. Indeed, at times technologies are embedded within the social, political, and economic constructs of the designer more than the user (Metcalf, 2006).

Still, it needs to be noted that the *South African Medical Journal*, for example, continues to publish a print version available by subscription, while making its entire contents, dating back to 1884, available online through an Open Access model on their own website and African Journals Online. And the *KCA Journal of Business Management* was launched in 2008 by KCA University in Nairobi as an Open Access journal, using open source software to set up, manage, and publish the journal entirely

within a digital environment, with associate editors from a number of institutions across Kenya, and editorial advisory board members from Kenya, Australia, and the United States.

Nonetheless, and in spite of the many advantages that online journal publishing portends for Africans, there remains great trepidation about the future of Open Access publishing models as both a promising and uncertain way forward. Opportunities to learn about, discuss and assess developments in these new technologies, such as was afforded by this IDRC-funded study, are a critical to the African advancement of scholarly communication on a regional, continental, and global basis.

Conclusion

Although ICT4D strategies, such as those seen with Canada's IDRC, have the potential to further African dependence on world systems and funding (particularly for IT infrastructure), the potential also exists for greater participation in global knowledge production from within African higher education. While online journals and Open Access publishing models rely upon information technology and telecommunications capacities, human networking is also a key component in extending the global scale of this knowledge exchange. International collaboration and cooperation for the development of technical skills, research collaborations, and social norms relating to scholarly publishing must also be developed for advancing Open Access models of publishing and archiving that hold great promise for extending African participation in this ideal of a global knowledge society. Toward this end, higher education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa and their research capacities are necessarily focused on both global and regional resources and influences (Lebeau, 2008).

This dual orientation is not unique to Africa, but is found within higher education systems elsewhere, albeit at different levels of agency and influence within the global environment (Marginson, 2008, 2009). Its influence is certainly being played out with current global initiatives underway at increasing access to research and scholarship. The Open Access model may represent, at once, a universal publishing ideal and a regional challenge. This challenging ideal is perhaps best addressed through ongoing dialogue, innovative strategies and experiments, and a shared commitment to the value of sharing what we are learning as widely and fully as possible.

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