

OPEN ACCESS, AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

- *Virtual Day on Open Access - December 15th, 2015*
- Ubuntunet Alliance

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Dr Pascal Hoba and Tiwonge Banda, UbuntuNet Alliance
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Outline

- What's Open Access?
- Challenges and Opportunities for Africa
- African context of OA
- Obstacles of African scholarly publication
- Relevance of OA for Africa
- Impediments of OA in Africa
- OA initiatives in Africa - Conclusion

What is OA

Captured succinctly below in the Budapest Open Access Initiative definition:

“By Open Access to literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet permitting users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited”

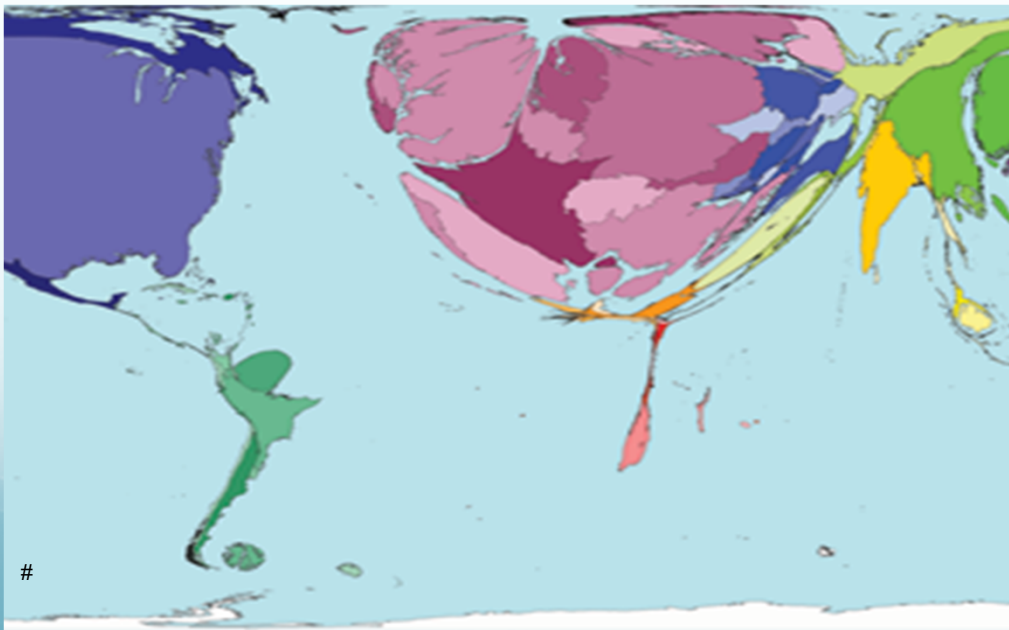
www.soros.org/openaccess/

Is Africa taking full benefit of OA?

- No
- But things are changing...

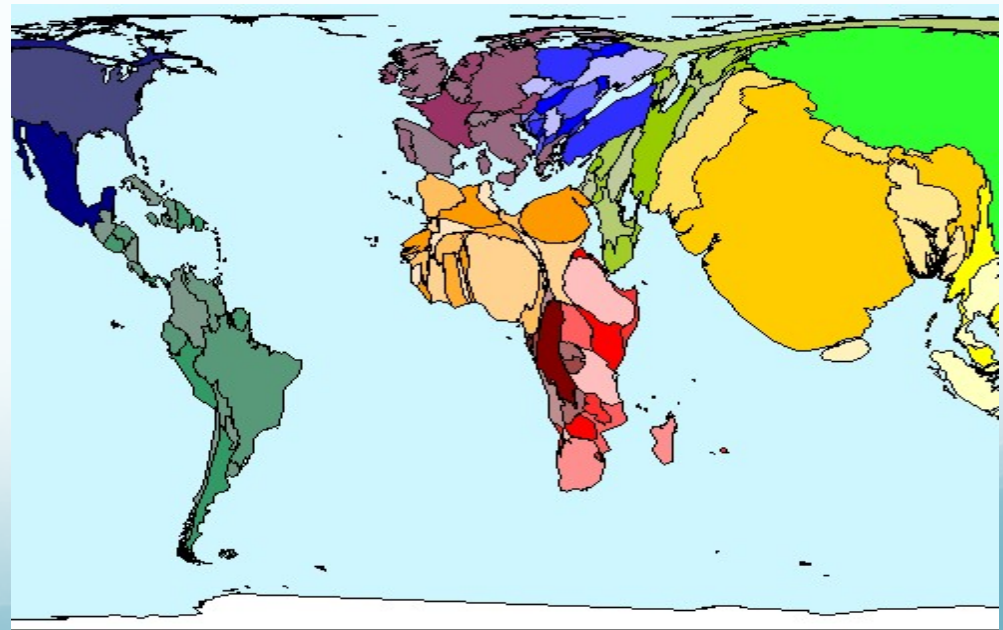
African Scientific contribution still very low

Territory size shows the proportion of all scientific papers published in 2001 written by authors living there.
Source: <http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=205>



Population mondiale en 2001

Source: <http://www.worldmapper.org/imagemap2.html>



OA: new development in Africa

- - Internet development
- - Mobile technologies and use of Social media
- - Reduction of Bandwidth cost
- - More presence of NRENs
- - More institution repositories
- - More and more local content

What is OA ...African context

- Access to scholarly & research material, usually digital.
- Free online access to published & peer-reviewed journal articles thru the internet.
- Open Access is provided when a researcher
 - publishes an article in an Open Access journal.
 - places a copy of his article or research in an Open Access Institutional repositories (IR).
- Consists of peer reviewed journal articles and conference papers, technical reports, theses, working papers.

Obstacles for Access to Traditional Scholarly Publications in Africa...

- **Avalanche of publications so librarians don't know which one to subscribe to.**
- **Even when they know, no storage space most of African universities.**
- **High cost of journal subscription and dwindling library budgets.**
- **Most scholarly journals are published overseas and problem of foreign exchange.**
- **Lack of hardware and internet connectivity (good improvement now)**
- **Author-pay's model discourages researchers from publishing in OA.**

Obstacle for African academic Libraries

- Libraries gain electronic access from large publishers in the form of bundled journals & licenses
- Problem?
 - Contracts are inflexible and vary
 - Libraries are struggling with price increases
 - Libraries are paying different prices for same subscriptions
- Result : Academic Libraries have some problem with Sustainability of contracts...

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Opportunities with Open Access

- Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. What makes it possible is the internet and the consent of the author or copyright- holder.
- It is compatible with peer-review
- Open Access literature is not free to produce and the business models for paying the bills depend on how OA is delivered...

Relevance of Open Access to Africa...

African researchers depend on free information sources from the north because of poor library budgets, few world acclaimed scholarly journals, and limited research funding in Africa.

Open Access publishing in Africa will:

- fill gaps in non-subscriptions
 - provide full text articles
 - allow immediate dissemination and access for all to freely use
 - allow for long term access to scholarly materials
 - Assist faculty and researchers to increase their impact and visibility in the world.
 - allow for long term access to scholarly materials.
 - Improve the research profile of the institution.
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- When research results are put in the public domain discussions are enabled to bring about further innovation.

Relevance of Open Access to Africa...

Open Access publishing in Africa will...

- enable small libraries and those with small budgets to have access to greater amount of scholarly materials.
- enable research carried out in the south to be made visible globally, and for collaboration.
- bridge the digital divide to bring about development and innovation.
- become a means of making sure that researchers working in Africa are aware of what other researchers in Africa and other parts of the world are doing.

Impediments to OA in Africa

- OA concept still not widely known and its ideals not greatly accepted in Africa.
- Most of those who know are skeptical about its sustainability.
- Negative attitude of 'old brigade' towards computers and established status quo.

What OA should do for Africa...

- African Institutions developing their own Open Source Software for their OA journals having in mind their indigenous languages and materials.
- There should be Strong economic support for OA from Universities and funding agencies will be present.
- There should be no personal financial costs to authors in order to get published.
- OA should fill scholarly journal gaps in libraries.
- Should foster Strong academic links (south-south and south –north) between researchers.
- Offer African scholars a fast and easy means for making African research results available to the world.
- Institutions will accept OA articles as peer-reviewed and of high quality and give them same weight as hard copy subscriptions for Faculty career progression purposes.

Some Big African OA Initiatives

- African Journals Online - 1998

www.ajol.info/

- African Digital Library - 1999
www.africaeducation.org/adl/

- Database of African Theses and Dissertations – 2003

www.aau.org/datad

- Africa's Open Knowledge Network - 2003
- African Online Digital Library

www.aodl.org/

Conclusion

- Readership of African research is reduced due to excessively expensive online subscriptions
- Open Access provides a solution to make research articles freely accessible online
- “OA is a vital means of dissemination of information which is crucial for national development and in achieving MDGs, given the crucial role that information plays in achieving social, economic, cultural and political development.”
Professor Frank Youngman, DVC, University of Botswana
- BUT, we need the buy-in of everybody on the continent to change the face of African research

END

Thank you
ceo@ubuntunet.net
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