

**Editorial****The problems of publishing scientific journals in the developing countries****Prof. Olu J. B. Osinowo, Editor-In-Chief**

In the developing countries, several problems are encountered in the attempt to disseminate scientific information and results of research include: poor funding, poor research facilities that do not match what is available in the developed parts of the world, poor journal impact, poor availability and use of e-facilities, inadequate editorial services, low subscription by individuals and libraries, irregular publications, lack of indexing facilities in the developing countries and the “publish or perish” culture in the research centres and institutions of higher learning in the developing countries. Additional to the above problems should be added the dearth of research funding in many developing countries<sup>1</sup>. This in itself has impacted on research output and quality. Most of the journals published in the developing countries suffer from low journal impact as assessed internationally.

In Nigeria, the phenomenal growth of higher institutions has continued to fuel the need for more scientific journals and the competitions for scarce research funding and publication of poorly funded journals that are irregular and of poor quality leading to low journal impact.

no sooner had research libraries in Africa and other parts of the developing world begun to build modest journal collections in the hundreds, and even thousands, of titles during the 1960s and 1970s, then those collections were decimated by subscription-price increases, currency fluctuations, and local economic troubles. Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, for example, lost 70 percent of its 1,200 subscriptions in the late 1980s<sup>2</sup>.

According to Esseh and Willinsky<sup>3</sup> after all that has gone into improving research library access to online publications in Africa, and now that access to research, internet bandwidth and librarian technical skills are improving, the next logical step in this strategy is to direct these developments

toward the support of local scholarly publishing initiatives that will increase access to African research and advance local research capacities. These authors analysed (1) the state of scholarly publishing among journals in 6-8 regions of Africa, with regard to editorial structures, economics, technologies (print and Internet), and incentives, (2) levels of support for online access to scholarly materials, both African and global, and the (3) the feasibility of research libraries or other academic centers establishing Online Scholarly Publishing Sites (OSPS) to host and support existing and new academic journals through the use of PKP's Open Journal Systems (OJS), an open source journal management and publishing system.

The OSPS model proposed by Esseh and Willinsky<sup>3</sup> is based on the IBICT SEER program in Brazil, which supports the online management and publishing of 63 Brazilian journals using OJS. One source of potential support and training for the sustainability of the OSPS model comes from Smith Esseh's work in the Publishing Studies program at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana<sup>3</sup>.

The potential benefits of the Online Scholarly Publishing Sites (OSPS) Model include:

*Immediate*

- Library-based OSPS is able to manage and publish multiple journals.
- Integrates and indexes African content across institutional repositories and journals.
- Creates a well-documented implementation model for university libraries.
- Develops OSPS workshop materials for extending African roll-out.

*Long Term*

- Development of a training and support center for scholarly publishing studies.
- Increased African and global access to (and indexing of) African research.
- Increased African participation in scholarly publishing, reviewing, and editing.

- Reduced and sustainable publishing costs for journal publishing in Africa.
- Greater global knowledge exchange and fostering of knowledge economies.

Now that African universities have achieved far greater access to scholarly literature through increases in Internet access and open access initiatives, there have been expressions of concern over what Y. Z. Ya'u<sup>4</sup>, Executive, Director of the Computer Literacy Project (CLP) Nigeria, describes as “the resurgence of imperialism, this time represented by knowledge dependence”<sup>4</sup>. Others, such as Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis<sup>5</sup> have addressed an undermining of “the production and distribution of knowledge in Africa,” making “it increasingly difficult for African intellectuals and professionals to carry on their work and participate in the global exchange of ideas”<sup>5,6</sup>.

According to Iya<sup>7</sup>, journals should make space for advertisements in order to boost the financial base of their publication. Advertisements could be for seminars, workshops conferences, newly-published books and journals, among others<sup>7</sup>. However, with the depressed and underperforming mono-economy in Nigeria, the escalating foreign exchange rate and the number of journals competing for dwindling advertisement volume, most journals in Nigeria now transfer the cost of journal production to the authors. This can sometimes be in excess of N30,000 (Thirty thousand Naira). The need for funding may actually lead to the publication of materials that otherwise would not merit publication.

The introduction of the funding of two journals per university by the Tertiary Educational Trust Fund (TETF) has ameliorated the problem of journal funding in Universities. However, a wide gap exists between, the need and the funds that the TETF can provide. There are also more scholarly journals being published by societies, individuals and associations outside those funded by the TETF. The involvement of TETF in the funding of scholarly journals would, hopefully, improve the regularity of publication, quality of scholarly papers and non-dependence on advertisements and finally improve the journal impact level. In this vein, we are optimistic that this journal (J. Appl. Sc) would not experience

any of the problems discussed above.

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