

Open Access Dialogues

Report on the global electronic debates facilitated by Eve Gray and Kelsey Wiens, in partnership with The African Commons Project (South Africa) and the Centre for Internet and Society (India), between November 2012 and March 2013, through support from the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, and hosted at WSIS Knowledge Communities Discussion Forum.

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A. WSIS Knowledge Communities dialogue participation

The online debates took place on the WSIS Knowledge Communities discussion forum between November 2012 and March 2013. Excluding the core team members, there were a total of 19 additional 'voices' on the WSIS platform. The debates were rich and insightful. Although aimed at Indian and South African participants, the dialogues were totally open, which means that no one was excluded and comments were visible to the general website visitors (although participants had to register on the platform in order to contribute to the discussion).

It was striking that there were contributions from senior research scholars, as well as some young emerging researchers who were relatively new to Open Access discussions. The debate therefore succeeded in harnessing the insights of the different levels of the higher education system.

Opinions and suggestions have been captured in sections B and C, which separate out the key aspects from the Indian and South African perspectives.

B. Key strategic issues emerging from Indian participants

1. Lacking OA awareness, even among scholarly communities

Many, if not all, commentators emphasised the unfortunate lack of awareness about the notion and possibilities of Open Access across India, including among the scholarly and/or higher education related communities. Often the notion of Open Access is quite familiar, especially among scholars, but without a clear understanding of its benefits and how to make one's scholarly works openly accessible.

2. Uneven geography of OA success stories

The above point must be read along with strong success stories emerging from Indian OA journals, mostly from science disciplines. A recent study <<http://www.currentscience.ac.in/Volumes/103/07/0757.pdf>> reveals that 970 Indian OA journals are included in the 'Journals Citation Report 2011' (science), and the Impact Factors of these journals are on the rise. This indicates towards a very uneven geography of OA awareness and adoption in India, with the OA agenda being pursued successfully by specific scholarly communities but not translating into widespread support across the higher academia landscape.

3. Global businesses of scholarly works and complicity of Indian researchers

The role of global businesses of scholarly works in impeding the Open Access agenda in India was mentioned by most of the commentators. The publication, and especially distribution, of publicly funded research is dominated by global publication houses. Additionally, the complicity of Indian researchers in reinforcing the culture of exclusive and 'prestigious' journals published by global publishers is also well understood and criticised.

4. Citation Indexes as necessary evil

The discussants argued against an over-emphasis on Impact Factors in judging a quality and success of journals, especially for IF being biased against new journals, and thus against newly started OA journals. At the same time, measurement of citations remains a crucial way of understanding readership and impact of scholarly works. There was a strong recommendation of article-level metrics as opposed to journal-level ones. Studies were suggested to argue that article-level impact increases with OA journals. Another concern is bibliographic malpractices, including biases against citing works from Indian (or, developing world) scholars and against citing works published in non-'prestigious' journals.

5. Open Access must not only be about access to journals

A strongly expressed opinion was that the OA agenda must move beyond journal publications. The journal-centric approach emphasises the supply side of knowledge but fails to appreciate the demand of knowledge, especially in a country like India where primary and secondary education remain vital challenges. Further, even within higher academic circles, OA agenda must expand into other forms of scholarly works beyond journal essays, such as primary data and other research materials, especially since all such forms are also produced by public funds. Open Access to 'gray literature' (produced by private and non-profit research organisations) is also crucial, as much policy-making tends to be shaped by such works.

6. Open Access and the consumers of knowledge

The commentators emphasised the nature of OA to knowledge as a public good. The OA agenda must address the consumers of knowledge outside the university system, and especially across socio-economic classes. While Open University education and participation in MOOC-models of learning are on the rise in India, there is a threat that this digital-centric approach reinforced existing digital divides in access to knowledge.

B. Key strategic issues emerging from southern African participants

1. Beyond the Impact Factor - reconciling publication for prestige and communication for development impact

From the outset of the debate, South African participants identified as a central obstacle to effective research communication the extreme reliance in the region on journal articles as the preferred output and the ISI Impact Factor as the dominant measure for research success. Of particular concern was the effect this system has had; given its bias in favour of the research interests of the global North, in consigning developing country research to the periphery and undervaluing research that was of relevance to Africa.

This metrics-driven view of research excellence was also seen to be at odds with the need to achieve research impact on critical national and regional development challenges in the region, consigning to invisibility much of the research that was actually being produced.

As a policy issue, this has two strands:

- a call for an end to the dominance of the IF as the measure used for academic rewards and promotion and its replacement by article level metrics aligned with national and institutional strategic goals and values; and
- the need for a wider vision of open access, beyond journal articles, with the potential for publication through outlets that are local and relevant and which allow researchers the benefit of deciding where to publish rather than having this dictated by competitive rankings.

2. A wider vision of open access, beyond journals

In the context of this debate, there was general agreement that Open Access had to move beyond its limited focus on peer reviewed journals alone, to incorporate a wider range of outputs, aligned to user needs:

'We need a system whereby we embrace the ideal of open access by not only recognizing journal publishing, but also (and equally) recognizing the importance of publishing research in a format that most appropriately meets the information and knowledge needs of those who can use that research to improve society's development.'

Given the lack of resources in the region, it was seen to be an imperative for the research that is being produced to be disseminated effectively... For example, senior and more junior medical scholars expressed the need for the distribution of research information, particularly in the poor rural areas. With the focus almost exclusively on journals, they felt that not enough attention was being paid to the localization of information and the addressing of access problems.

3. Sustainability models, beyond commercial mechanisms of exclusion

There was a perception that Author Processing Charges as a sustainability model for OA and for hybrid OA models risked replicating the access barriers of the subscription journals, particularly with the high prices being charged by some journals. The fear was that there would be a continuation of the high profit pricing models of the commercial subscription journals:

'We end up with an unvirtuous cycle – those in the north with the resources are able to capture the bulk of research funding, are able to access information (whether Open Access or not), are able to publish their research more easily in Open Access journals (because their institutions can afford the article processing charges, or post publication Open Access fees in 'closed' journals) – and so their research is more widely circulated – no wonder the African research project is invisible to the world. It is a self-fulfilling cycle.'

This is an important issue and one that is creating a level of cynicism about OA, as yet another incarnation of commercial exploitation of scholarship that advantages the rich countries. Fee waivers were not necessarily seen as a solution to this dilemma: rather, the call was for more equitable and affordable ways of paying for OA publishing, to create a more democratic environment. There is a need, it was argued, to develop a sustainable business model that is functional in making knowledge circulate in ways that are useful to society, not to the profits of publishers.

4. Strengthening research systems and investing in scholarly communications

A further dimension was added from a UNESCO contribution to the debate: that from the African perspective these issues need to be linked to the structural problems in African research, of low investment in research, and a lack of serious implementation of reforms in higher education. The implication is that a broader vision is needed which involves deliberating not only on benefits of Open Access for Africa, but also how to ensure capacity for open research communication through a more wide-ranging and systematic approach to research capacitation.

A corollary to this point was the need for curriculum and training in OA, suggested by UNESCO, and the need for further advocacy and knowledge dissemination about OA, given the serious lack of awareness about OA and changing research communication models across the HE system in southern Africa, from government to senior administrators to young scholars.

5. The need for national policy and coherent institutional policy

The lack of a coherent policy framework for scholarly communication at regional, national, and institutional levels in the southern African region stood out in contrast with the Latin American input into the debate. A post from Brazil outlined the wide range of collaborative OA ventures in Latin America, from regional repositories to journal portals and institutional repositories. Latin America has a long tradition of cooperative regional information systems. In comparison, OA policy and implementation is patchy in southern Africa and there appears to be a lack of will to acknowledge the problem and tackle the issue.

D. Policy Suggestions

- 1 'Mainstreaming' the OA agenda: Instead of locating OA as a separate agenda, it will be useful to 'mainstream' it within larger development/research related funding initiatives by making OA publications of research outcomes a necessary grants condition .
- 2 OA as the entry point to a broader 'open' agenda: The OA agenda can build upon its existing institutional and governmental acceptance and implementation to promote a broader 'open' agenda, including open sharing of research data, open formats for and sharing of bibliographic data etc.
- 3 Moving the OA discussion and knowledge organisation beyond higher education communities: Addressing non-university circuits of learning, of both institutional (primary and secondary education) and non-institutional (informal learning groups around MOOC courses) varieties, is a crucial challenge for the OA agenda in the developing world. Another crucial community of potential OA supporters would be the non-governmental and non-profit organisations working in the field of education in particular, and development in general.
- 4 Removing policy biases against Open Access journals in academic administration: Combined global and local efforts remains important to reshape national academic administration policies to stop discrimination against OA publication of scholarly works, such as higher academic benefit for publication in closed 'prestigious' journals.
- 5 Encouraging and supporting scholarly communities (often with a disciplinary and/or thematic common ground) to undertake OA knowledge production: Promoting the OA agenda must also adopt a bottom-up strategy in the developing world, and this would require capacity and community building exercises involving local and global scholarly colleagues and enthusiasts gathered around thematic and/or disciplinary foci, as well as institutional and governmental recognition and support.

E. Complementary Twitter discussion analysis

1. 14 February Tweet up

An analysis of the twitter discussion finds that discussion and questions can be loosely grouped around 6 key themes including: (1) the necessity for a wider definition of OA; (2) the discussion beyond journals to include archives, museums, mobile and ebooks; (3) the discussion about OA business models; (4) the importance of communicating open access research; and (5) highlighting Brazil as a successful developing-world adopter of OA.

There were as many as 300 tweets posted during the course of the discussion.

Theme 1: Wider definition required for Open Access (OA)

- Definitions of OA are key.
- Is there an identifiable OA community?
- OA should not only be for journal articles.
- The BOAI's recommendations for next 10 years still focuses on journals.
- The question raised was if OA was beyond journals, how could this be organised: should the different OA disciplines or products be broken into chunks?
- A question was raised as to how open governance on a continuum could/should be successfully organised.

Theme 2: Discussion on OA beyond journals to include archives, museums, eBooks

- Digital repositories required in Africa.
- Archives, museums are still anxious about OA due to IP issues.
- Bungled digitisation processes have weakened the principle of OA.
- Archives have a global resonance in that the issues here are systemic all over the board, eg alternative metrics, peer review, cost, quality.
- Some eBook archives are talking about opening up their archives after an embargo period.

Theme 3: Open access publishing business models

- Is the lack of South-south specific OA business models the problem?
- Is the success of Northern OA based on business models or rather on engaged communities?
- It would be key to have an accessible list of viable business models for OA.
- There are several strategies available to combat 'pay to publish' (shared link: http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/OA_journal_business_models)
- What 'products' would be required for effective publishing beyond journals?
- Building networks around fragmented collections and domain-specific fields could result in the successful sharing of working business models.
- The question for the South is: who pays? This is the 'niggling problem' in the South.
- The South cannot go on channelling money into Elsevier and other big publishers with 35% profit margins.
- The monies (to big publishers) from developing countries would be better spent being channelled back into helping strengthen the region.
- We should get the basics right: OA should be free for authors and readers, then business can add value and charge for it.

Theme 4: The importance of communicating open access research

- Communicating research should be part of research funding.
- A good idea would be to make a grant renewal contingent on proof of having communicated the research.
- There is a need to identify what researchers' outputs really are, and what audiences they want to reach.

Theme 5: Brazil as a successful example of open access jurisdiction

- Brazil is currently the 2nd largest country to publish OA in the world.
- We can learn from Brazil how to fund scientific research properly.
- The reason for Brazil's success is a proactive, 'technocratic' government, which looked at how to develop the economy and acted.

Additional ideas and sub topics:

- scientific language, and the need to simplify this as a means of increasing access.
- open access support structures (people) should be institutionalised and/ or made more visible.
- open access for mobile in developing countries should be considered within the greater A2K debate.

2. 25 February tweet up

The discussion that took place on 25 February can be grouped around the following 5 key themes: (1) the discussion around the reasons for the existing status quo of academic and scholarly publishing; (2) the need to diversify OA outputs; (3) the need to demystify and strengthen OA in a developing-world context; (4) the discussion around researchers and their relationship with and potential impact on OA; and (5) the recent progress made internationally and locally towards adoption of OA as a standard.

There were over 230 tweets during this discussion.

Theme 1: Discussion around the scholarly knowledge status quo

- ISI reinforces the lack of incentive for developing country researchers to publish in OA outlets.
- All too often non-journal article outputs are dismissed as 'grey literature'. How do we reinvest value?
- Publications in journals result in healthy financial reward for the institution (university) thus incentivising them to publish in journals.
- The current situation is that along with citation indexes, the drive to find global academic audiences is another thing that drives publication in closed journals.
- As long as researchers are awarded primarily for journal articles and impact, the OA debate goes round in circles.

Theme 2: Diversifying OA outputs from journals

- There is a fixation of journal articles as the most desirable output.
- Need to look at richness of scholarly output in other formats such as OERs, student-developed materials, books, research reports, and policy briefs, also if we are to fulfill our development mission.
- OA should be viewed as a wide range of outputs that is collected, archived, curated, described with metadata, and is both discoverable and shareable.

Theme 3: Demystifying and strengthening OA in the developing world

- We should be actively advocating the benefits of OA across developing country stakeholders.
- Academic literacy and OA advocacy is key.
- Demystifying OA could be done by including OA sessions in workshops and spreading awareness around the usage resources such as Open Oasis.
- The way forward could be through developing and nurturing focussed knowledge-sharing networks and their OA initiatives.
- Change management is an important component given that OA forces significant change in how researchers think about scholarship.
- There is a need for professional development and new skills for librarians.
- Moving to OA should be seen as a long-term development that includes both librarians and other key institutional stakeholders, and should not be viewed as a short transition.
- It is important to have a senior-level institutional champion involved in an OA migration.
- APCs in the developing world need careful consideration, for example, fee waivers could affect local journals and not be sustainable.
- INASP info could be helpful to connect OA to big goals: university strategies and national research agendas.
- We need to mobilize our students, who we are losing because of journal-linked promotion policies.

Theme 4: Researchers and their relationship to, and possible impact on, OA

- Some researchers cannot afford the cost of OA that includes both a financial cost and reputation cost: earning the necessary research points.

- There is an unfounded fear by researchers that OA can lead to plagiarism.
- Academics prefer to publish in well-read journals.
- It is important for 'developing world' academia to be imagined beyond universities.
- The benefits of OA for researchers is that they want influence; they want what they do to make a difference.
- Researchers/ academics should see a wide readership which is made possible through OA as more important than the impact factor which is controlled by the journal system.
- The key 'penny dropping' moment for researchers around OA is when they see that their research is read more and the value is now personal.
- To change the mindset, the reward system would need to be changed.
- Require skills training to encourage reluctant researchers to share material via OA.

Theme 5: Recent progress that is beginning to recognise the benefit of OA knowledge

- In the United Kingdom's open access discussions, there is the suggestion that repositories should be turned into publishing sites with APCs.
- All UK research will be open from January 2014 if it is to comply with HEFCE findings in interim report.
- The United Kingdom is churning out OA policy and debate, but we in the developing world are standing still. There is, however, some resistance by UK researchers to OA rollout.
- The European Union commission launches open data portal with 5,585 datasets.
- The United States government is making federal-funded research feely accessible online.
- At the University of Cape Town, a policy is in place to providing administrative support to repository deposit and the supply of generous funding for Gold OA.

F. Social media usage analysis

1. Facebook

A total of 116 people 'liked' the Open Access Debates page, as of 1 March 2013. The most common age group was between 25-34 with gender bias towards female at 60% compared to male 40%.

The following countries and cities were reached via the page:

	COUNTRY
29	India
29	South Africa
8	United Kingdom
7	United States of America
3	Australia
2	Germany
2	Nigeria
1	Bangladesh
1	Indonesia
1	Ukraine

1	Romania
1	Italy
1	Netherlands
1	Tunisia
1	Belgium
1	Myanmar
1	Norway
1	Tanzania
1	United Arab Emirates
1	Sweden

	CITY
23	Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa
9	New Delhi, Delhi, India
8	Bangalore, Karnataka, India
5	London, England, United Kingdom
4	Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa
4	Delhi, India
2	Lagos, Nigeria
2	Sydney, NSW, Australia
2	Washington, DC
2	Calcutta, West Bengal, India
1	Oakland, CA
1	Jakarta, Jakarta Raya, Indonesia
1	Dhaka, Bangladesh
1	Sonipat, Haryana, India
1	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India
1	Kharagpur, West Bengal, India
1	Tumkur, Karnataka, India
1	Los Angeles, CA

1	Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa
1	Stavanger, Rogaland, Norway

The Facebook posts with the biggest reach were those posted at the launch of the page as follows:

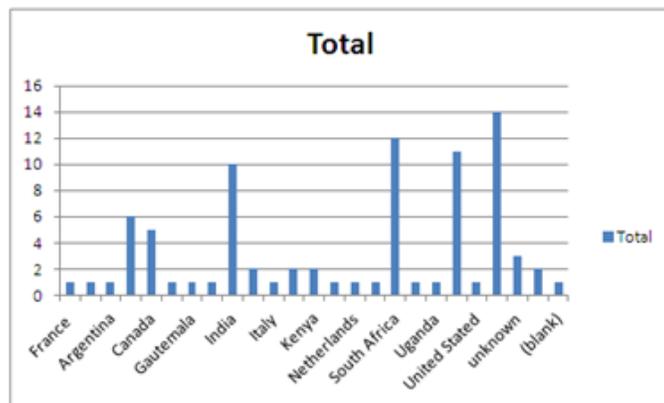
Two posts that discussed an article by Professor Botman, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch about how OA can boost African development. The posts combined reached 221 people and actively engaged 25 people.

A post about the launch of the OA debate on the WSIS platform, which included the positioning statement, reached 104 people and actively engaged 11 people.

2. Twitter

The twitter discussions included a combined total of 83 unique tweeters, with a total for both tweet up sessions of around 530 messages.

Country	Total
France	1
Uruguay	1
Argentina	1
Australia	6
Canada	5
France	1
Gautemala	1
Germany	1
India	10
Indonesia	2
Italy	1
Japan	2
Kenya	2
Middle East	1
Netherlands	1
Scotland	1
South Africa	12
Spain	1
Uganda	1
United Kingdom	11
United States	1
United States	14
unknown	3
Venezuela	2
(blank)	1
Grand Total	83



G. Future opportunities

Should one include both the participants on the WSIS Knowledge Societies platform and the participating tweeters who took part in the Twitter discussion, there were just over 100 voices that contributed to the online discussion. Common themes emerged from the discussions as follows:

- **Open access beyond journals**
- **New business models with alternative incentive and measurements**
- **Networks**
- **OA advocacy**

These key areas were referred to - and highlighted - as highly important for the take up and sustainability of OA within a developing-world context. However, what did not emerge was a clear roadmap of how to further articulate these issues. For example:

Open access beyond journals: if OA should be seen more inclusive than journal articles, how can we aggregate this knowledge, or how should we connect this knowledge to ensure adequate access?

New business models with alternative incentive and measurements: Can we find a workable model which is built within a southern context, particular to our local researcher- and user-driven challenges? How do we propose take up of this?

Networks and advocacy: Networks were repeatedly mentioned as being important in the OA movement. Yet what constitutes a network? How do we connect different stakeholders?

Possible next steps could involve:

Concretise a roadmap. Bring together a working group (remotely with two face-to-face working sessions at the beginning and conclusion of the working group) with varied stakeholders to put together an OA roadmap that looks at the specifics that have come out of these discussions. Key here would not be to 'go back' into the discussions but work from a specific starting point, towards specific objectives.

Test the theory. Over a 6-month period, pilot the roadmap with a network that includes OA publishers (wider than Journal publishers), academic institutions, informal knowledge networks.

Report. Using key meetings around in the global South and North, present the roadmap and the tested theory with the ultimate goal of including this into policy and multinational frameworks.