INCREASING ACCESS TO AFRICAN HEALTH RESEARCH OUTPUT THROUGH CREATION OF INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES

A PROPOSAL

BY

NETWORK OF AFRICAN MEDICAL LIBRARIANS (NAML)

March 27, 2012

The Need

A great deal of research has been carried out in Africa, by African scholars. A substantial part of this research has been published as research articles in international, regional and national peer reviewed journals, while others such as theses and dissertations are unpublished. Unfortunately, most of the published literature is not readily accessible by the institutions that produce it. Most of it ends up on the library shelves, neither used to inform policy, nor to generate further research.

Although international funding has increased dramatically in aid to Africa for combating disease, there is little or no international access to the bulk of research that has been and is being carried out in Africa by African researchers. This valuable information is generally not available to African researchers or their colleagues in the international community of global health and therefore does not inform current or future prevention, treatment, research, and policy.

One of the ways of addressing this problem is to create Institutional Repositories (IRs). Institutional Repositories provide access to institutional research output by self-archiving it. IRs create global visibility for an institution's scholarly research, collect content in a single location; store and preserve other institutional digital assets, including unpublished (grey) or otherwise easily lost.

This proposal is a concerted action by a high level network of African librarians in seven countries to change that paradigm by creating institutional repositories that are searchable by anyone from any location worldwide. It aims at facilitating the dissemination of research output produced 'locally' in the seven member countries of the Network of African Medical Librarians.

The project will be managed by the Network of African Medical Librarians (NAML). The Network comprises medical librarians from seven academic institutions in Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Network has been active in improving access to research and health care information to researchers, students, health care workers and policy makers in Africa. It has developed a training manual titled: **Finding,**

Organising and Using Health Information which is available in print and electronic formats.

(http://karibouconnections.net/wordpress/medlibafrica/training_module/index.html)

THe Network has also been involved in the training of students, health workers, academics/researchers and policy makers in member countries on accessing, retrieving and using online health information.

The **Vision** of NAML is to strengthen health sciences education, research and outreach for better health outcomes in Africa. The **Mission** is to expand the frontiers of knowledge through the training of, and outreach to African librarians, the academic community, health care professionals, health policy makers in finding, organising and using of health information.

The goal and objectives of the project

The goal of this project is to increase access to African health research output.

The objectives are to:

1. Establish IRs in the seven Network countries where they don't exist
2. Create a network of IRs to facilitate sharing of research evidence by institutions in Network member countries
3. Train users on how to input and retrieve the research output

Methodology

Information will be identified through searching databases such as the African Index Medicus (AIM), the Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD), African Journals Online (AJOL); libraries; professional associations such as the Association for Health Information and Libraries (AHILA); and ministries of health.

The proposed activities are to:

1. Develop metadata standards to be use by all the Network Libraries
2. Identify the appropriate software
3. Identify technical expertise
4. Set up an advisory sub-committee composed of key players
5. Develop criteria for the identification of contents

6. Scan/digitize the printed information to populate the IRs

7. Develop a federated search engine (ability to search across the Network IRs)

8. Train the Librarians (administrators of the IRs) on use of IRs

9. Conduct training and advocacy workshops on open access and online publishing; for the academic community; and authors /researcher to input and retrieve research evidence.

10. Market the IRs within the institutions, nationally and internationally while mentoring young professionals in their use and application.

Project Phases

The project will be carried out in three phases:

Phase 1- Implementation of activities 1-5

Phase 2- implementation of activities 6-7

Phase 3- training workshops, marketing and mentoring younger professionals 8-11

Scope of the Project

The plan is to index about 500 health journals and other scholarly research output such as grey literature, thesis and dissertations by African researchers which are available in the libraries of network countries. Missing issues of journals in the libraries of Network countries would be subscribed to to fill the gaps. This project will cover African health research output published during the last 25 years (1987-2012).

Project implementation and monitoring

The overall tracking of the activities of the project will be done by Abdrahmanne Anne, assisted by Alison Kinengyere and Masimba Maziringa, Network members who have experience in IT and in creating digital repositories.

Key persons who will direct the implementation of the project in their countries are:

1. Grace Ajuwon – E. Latunde Odeku Medical Library, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

2. Nancy Kamau – Deputy University Librarian, Kenya Methodist University

3. Christine Kanyengo – University of Zambia

4. Alison Kinengyere – College of Health Sciences, Makerere University

5. Masimba Maziringa – College of Health Sciences, University of Zimbabwe

6. Abdrahmanne Anne – Faculty of Medicine, Bamako University of Science and Technology, Mali

7. Cristina Horta – Medical Consultant, Maputo, Zimbabwe

The team will be supported by:

1. Julia Royall, Global Health Consultant; (retired) Chief, International Programs, U.S. National Library of Medicine

2. Becky Lyon, Librarian Consultant; (retired) Deputy Director, Library Operations, U.S. National Library of Medicine

The activities will be implemented in the NAML member countries. Lessons learnt and experiences will be shared with other health sciences librarians through the Association for Health Information and Libraries in Africa (AHILA) Congress and other fora such as the Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI).

Time-lines

Activities	Time
Phase 1 1. develop metadata standards to be used by all 　　the Network Libraries	Six months
2. identify the appropriate software	One month
3. identify technical expertise	One month
4. set up an advisory sub-committee composed of key 　　players	One months
5. develop a criteria for the identification of content	Three months
Phase 2 6. scan/digitize the printed information to populate the IRs	Ten months
7. develop a federated search engine (ability to search across the Network IRs	Ten Months
Phase Three: 8. train the Librarians (administrators of the IRs)	One month
9. Conduct advocacy workshops for open access and online publishing among the academic community and train researchers/authors to input and retrieve the research output	Two months
11. market the IRs within the institutions and nationally	One month

Total		36 months

Sustainability

Creating IRs is an activity that is self-sustaining, because once the content has been uploaded and the stakeholders have been trained, the project will continue without further funding. The member libraries will continuously identify new research and add it in the IRs. The Librarians will also do continuous training for new researchers/authors to ensure updates and continuity of the project.

Evaluation of the project

A post evaluation of the project will be carried out by:

1. Designing and sending questionnaires for content submitters and users
2. Generating usage statistics to assess the impact of the IRs within the member institutions and beyond

Feedback from the questionnaires and usage data will inform future decisions regarding the progress of the project.

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Comments by librarians at their planning meeting February 27-March 2, 2012, Kenyatta University, Nairobi