


Chapter 53

Promoting Open Educational Resources Through Library Portals in South African Universities

Lancelord Siphamandla Mncube

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4863-6310>

University of South Africa, South Africa

ABSTRACT

In the South African context, there is still a lack of development of OER, and it is not well noted if library portals are a relevant place for hosting OER. There is a significance need for further scientific investigation about the appropriate channels of hosting OER in library portals. To further investigate the problem, this study opted for website content analysis to determine if library portals within the academic libraries accommodate OER in their portals. Out of 26 Institutions, so far only three institutions have accommodated OER in their repositories. This study concludes that policymakers and academics should play a significant role in engagement in promotion of OER to higher education institutions' digital libraries. This chapter concludes that library portals should strive to keep up with international initiative of openness. This study recommend that all South African universities and their academic library portals should have a common OER TAB (space) within the institutional repository.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Academic libraries fulfil an important function in the promotion and dissemination of knowledge to support learning, teaching and research (Miller, 2016; Enakrire & Ocholla, 2017). These institutions are leveraging this essential role to support scholarship through web-technologies, for example, library portals and other virtual platforms (Ferran, Casadesus, Krakowska & Minguillon, 2007; Haugen, Mastel & Pfander, 2017). The emergence of the academic library portals provides both academics and students

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with a sustainable infrastructure for seamless access to knowledge, course content, information resources and services from all integrated service points (Chang, 2013; Spencer & Watstein, 2017).

In support of knowledge creation, South African academic libraries are guided by local and international frameworks including Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (IFLA 2015). According to IFLA(2015) and supported by Rripathi, Gunjal and Pradham (2017) academic libraries should adapt technologies that enable them to provide for the dynamic and complex needs of the users . Academic libraries should focus on the following:

- Enhanced integration of access management services for on-demand access to resources over a distributed networked environment;
- Employment of wireless technologies;
- Adjusting procurement strategies to focus on network-based information resources;
- Integrate the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS) functionality with other non-library related systems (finances, registration, virtual research and learning systems and access systems); and
- Incorporate web-based discovery to support related peripheral applications.

To comply with IFLA's standards pertaining to portal services, academic libraries need to continuously strengthen their ICT infrastructures and strive to provide the relevant services to the end-users (academics and students). This is necessarily in reducing the cost of materials and widening access to scholarship (Salem, 2017). What is noticeable is that technological advancements in academic libraries have gone through different phases. The modern era of library computerisation started in the 1970s when academic libraries experimented on the use of digital technologies to widen access to information. In the 1980s and 1990s academic libraries started to utilise internet technologies for disseminating resources and in providing access to the internet (Saarti, Luokkanen, Ahlqvist & Lager, 2015). The twenty-first century has been characterised by the proliferation of OERs in academic institutions. These development underlines the proposition that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are evolving and revolutionising the library domains.

Within the context of this continuous modernisation, Utulu and Ngwenyama (2017) opined that ICTs were enabling wider access to information services. Through ICTs it has been possible to supplement, automate and digitise library operations and procedures for strategic efficiency. Technological developments in the Information science landscape demand critical knowledge and skills from academics and students. Digital literacy skills are useful for supporting users to access scholarly databases. Media literacy, ICT literacy and digital scholarship skills, as well as communication skill help to enhance collaboration among academics (Luokkanen, Saarti, Jauhiainen & Lager, 2012; Boateng & Liu, 2014; Schrum, Genuth & Chompalov, 2015; Borgman, Darch, Sands, Pasquetto, Golshan, Wallis & Traweek, 2015; Punzalan & Kriesberg, 2017). The expanded skills proficiencies enable users to navigate digital platforms and conduct research, use digital devices, study and learn in digital environments, and participate in emerging academic and research practices through, for example, library portals (Berry & Fagerjord, 2017). Library portals are gradually gaining favour among academics because of their usefulness in supporting learning, teaching and research. Most academic libraries have adopted library portals for their functionality. Library portals are not standalone entities, but they are the biggest drivers of library platforms in promoting open access (OA) to scholarly communication (Świgoń, 2017; Puckett & Michaelis, 2017;

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