



The Case for Open Access Publications: A Study of the University of Technology (UTECH) Library Services.

By Hirfa Morrison

Affiliation: Excelsior Community College, Jamaica

Abstract

Statement of the Problem

Open access is concerned with freely available scholarly literature via the Internet. Suber in defining Open Access literature described it as “digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions”.

The Budapest Open Access Initiative defines Open Access as “... freely available on the public Internet” (qtd. in Suber). Budapest further mentioned other attributes of Open Access by stating that it permits 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...” (qtd. in Suber). The only limitation for this is the hardware and service provider component which will need to be provided for access to OA. According to Budapest while OA publications are freely available it does require users to give “authors control over the integrity of their work” (qtd in Suber) and the right to be associated with the work.

Springer’s idea of Open Access , “is when publications are freely available online to all at no cost and with limited restrictions with regards [to] reuse” (Springer).

The definitions above suggest that OA is free to anyone who needs scholarly information. As long as the hardware and software components are available for access, OA publications should be accessible in academia. There is a drive to promote Open Access in colleges as a means to improve and maintain the research community and to stretch the meager budgets offered to colleges in Jamaica.

A recent assessment among libraries within the College Libraries Information Network (COLINET) in Jamaica, of how OA is used in colleges, proved that the majority, if not all, colleges do not promote or use OA publications. As academic institutions existing in a third world country, libraries are faced with very low budgets and are expected to provide the best resources with relevant information and quality research data as necessary. In many instances college libraries in Jamaica cannot afford many of the proprietary databases that are promoted in academia and as a result will enter into a consortia agreement with other local colleges to subscribe to the most relevant databases. In other instances some colleges are not able to enter into more than one consortia arrangement despite the small subscription fees.

Objectives:

The objective of this research is to identify to what extent Open Access (OA) publications are being used at the University of Technology and how these have impacted service delivery.

The researcher will seek to find out the implications of OA for the library budget and what (if any) are the necessary skills for information professionals working with OA. In conducting this study the researcher will examine the benefits to students as well as to the library and identify effective promotional activities that are in place for the promotion and use of OA. At the end of the research the researcher will explore how OA publications can be promoted to College Libraries across Jamaica.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent have open access (OA) publications been integrated in library and information services at the Calvin McCain Library?
2. How has OA impacted information service delivery?
3. What changes or implications do OA have on the library budget?
4. What are the requisite skills sets that is required for information professionals dealing with OA?
5. What strategies are in place for the promotion/use of OA resources?
- 6 How effective are the promotional strategies that have been put in place, in reaching students for research and study activities?

Methodology: (brief overview)

In gathering data the researcher will use mixed methods. A questionnaire will be used to gather relevant data on information professionals and services at the Calvin McCain Library. Interviews will be conducted with information professionals to see how they respond or are receptive to

issues/questions/topics relating to OA. A simple random sample will be used to gather data from students and other patrons to see how OA reference publications such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), have impacted their research and study activities.