GHANA ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF THE OPEN ACCESS INITIATIVE (OAI)

ANABA A. ALEMNA, FGA

ANNUAL LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES 2016
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ABSTRACT

Academics all over the world place emphasis on research and publications, not only because it is presumed that research enriches both teaching and the learning process as well as contributing to the body of knowledge, but also because it is a major determinant of institutional prestige. To the academic staff, therefore, publishing achieves that dual purpose of enhancing both one’s position and the status of the institution.

However, scholarly publishing in Africa is still struggling to keep pace with the rest of the world. Various reasons for this are discussed in this paper. The author also highlights the issue of Predatory or Standalone journals which are trying to take advantage of challenges in scholarly publishing to exploit the African Scholar or writer.

As one of the solutions to this problem, the author suggests that scholars in Africa should take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of Open Access (OA) Journals. These provide unlimited access to online peer-reviewed scholarly research works. They are also digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions, The role of the Academy of Arts and Sciences in assisting the OA agenda is also emphasized.
Introduction

Scholarly publications are often considered as those that the authors have in mind academics or the intellectual community and their publications are handled by recognized societies with academic goals and missions. It further states that scholarly publications do not only provide research findings thereby advancing new knowledge but their contents are subjected to rigorous scrutiny by experts in a given discipline (Wor, 2013).

Ondari-Okemwa (2007) showcases the relevance of scholarly publishing by linking it to the carrier development and promotional needs of authors. He identifies the author, editor, publisher and the subscriber as the main parties involved in scholarly communication. Items such as conference abstracts, book reviews, and papers in conference proceedings, invited chapters, books, monographs and journals fall within the ambiance of scholarly or scientific publications. In addition to the list, Ware and Mabe (2009) consider informal seminar discussions, face-to-face or telephone communications, and even e-mail exchanges as part of scholarly communications.

In all these, the researcher considers the journal as the most effective and trusted medium for scholarly discourse. This assertion
is also supported by Hussein (2002) who posits that journals are the backbones of scholarship due to the platform they present for scholars to exchange information, educate and stimulate debates among themselves.

Currently, journals and for that matter scholarly publications, are now used as instruments to establish the professional acumen of scientists and have decisive influence in the allocation of research resources (Wor, 2013). Stranack (2008) and Angrosh (2005) catalogued the importance of scholarly journals as:

- Serving as a major source of information and knowledge acquisition; through the provision of unique record of scholarly activity;
- Giving an institution a scholarly recognition;
- Enhancing career growth of individuals; and
- Ensuring economic and socio-cultural development of a nation.

Research, and for that matter scholarly communication, is a vital tool, towards the development of any nation or society. The development of technologies, science, culture and almost every facet of our lives depends largely on the extent of research and its utilization. It is also necessary that research findings are duly and adequately communicated for the benefit of the larger society.
Channels such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers and letters among others are commonly used to relay the findings of research for the enrichment of life (Wor, 2013).

Scholarly publishing forms the nucleus for the dissemination of research findings and thus forms the spotlight of this paper. The raw materials in terms of ideas and knowledge for the industries, academia, politics, agriculture and other vital sectors of the economy emanate to a greater extent from scholarly publishing. It is not surprising however that the scholarly ability of an individual and the integrity of institutions of higher learning are rated based on research outputs and contribution to knowledge. In affirming the importance of journals over other channels of scholarly discourse, Solomon (2007) states that journals act as a means of tying a scholarly community together and also maintain community standards in the conduct of research. Stranack (2006) indicates that journals provide new and unique records of scholarly activity. Research publications in journals by academics are therefore very essential towards the attainment of authorities in academic environment (Wor, 2013)

Martin and Tang (2007) identify seven (7) “mechanisms or exploitative channels” by which benefits of research flow into the economy:

- Knowledge increase;
Scholarly publishing in Africa and the role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI)

- Contribution of skilled graduates and quality researches;
- Formation of new and more relevant scientific instrumentation and methodologies;
- Development of networks and stimulation of social interaction;
- Empowerment of problem-solving capacities;
- Establishment of new firms; and the
- Provision of social knowledge

Scholarly Publishing in Africa

Access to knowledge is fundamental to all aspects of human development, yet access to academic publications is restricted in many developing countries. Even though a number of research activities occur in Africa, the continent is said to account for 2% of the research output of the world (Moahi, 2012). Most of such research outcomes emanating from African universities are often obscured due to inadequate indigenous sustainable journals as well as issues of copyright (Alemna, 1995; Alemna, 2005). The alternative, as revealed by Moahi (2009), is that African academics strive to publish in internationally renowned peer-reviewed journals in order to ensure academic promotion, but then, again, not many of these do make it
into such journals. And when they do, the journals are out of reach of most university libraries, rendering access difficult. Without any forum of sharing this knowledge, replication becomes the order of the day. Reflecting back on the research information related problems faced by developing countries, Abukutsa-Onyango (2010) said there had been two-fold problems in the past: inability to afford subscriptions to journals and inability to integrate national research into the global knowledge pool. The prohibitive cost of publishing and distributing journals in the developing world means much of the research done there remains ‘invisible’ to the rest of the world (Harnard, 2010).

Comparatively, scholarly publishing in Africa, is not as prominent as the case in other regions of the world. The situation in the Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Ghana, is even worse. Ondari-Okemwa (2007) identifies that scholarly publications coming from Sub-Saharan Africa and the entire African continent lack visibility. He again stressed that for the period between 1997 and 2007, South Africa, the leading producer of scholarly publications in Africa, recorded less than half the scholarly publication of the United States in the year 2006 alone.

This situation is blamed on the low reading culture, economic and technological barriers, lack of common language, environmental
inhibitions such as lack of free speech or freedom of the press, and illiteracy among others (Adebowale, 2001 and Ondari-Okenwa, 2007). Journals, which serve as conduits to scholarly communications are not adequate enough to serve the intellectual demands in the African regions.

Wellcome Trust (2003) claims that the monopoly held by publishers in the current system does not act in the interests of either the academic community or the public, further worsening the disparities that exist between resource rich and resource poor countries. To change the current structure of scholarly publishing requires a buy-in of key stakeholders such as faculty, librarians and publishers (Ming, 2000; Johnson, 2002).

**Publishing Abroad or Locally**

There is always the feeling among writers in Africa that they will gain world-wide recognition and reputation when their papers are published outside the continent. By virtue of the overseas publishers' inter-continental representation and commercial and managerial expertise, it is often expected that works published outside Africa are better than locally published ones. Although this may not be always true, there is another category of writers who even feel that it is better
to deal with a bad publisher overseas than the good one in Africa (Alemna, 1996).

There is also the feeling especially in the academic circles, that a manuscript or research paper which has not been published by any of the publishing ‘giants’ (usually foreign based) is cheap and inferior and of no consequence as far as promotion in our universities goes. In other words, it is being assumed that a local journal or publisher cannot publish anything of intellectual consequence (Ochai and Nwafor, 1990).

The high mortality rate of journals in Africa is also a cause for concern. This is another major reason why researchers in Africa would wish to publish their findings outside. Many of these journals do not even acknowledge receipt of papers sent to them. In some cases, a manuscript could be delayed for a considerable length of time, thereby making the information they provide of little research value, when it is eventually published.

Foreign journals always have the advantage of getting information abstracted, indexed and reviewed by major international abstracting and indexing services, thereby increasing visibility of authors. This serves as an attraction to African researchers.
Local journals are also accused of killing talents by the lackadaisical manner in which they assess papers sent to them for consideration for publication. As a result of this, some papers get lost or are returned from the assessors to the editors very late, causing a delay in the production schedules.

Additionally, local assessors of manuscripts have been blamed for destroying budding authors by their subjective assessment. In his article, Oloidi complained that his manuscript was rejected by a local journal on the grounds that: (a) it is more polemic than scholarly; (b) it is more of a survey than analytical work; (c) it offers no specific, novel contribution to scholarship (Ochai, 1990) but when sent to a journal in California, the paper was accepted. The assessment from California was summarized as ‘extensively analytical-details and well-studied’.

Apeji, (1990) in his study of science journals as sources of information for Nigerian researchers, listed the factors that militate against their use as:

1. Editorial and organizational problems
2. High mortality rate.
3. Financial and production problems.
4. Shortage of good authors.
5. Lack of relevance.

6. Non-Coverage by abstracting and indexing services.

In a similar study of Nigerian science journals by Azubuike, Adeyomo, and Okojie, (1990) the result showed that the probability that a Nigerian journal will die at between two and five years is high, as over 80 per cent of the discontinuation took place within this period. The results of the study further showed that the factors responsible for the situation include lack of periodicity, poor pricing, lack of distribution and advertising strategy, lack of impact on the international scene, and lack of coverage by abstracting and indexing services.

Against the above background, when researchers are in a hurry to get their manuscripts published to meet an impending promotion exercise or higher appointment, or to announce some scientific discoveries before others working in the same field lay claim to them, local journals might well not be the best outlet.

On the other hand, a school of thought argues that if researchers publish their works locally rather than abroad, this would help raise the level of local journals, thereby increasing their market value and sustaining them over a long period.

Another advantage in publishing locally is to avoid the situation whereby research findings that are intended for a local audience are
lost to them because they are unable to purchase the journal or book in which the findings have been published. Even where such publications manage to slip into the country, the cost may be too exorbitant for many local potential readers.

It must also be pointed out that although most of the research from Africa is found in foreign journals, it is not always easy to get published in these foreign journals. The problem is that many of these papers address local issues and problems which are unlikely to interest an overseas audience. This accounts partly for the high rejection rate of manuscripts sent abroad from Africa for publication.

The Case of Predatory Journals
As a result of the difficulties in getting publication outlets, African academics and universities have been caught in the Predatory or standalone journal web. Jeff Beall, an academic librarian at the University of Denver in Colorado describes predatory journals as ones that exploit the page fee model for self-gain. They transgress all the rules of research integrity and in most cases, they have no clear focus area (Beall, 2015).
Characteristics of Predatory Publishing

- Accepting articles quickly with little or no peer review or quality control.
- Notifying academics of article fees only after papers are accepted.
- Aggressively campaigning for academics to submit articles or serve on editorial boards.
- Listing academics as members of editorial boards without their permission and not allowing academics to resign from editorial boards.
- Appointing fake academics to editorial boards.
- Mimicking the name or web site style of more established journals.
- Misleading claims about the publishing operation, such as a false location.
- Improper use of ISSNs.
- Fake or non-existent impact factors.
- There is little or no geographic diversity among the authors of articles in one or more of the publisher's journals, an indication the journal has become an easy outlet for authors from one country or region to get scholarly publications.
1.1 Publishing in Africa and the role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI)

- The publisher has an optional "fast-track" fee-based service for expedited peer review which appears to provide assured publication with little or no vetting.

How to Perform due Diligence before Submitting to a Journal or Publisher

- Check that the publisher provides full, verifiable contact information including address, on the journal site. Be cautious of those that provide only web contact forms.
- Check that a journal's editorial board lists recognized experts with full affiliations. Contact some of them and ask about their experience with the journal or publisher.
- Check that the journal prominently displays its policy for author fees.
- Be wary of e-mail invitations to submit to journals or to become editorial board members.
- Read some of the journal's published articles and assess their quality. Contact past authors to ask about their experience.
- Check that a journal's peer-review process is clearly described and try to confirm that a claimed impact factor is correct (Beall, 2015).
I must however add that Beall’s description of predatory journals has also received some negative comments. Some of the criticisms are:

- It is wrong for a single person to determine which journal is predatory or not.
- Predatory is based on author-pays open access.
- There is a bias against open access journals from less economically developed countries in Africa and Asia.
- Some of the criteria seem to make first world assumptions that are not valid worldwide.

All the same, it is important for researchers, Universities and Research Institutes to audit journals in which academics publish. This is necessary for the reputation of the researcher and the institution. As one writer rightly points out, Africa is famous for many of its predators, but there are a few pernicious ones in academia that don’t show up on Safaris, (Thomas, 2016). We must be wary of such hidden predators.

**Electronic Vrs. Print Journals**

The other critical issue is whether to rely on electronic or print journals as the choice of publications.
While Stranack (2008) defines electronic publishing (online publishing or e-publishing) as placing contents on the Internet, and to share with the wider world, Angrosh (2005) describes it as “a serial publication produced and stored in electronic format only, subjected to peer review process, carrying International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN) and adhering to stringent quality standards of electronic technicalities”. Print journals on the other hand, are journals that are outputted in a hard copy form (on paper).

Though Dalgaard (2004) is of the opinion that the reason for the introduction of electronic publishing or digitization text is to help cater for the “overload of scholarly text or flood of information”, many studies prove that it is rather more of the cost elements (Mattlage, 1999, C. McAllister, F. McAllister and Fritz, 2004, Angrosh, 2005; and Asamoah-Hassan, 2007). For instance, the Wellcome Trust report indicates that the cost of processing a journal in the printed domain is far more than that of electronic and that even the total cost of paper alone is far more than the entire cost of electronic publication of the journal.
Due to the cost effectiveness and wide coverage capacity of the electronic mode of journal publication, more journal publishers are now leaning towards electronic publishing. Karp (2007) indicates that irrespective of this development, “Print publishing won’t be dead until the people who value print distribution are dead”. Karp is therefore convinced that people will continue to cling to the physical presence of print journals as they do not require internet connectivity, software and hardware to access them. There is also a growing concern that the print journal still holds certain prestige that do not always come with its electronic counterpart. For now, therefore, it can be said that both electronic and print journals are adequate for the scholarly writer in Africa.

**The Role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI)**

‘Open Access’ (OA) as a term, was formally introduced during conferences in Budapest,Bethsaida and Berlin, in the early 2000s. Official statements from these conferences clearly defined ‘open access’, and thus reduced its misinterpretation and excessive misuse (Suber, 2004). All three conferences called for the removal of price and all forms of barriers to scholarly information. For instance the
Budapest Open Access Initiative (2000) statement, where the term ‘open access’ was formally coined, read as follows:

"By “open access” to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public Internet, permitting any 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 other than those inseparable from gaining access to the Internet itself. The only constraints on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited”.

In a similar fashion, the Berlin Declaration on Open Access Initiative (2000), calls for the “free availability on the public Internet, permitting any 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 other than those inseparable from gaining access to the Internet itself” (BOAI, 2002).
What is NOT Open Access (OA):

- Open Access is not self-publishing.
- Open Access is not a means of by passing peer review procedures for formal publishing.
- Open Access is not an inferior class publishing avenue.

Open Access is usually in an electronic form via the Internet. For authors, Open Access (OA) can be achieved in two primary methods:

These two parallel but complementary paths for achieving Open Access (OA) are sometimes referred to be as the “Gold Road” (i.e., publish in an Open Access Journal (OAJ) and Green Road to open access (i.e., published in a non-Open Access Journal but deposited in an OAA) Harnard, et. al., 2004). There is also the hybrid, which is a combination of the two.

Opportunities with Open Access Publishing

Open Access has presented many opportunities to all stakeholders. Suber (2004) eloquently spelled out opportunities presented by Open Access to various groups of people:

- **Authors:** Open Access gives them a worldwide audience, larger than that of any subscription-based journals, no matter
how prestigious or popular, and probably increases the visibility and impact of their work.

- **Readers**: Open Access gives them barrier-free access to the literature they need for their research, not constrained by the budgets of the libraries where they may have access privileges. It increases their convenience, reach, and retrieval power.

- **Libraries**: Open Access solves the pricing crisis for scholarly journals. It also solves the permission crisis. Open Access serves library’s interests in other indirect ways, too. Librarians want to help users find the information they need, regardless of the budget-enforced limits on the library’s own collection. Librarians want to help faculty increase their audience and impact and thereby help the university raise its research profile.

- **Universities**: Open Access increases the visibility of their faculty and institution, reduces their expenses for journals, and advances their mission to share knowledge.

- **Journals and Publishers**: Open Access makes their articles more visible, discoverable, retrievable, and useful. If a journal is Open Access, then it can use this superior visibility to attract
submissions and advertising, not to mention readers and citations.

- **Funding Agencies**: Open Access increases the return on their investment in research, making the results of the funded research more widely available, more discoverable, more retrievable, and more useful. Open Access serves public funding agencies by providing public access to the results of publicly-funded research.

- **Governments**: As funders of research, governments benefit from Open Access in all the ways that funding agencies do. Open Access also promotes democracy by sharing government information as rapidly and widely as possible.

- **Citizens**: Open Access gives them access to peer-reviewed research (Most of which is unavailable in public libraries) and gives them access to the research, for which they have already paid through their taxes. It also helps them indirectly by helping the researchers, physicians, manufacturers, technologists, and others who make use of cutting-edge research for their benefit.

A growing number of studies have confirmed that an Open Access article is more likely to be used and cited than one behind subscription barriers. There is enough evidence that Open Access
documents are most likely to be cited than non-Open Access documents. This gives Open Access authors an advantage over other print repositories (Iwighreghweta and Onoriodoe, 2012).

Some African Open Access Initiatives

  (www.ajol.info/)
- Database of African Thesis and Dissertations (DATAD) - 2003
  (africaeducation.org/adl/)
- Africa’s Open Knowledge Network – 2003
- African Online Digital Library
  (www.aodl.org/)

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) (http://www.doaj.org) lists titles of journals that are on Open access. Most of these are also on Web of Science/Web of Knowledge of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI).

Challenges to Open Access in Africa

- Awareness of Open Access
Scholarly publishing in Africa and the role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI)

- Inadequate ICT connectivity
- Unreliable power supply
- Inadequate funding
- Inadequate advocacy
- Copyright and technical barriers
- Institutional Culture and politics
- Reward system in some Institutions

Some International Support for Open Access

- Budapest Open Access Initiative -2002
- Bethesda Statement – 2003
- UK Parliamentary Inquiry – 2004
- US House Appropriations Committee – 2004
- Research Councils UK – 2006
- Academy of Science of South Africa – 2006
- Ukrainian Law – 2007
## African Journals Online

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<th>No. of Journals</th>
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Scholarly publishing in Africa and the role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI)

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Source: African Journals Online (AJOL) - 2016
Conclusion

The issues discussed in this lecture should be of some concern to the Academy of Arts and Sciences. As major contributors to scholarly works in the country, we should be able to advice the government on the opportunities of Open Access for the country. We could also stimulate this development by assisting to formulate codes of conduct as well as ensuring the freedom to read, publish and also help improve assessment procedures for scholars.
REFERENCES


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Clubs, Mathematics

Research
Education
Mathematics
Miscellaneous
Scholarships—
See Tests
Slide Rule—
See Computation and Devices

Statistics
Stories—
See Humor, Drama, Poetry
Surveys—
See Research

Symbolism
Teacher
Education
Evaluation of
Miscellaneous
Salaries

Teaching Methods
Discovery
Expository
Miscellaneous
Programmed Instruction
See also Teaching Methods under Algebra, Arithmetic, Calculus, General Mathematics, and Geometry

Television
Testimonials—
See Memorials and Tributes
Tests—
See also Evaluation

Textbooks
Topology

Trigonometry
Unified Mathematics—
See General Mathematics

Vectors
See also Geometry

Verse—
See Humor, Drama, Poetry

Visual Aids

Vocational Mathematics
See also Applications and Guidance

Ability
Grouping


Adapting Instructional Material to Individual Ability Grouping of Students in Senior High Mathematics. 21: 102–6, Feb. 1928.
Professor Alemna is a former University Librarian at Balme Library, University of Ghana. Educated at Navrongo Secondary School; University of Cape Coast; University of Ghana; and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Professor Alemna joined the University of Ghana as Lecturer in January 1987.

He went through the ranks to be promoted full Professor in July, 1997. From October 1995 to September 1998, Prof. Alemna was the Head of the then Department of Library and Archival Studies. He also acted as Dean of the Faculty of Social Studies on many occasions between August 2000 and June, 2002. He was promoted University Librarian on 1st July 2002 and moved to the Balme Library until his retirement in August 2009. He was a visiting Professor at University of Illinois, Urbana – Champagne (1992 – 1993) and University of Botswana (2000 – 2001). He was awarded the Commonwealth Professional Fellowship in 2004 where he spent some time visiting academic libraries in Scotland. Professor Alemna is an External Examiner and Assessor in a number of Universities in Africa, England and India. He received the Ghana Book Award in 1998 and the Literati Award for Most Outstanding Paper in 1997 and 1999. He is also a member of Editorial Boards of a number of professional journals. He is a member of the International Association of School Librarianship (USA), Christian Librarians Fellowship (UK), The New York Academy of Sciences and Fellow of the Ghana Library Association.