

**ASC-CODESRIA Conference: Bridging the North-South Divide in Scholarly Communication on Africa. Threats and Opportunities in the Digital Era**

**Kenniscentrum Leiden, Archimedesweg 31, 2333 CM Leiden, The Netherlands**

**Rapporteur: Ursula Oberst, ASC**

<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Academic knowledge for development in Africa</b>
<b>Chair</b>	<b>Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi, CODESRIA, Dakar</b>
<b>Rules of procedure</b>	<b>Limited time for questions and debate after the keynote speech and at the end of the paper session</b>

The Director of the African Studies Centre, Prof. Leo de Haan welcomes the participants and introduces Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi (CODESRIA, Dakar), the chair of the first session. In his opening speech Prof. Olukoshi sketches why CODESRIA initiated a conference on scholarly communication. He also describes the setting up of the strategic partnership between CODESRIA and the ASC. Prof. Olukoshi then introduces the keynote speaker Dr Paul Wouters (Virtual Knowledge Studio for the Humanities and Social Sciences, KNAW).

In his keynote speech, Dr Wouters focuses on the question of what open access actually signifies: access to what and for whom? He discusses what open access will mean to e-science and e-research and how novel regimes of open access may affect the dynamics of knowledge creation and dissemination at the international level.

Issues raised in his speech include:

- Open access to what? How does open access to scientific information affect what e-researchers actually produce?
- Problems of data sharing: What are the prospects of access to and sharing of scientific and scholarly data? What does large-scale data sharing mean for information infrastructure and knowledge practices?
- Open access for whom? Which legitimate boundaries to open access to scholarly research are recognized and who decides upon the conditions?
- How open are collaboratories? Will global collaboratories promote open access or are they simply the new form of invisible elitist colleges?

Dr Wouter's keynote speech is based on a presentation he gave at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis in November 2005 (Paul Wouters, Christine Hine, Kirsten A. Foot, Steven M. Schneider, Subbiah Arunachalam & Raed Sharif (2006), "Promise and Practice of Open Access to e-Science", Proceedings of WSIS Tunis, November 2005).

Questions and comments on the keynote speech:

- A participant asks whether a scientific community actually exists. He points to the fact that there are many differences between scientific communities (in general, differences in power, differences in resources etc.).
- A participant suggests that one should use the term “content sharing” instead of “data sharing” because data plus extra work creates content.
- Another participant proposes that one should take into account interaction between the scientific world and the business world (patent, copyright) when talking about open access.

Six papers were presented during the first session.

**1.** Arunachalam Subbiah (M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, India)

**Paper:** Open access inevitable for not only science and scholarship in Africa but also for overall development

**2.** Mike Powell (Development consultant, Sheffield, United Kingdom)

**Paper:** Which knowledge? Whose reality? An overview of knowledge used in the development sector

**3.** Frederick Kintu (Programme Manager of the Information Society Foundation (ISF), Kampala, Uganda)

**Paper:** Manifestations of scholarly communication in Africa: The case of the Uganda health information network

**4.** Eve Gray (International Policy Fellow. Open Society Institute, Budapest and Honorary Research Associate, Centre for Educational Technology, University of Cape Town)

**Paper:** At the south-eastern frontier: The impact of higher education policy on African research publication

**5.** Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome (Brooklyn College, City University of New York, Department of Political Science)

**Paper:** Spinning an African Academy into the World Wide Web: The liberatory and democratic potential of African scholarship in cyberspace

**6.** Jennifer A. De Beer (: eIFL / SIVULILE)

**Paper:** Open access in developing and transition countries: eIFL and a view from South Africa

Questions and comments at the end of the paper session focus on open access publishing:

- Several participants address the fact that African researchers have to publish in overseas journals in order to be able to graduate and be awarded a PhD. A participant raises the question about whether CODESRIA is challenging African universities to change these graduation rules.
- A participant points out that African researchers are asked to publish in open access journals while European researchers still publish in print journals. The question is why? Is it only for economic reasons?

- A participant stresses the need to discuss the issue of the format of content when talking about open access and the dissemination of knowledge. Open access for whom? Knowledge for whom? Only for researchers? Does a farmer or a politician read an open access scientific report? In which language should it be published (local language, scientific language)?
- A participant articulates the need to carefully analyse the local situation before selecting software. First investigate local needs, then choose the appropriate software.