



## **Conference Announcement and Call for Papers**

The CODESRIA-ASC Conference Series 2006: Electronic Publishing and Dissemination

### **“Bridging the North-South Divide in Scholarly Communication on Africa. Threats and Opportunities in the Digital Era.”**

Leiden, The Netherlands, 6 – 8 September 2006

#### **Convened by**

Afrika-Studiecentrum (ASC)

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)

#### **Website**

<http://www.ascleiden.nl/GetPage.aspx?url=/events/event1142937906>

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#### **BACKGROUND**

As part of a joint, collaborative effort that includes research, a joint research masters degree programme, publications and dissemination, CODESRIA and the ASC have launched a series of conferences on research, documentation, publishing and dissemination in the context of the ITCs revolution.

The first conference on ‘Electronic publishing and dissemination’ was held in Dakar, in September 2004. Most papers fell within thematic areas such as the role of ICTs in the advancement of research, digitising content for academic outreach and social policy, access and visibility of African scholarship in the digital age and the role of digital libraries. In comparison with many other international conferences on electronic publishing, this conference was particularly interesting because it brought together researchers, publishers and librarians in the field of social science research on Africa. In this setting the conference raised many pertinent issues which need to be addressed.

#### **CONFERENCE THEME**

The objective of the second conference on ‘Electronic publishing and dissemination’ is to build on the momentum achieved at the Dakar conference and to explore the use of digital technologies in scholarly communication on Africa, the effects on the North-South divide and the role of different stakeholders in exacerbating or countering the divide.

## **Introduction to the theme**

Web publishing and its technical possibilities, as well as the open access movement that has accompanied it, have resulted in a number of tendencies with mixed implications for scholarly communication. Web publishing carries the potential to spread research results much faster across academic communities and beyond. It opens up new horizons for the advancement of free access to information and the availability of publications. At the same time digital technologies are put to use to enforce rights management, resulting in the publisher's exclusive control over access to scholarship. With e-journal publishing the licensing model has replaced the buying model, keeping ownership and control of digital materials in the hands of publishers. Libraries find themselves frustrated in their role as safe keepers of science: how can they ensure optimal access and availability if they do not control the access systems? How can they preserve the records of science if license agreements do not permit libraries to hold archival copies? In reaction to this trend, research libraries have started to form consortia to negotiate licensing conditions and access terms with publishers. They are experimenting with the setting up of institutional repositories coupled with open access. As a result, huge commercial and public investments are competing to develop new solutions to old problems and to find new ways of communicating science in the digital age.

It has been said that it is in the nature of any new technology to exacerbate the existing divide between rich and poor. In how far have the rapid changes taking place in the publishing industry exacerbated the relative deprivation suffered by researchers in the developing world? It has also been observed that Latin American and African academics in particular, rather than their North American and European counterparts, are embracing the new technology and its revolutionary opportunities for scholarly communication. This in turn gives rise to concerns regarding the equal participation in the free flow of information between North and South. If scholars in developing countries eagerly disseminate their work in the public domain whilst those in developed countries stay relatively reticent to do so, the established control mechanisms of academic publishing will remain in place and the free and uncontrolled dissemination of research results on the Web will become synonymous to unprofessional practice and bad quality output, exacerbating the imbalance in scholarly publishing between North and South. Looking at the heavily institutionalized scientific process in the North, with its age old traditions and vested interests, it is understandable that transformation and adaptation takes time. But it also raises questions. Is the print tradition a barrier or a pre-requisite for developing digital publishing models? Can Africa leap-frog into the digital age and by-pass the development stages of the print-based knowledge economy?

An intriguing question concerns the role of scholars, publishers, libraries, academic institutions and development organisations from the North in devising schemes to counter the North-South divide. In how far are these measures geared towards long-term solutions? How far does solidarity with scholars in the South reach? Africanists, a research community with strong roots in the western scholarly tradition and close connections with the African scientific community, represent a particular case in point. Scholarly exchange with African colleagues is necessary to validate their research. What are the characteristics of these exchanges? Do they contribute to more equitable scholarly communications between North and South?

### **Practical issues versus theoretical/scientific reflection and research findings**

The conference hopes to attract papers from the different stakeholders in scholarly communication on Africa, giving a balanced view of the economic, social and moral dimensions of the issues at stake. It attempts to relate the research theme to practical issues of web publishing, scholarly communication, recording and accessing the results of science, bibliographic control and dissemination and invites case studies to provide in-depth analysis of specific issues by use of quantitative data. It encourages theoretical and scientific reflections on knowledge production, scientific information flows, the institutionalization of the scientific process, the impact of ICTs on scholarly communication and welcomes contributions that provide explanatory theoretical frameworks for the issues at stake.

### **LAUNCH**

The conference will mark the **launch** of the [Connecting-Africa](#) web portal, a digital platform for scholarly communication on Africa. It provides details of researchers on Africa affiliated to Dutch universities and titles of published research on Africa. Connecting-Africa offers a lightweight, extensible solution for the promotion of research and research networks at a global level.

### **Conference programme**

The three-day conference will bring together internationally respected scholars presenting cutting-edge insights from their current research. The programme will be divided in 6 sessions.

### **Speakers**

The conference will host three keynote lectures and will carefully select a maximum of 30 presentations and 6 session chairs.

Funds will be made available to invited speakers from Africa who do not have the resources to cover their travel and accommodation.

### **Call for papers**

Those interested in contributing to this conference are requested to send a CV and an abstract of 250 words (describing the main points of their paper, its central argument and the type of research/methodology employed) to the two contact addresses indicated below.

The deadline for the receipt of abstracts is **May 31, 2006**.

The steering committee will decide on submissions by June 30, 2006 and will notify applicants after this date. Papers are due by August 15, 2006.

### **Participants**

The conference is open to participants on an invitational basis and is restricted to a maximum of 60 participants.

The invitees will represent the **3 target groups** evenly: social science researchers on Africa, information professionals and publishers/editors.

The conference will be **bi-lingual** (French and English translations) and at least 1/2 of the participants will come from Africa.

### **Conference Fee**

Invited participants will be asked to pay a conference fee of € 150.

## **Consolidated Results**

- Conference Proceedings on the web

### **Steering Committee**

Prof. Dr. L.J. de Haan (ASC)

Dr. M. de Bruijn (ASC)

Titia van der Werf (ASC)

Dr. E. Sall (CODESRIA)

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