

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

Rapporteur: Elvire Eijkman, ASC

<u>Session 2</u>	Bibliometrics and Citations
<u>Chair</u>	Dr M.E. de Bruijn, ASC, Leiden, NL
<u>Keynote speaker</u>	Prof. Dr Peter Johan Lor, IFLA, Den Haag, NL
<u>Date and time</u>	Thursday 7 September 2006, 09:00-12:00
<u>Rules of procedure</u>	Limited time for questions and debate after the presentation of each paper.

09:00-10:00 Keynote speech by Prof. Dr Peter Johan Lor, Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria, SA / Secretary General of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

Questions and comments:

- One of the participants asks the following question: Is the Internet killing libraries in Africa, and is it having a negative effect on the reading culture? Prof. Lor replies that in developed countries this is not the case, a symbiosis is possible (for example, with public libraries using the Internet) but in cases where the infrastructure for encouraging reading has been neglected, like in Africa, this could be a problem. However, in general, the Internet is not killing libraries.
- Another question is about the vulnerability of digital content. A participant asks if this meant that analogue content would continue or whether Prof. Lor foresaw paperless libraries in the future. Lor says that digital content requires a trusted repository for analogue documents. In general, one can say that the more primitive the technology, the more likely it is to survive a catastrophe.
- When asked what Africans can do to get their politicians to see the importance of reading, Prof. Lor says that influencing governments is a long hard struggle. It requires organization, advocacy and tactics (e.g. the publicizing of success stories as no one likes hard-luck stories).
- When the questioner calls on participants to send all the books they could spare to Africa, Lor objects because unwanted books often contain old information or are on subjects that are not relevant. Building the capacity to read and write is more important. IFLA is one of the organizations that gives workshops on these matters.

10:00-12:00: Five papers were presented during the Bibliometrics and Citations session.

1. Name: Robert Tijssen, Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS), Leiden University, NL

Paper: Measuring international scientific impact of local research in developing countries: An African case study

Questions and comments:

- The next speaker at this session, Williams Nwagwu, triggers a critical discussion on the criteria applied by Thomson Scientific's Citation Index databases and the consequences for African journals.
- What does the term 'local' journals mean? Why is this term used for journals produced in Africa? Answer: This is to distinguish them from 'international' journals, which here means journals produced in the Northern hemisphere and that are covered in the Science Citation Index. The speaker agrees that the distinction between 'local' and 'international' journals is a false dichotomy.
- Is the SCI relevant for measuring African research? In the discussion that follows it is recognized that the criteria used by Thomson Scientific's Citation Index databases marginalize African journals and the suggestion of creating an Africa Citation Index is greeted with enthusiasm.

2. Name: Williams Ezinwa Nwagwu, Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Paper: Organizing and monitoring research production and performance in Africa: towards an Africa Citation Index

Questions and comments:

- Questions are raised on the subject of how to organize the proposed Africa Citation Index. Is there a network or structure available in Africa? Eve Gray, one of the speakers, suggests NEPAD, which has recently called for the creation of an African Science and Innovation Facility for the funding of research initiatives across the continent.
- Another suggestion is to start with the creation of an African Periodical Index, which is not currently available. One institution should initiate this project: perhaps CODESRIA? Adebayo Olukoshi from CODESRIA answers that the creation of a citation index is in fact mentioned in Codesria's strategic plan: the momentum is already there! The initiative is enthusiastically supported by the audience.

3. Name: Elizabeth Le Roux, University of South Africa Press (Unisa Press), Pretoria, SA
Paper: Evaluating the success of scholarly publishing

Questions and comments:

- One of the participants raises the question of distribution and how this affects the strategy of University of South Africa (Unisa) Press. Distribution is in fact very difficult and collaboration is essential. Unisa has partners in various parts of the world but there is the problem of different editorial agendas. One must not lose sight of the reason for being an indigenous publisher.

4. Name: Omoverere Agarín, Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Paper: Link analysis and Web impact of Nigerian universities

Read by **Williams Nwagwu** because **Omoverere Agarín** could not be present due to visa problems, The ASC deeply regrets this but was unable to do anything about it.

Questions and comments:

- A participant asks why the search engine Alta Vista was used for this research. Answer: Alta Vista is the best in terms of links analysis. Someone remarks that links analysis is also shown by Web Crawler.

5. Name: Marlon Domingus, Open Access Leiden Programme, University Library of Leiden, NL

Paper: Research Unleashed?

Questions and comments:

- Titia van der Werf (ASC, and the initiator of the Connecting-Africa project) stresses the importance of this web portal for African Studies in terms of visibility and readership of African scholarship.