

And that's a wrap: Open Access Week 2013

Open Access (OA) Week 2013 came to an end last Friday here at UCT. Instead of the traditional scholar-scholar focus, we focused on scholar-student and scholar-community access with the overall theme this year of access. This was summed up by our panel discussion title: "Out in the cold: accessing scholarly resources beyond the ivory tower". [Our events](#) explored what OA is as well as disparities in access to scholarly materials between well-resourced institutions (such as UCT) and organisations or individuals outside of this enabling environment. Some highlights...

1) The university showed its support loud and clear! For example:

- The [UCT front page went orange!](#)
- The Animal Demography Unit highlighted their openly licensed resources throughout the week on [their Facebook page](#).
- The UCT library set up a display of open access books, resources and branded items in the foyer as well as adverts for our events on the common area display screens.



2) There was a great spirit at the Access Challenge and the OER Hackathon

These events saw a group of students gather in Molly Blackburn Hall to compare UCT access to journal articles with public access (using an external modem) and to turn educational resources into versions that are sharable online under an open license.



Some quotes from student participants:

"Access outside the confines and privileges of UCT can be challenging."

"Great idea for the Hackathon!"

"Academic institutions access to journals is very helpful. Personally, I cannot afford to pay"

"Individual articles are expensive and sometimes reading the preview...gives you the wrong idea."

The events drew interested passersby into conversation with us. For those walking by, we were on hand to answer questions and discuss open access, OERs and openness in general. It was rewarding to share information in these areas and spread the word to the student community.

3) Thursday's panel "Out in the cold: accessing scholarly resources beyond the ivory tower" evoked a lively response from the audience and had the unanticipated consequences of connecting the speakers with one another as well as with the audience. Open projects were simmering!

The panellists were:

Mark Horner: Founding Director of [Siyavula](#), a company that produces openly licensed textbooks and works with teachers to help them openly share their teaching resources;

Kathleen Dey: Director of [Rape Crisis](#), an NGO that supports rape survivors within their communities and within the Criminal Justice System and conducts research; and

Barbara Schmid: Project Manager of [UCT's Knowledge Co-op](#), which provides a bridge between groups or organisations and the knowledge, skills and resources from within UCT through student research projects.

With their diverse backgrounds, each panellist gave a unique perspective with regard to the challenges of access to resources beyond the university environment. With discussion, questions and comments ranging from talk about Open Educational Resources, resource sharing and Open Source Software use in SA schools to the limited access opportunities for off-campus research and students bridging the gap to scholarly resources for NGOs and the community, we covered a lot of ground. It was clear that issues of access are on the minds of people from a wide variety of work and disciplinary backgrounds. Serendipitously, the panellists found several synergies and areas where their expertise and issues overlap and it was good to see potential future networks and connections start to take root.



It was challenging to engage students during study week (that is the downside of OAWeek in the global south) but we succeeded in our efforts to engage the broader university community especially students with a range of open access issues. We are continuing our conversation within UCT as well as the broader community. Visit [our site](#), [follow](#) or [like](#) us, or feel free to contact us [via email](#) with your questions and comments around open access and more. We're looking forward to having you join the open conversation.

The OpenUCT team

by OpenUCT

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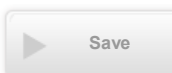
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