Case Study 2

Feminist Africa

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February 2009

Title: Case Study 2: Feminist Africa

February 2009

Report of the Opening Scholarship Project funded by the Shuttleworth Foundation

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAU	Association of African Universities
AGI	African Gender Institute
ASSAf	Academy of Science of South Africa
DOAJ	Directory of open access journals
DoE	Department of Education
GWS	Gender and Women's Studies
HEI	Higher education institution
HIVOS	Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
OJS	Open Journal Systems
OS	OpeningScholarship
SCI	Science Citation Index
SID	Society for Information Display
SPARC	Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNISA	University of South Africa

Introduction to the scholarly publishing case studies

This case study is one of four case studies of scholarly publishing practices carried out at the University of Cape Town (UCT) as part of the OpeningScholarship (OS) project, funded by the Shuttleworth Foundation and delivered through the Centre for Educational Technology. This project addresses the opportunities that 21st century information and communication technologies (ICTs) and open dissemination models could offer for enhanced communications and more effective knowledge dissemination in a South African university. In the case of scholarly publications, this is not a matter only of more effective dissemination of research results among scholars, but also the potential for new ways of tackling research communications and enhanced possibilities for ensuring the delivery of the university's mission and strategic goals, as well as enhancing the impact of its research.

The broader questions that the project asks are how the ICT systems that are in place could help deliver much greater intellectual capacity; how a university like UCT could make the most effective use of its research knowledge; and how it could avoid becoming a dependency, relying on its own intellectual output rather than on imported content. On the national level, the question would be how to use ICTs to grow access to South African (and African) knowledge to deliver the aspirations of national policy, as set out in the National Research and Innovation Policy and of the key objectives identified in the university's own strategy.

What is emerging increasingly, as universities across the globe engage with the potential of the internet to achieve international distribution for their research, is a recognition among many leading institutions of the strategic importance of doing as the Ithaka Report on scholarly publishing recommends and bringing scholarly publication activities closer to the core missions of universities (Brown, Griffiths and Roscoff, 2007:17). For example, at a recent symposium of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) in the US, Catherine Candee, executive director, Strategic Publishing and Broadcast Initiatives, office of the president of the University of California argued that universities need to meet the challenges of modern society and in order to do so need to have an adequate publication and communication system. Equally, Harvard University, faced with what Stuart M. Shieber, recently appointed as Officer of Scholarly Communications at Harvard, described as the market failure of the traditionally accepted scholarly publishing system, decided that it 'needed to make as a statement of principle that that scholarly writing should have broadest availability possible' (Shieber, Candee and Smith 2008).

The case study approach was chosen in order to provide multiple perspectives that could then be mapped against the broader context in order to highlight both the opportunities and the constraints that are encountered in attempts to maximise the potential of ICTs in university communications. The selection of case studies aimed to cover a range of scholarly disciplines as well as varied strategies for the use of ICTs in scholarly publishing. These were selected not only to profile effective and innovative use of ICTs for communication at UCT or explore situations in which the use of ICTs could improve performance, but also to reflect the ways in which UCT's strategic research goals are (or are not) being achieved through its research publication practices.

The research questions asked were:

- How can an institution such as UCT best build collaboration for scholarly communications across the institution?

- How effectively is UCT making strategic use of publishing activities on campus to profile the institution's mission, particularly in relation to international developments and best-case examples?

- What could an ICT system such as that at UCT offer in terms of new and opened up communications in teaching, learning and research?

- How can the ICT systems that are in place help deliver much greater intellectual capacity, allowing the university (and by extension, the country) to rely on its own intellectual capital rather than on imported content?

- What lessons can be learned from those departments making effective use of ICTs and new approaches to research dissemination?

- How can existing projects – both departmental initiatives and donor-funded projects – be coordinated to achieve an effective and collaborative institution-wide scholarly communication system?

What policies and practices would need to be encouraged if the university is to achieve the maximum impact for its scholarly communications for research, teaching and learning, and community engagement?

Background: the OpeningScholarship project

For universities, the changes brought about by new information technologies go beyond simply easing information transmission – although this is itself is potentially a powerful tool; but are affecting the way research is conducted, how teaching and learning takes place, and how scholars, students and the broader community communicate with one another. Most important, new modes of production are developing, increasing the potential for non-proprietary approaches to knowledge production in collaborative enterprises. There is a growing movement worldwide, using the potential that the internet offers for democratising knowledge, aimed at providing open and equitable access to information and knowledge, in particular, access to publicly funded research.

For a university like UCT this offers both challenges and opportunities. A major opportunity could be to use publishing activities being carried out by its academics to add to the reputation of the university and to further its goals. This potential is cogently expressed at the outset of the influential Ithaka <u>Report into Scholarly Publishing in a Digital Age</u>:

> We will argue ... that universities give up too much by withdrawing from publishing. They give up the opportunity to enhance institutional reputation and prestige. They reduce their ability to influence what gets published – and, therefore, not only what gets read but also who gets hired or promoted. They give up an opportunity to enhance the quality of what is published through the rich dialogue that is enabled by bringing editors into the fabric of relationships among scholars. And, as is often decried by open access advocates, universities sometimes must pay excessively high prices to gain access to published scholarship .... There is a great need, as well as a great opportunity, to revitalize the university's role and capabilities in publishing. (Brown *et al*. 2007: 6)

These new opportunities pose questions in a context like that of South Africa, about where the responsibility (and the advantage) lies for the dissemination of scholarship. There is no major scholarly publishing industry

in South Africa and the dissemination of research knowledge is handled in a patchy way by a variety of voluntary efforts and mostly small public benefit and commercial enterprises. Unlike the USA, where a number of leading universities are reclaiming scholarly publishing, using a variety of innovative models, in South Africa, the universities still do not – with the exception of UNISA Press – consider journal publishing as part of their mission.

In South African universities (and UCT is no exception) there is a general assumption that scholarly publishing is not the job of the university. Although the university tracks and supports authorship in accredited publications, to ensure a revenue track through Department of Education (DoE) subsidies, the OS project found that there were no central university records of journal publishing activities taking place in university departments and research institutes. There were also no records of which academics were editors of local or international journals. While it is difficult to back this up, given the paucity of the available records, the OS researchers gained the impression that UCT, with the possible exception of the Law Faculty, is comparatively low on the scale of South African universities when it comes to the number of journals edited or published by its researchers, nor is it one of the South African universities considering the establishment of faculty or institutional repositories. In other words, in spite of its considerable investment in an ICT infrastructure, UCT does not yet seem to have recognised its potential use to enhance the university's publishing efforts, profile its research output and improve its research output to the public.

Executive summary

This case study describes the use of ICTs in the publication of a journal, *Feminist Africa*, in the context of an academic department at UCT. The journal is of particular interest, because, being situated in the African Gender Institute (AGI), it provides insights into challenges and opportunities that are faced when a university unit takes on the role of journal publisher. This case study is enriched by the fact that the journal aims to pull together the research dimensions of the AGI's interests in the development of curriculum and teaching materials for African feminist studies in the context of its outreach work through the GWS African feminist network.

The case study reveals the difficulties faced by volunteer editors in a university departmental context. While the journal received donor support, the main difficulty transpires as the lack of support from the university for publishing activities. This leads to a level of 'invisibility' except when it comes to bureaucratic control and to levels of overwork in dedicated staff trying to juggle multiple roles.

The question raised in this case study is what advantages there would be for the university if it were to invest in the support journal publishing and what ICT systems would facilitate this.

Findings

Feminist Africa provides a lesson in the integration of the three pillars of the university mission: research, teaching and learning. The fact that it is an Africa-wide publication that attracts articles from the African continent and the diaspora, means it is delivering a number of the university's strategic goals.

Because there is so little support for scholarly publishing in South Africa, the country is falling behind international developments, as a number of leading international universities investigate ways in which online publishing can profile university research and start to place research dissemination at the centre of their operations.

Rationale for the selection of Feminist Africa

Feminist Africa was chosen as a case study for the OS project because it exemplifies the primary issues and challenges experienced by a university department publishing an academic journal. Although two key positions have salaries paid for by donor funding, other positions are filled by academics within the AGI who work on the journal as part of their core intellectual responsibilities. The journal is also of interest in that it is primarily an open access electronic journal, although some print copies are produced.

In terms of the strategic value of the journal to the university, it offers a number of potential 'hooks' for the university. The journal focuses on feminist studies in Africa, as described in its website:[1]

Feminist Africa provides a forum for progressive, cutting-edge gender research and feminist dialogue focused on the continent. By prioritising intellectual rigour, the journal seeks to challenge the technocratic fragmentation resulting from donor-driven and narrowly developmentalist work on gender in Africa. It promotes dialogue by stimulating experimentation as well as new ways of engaging with text for readers.

A commitment to transforming gender hierarchies in Africa will shape a strongly continental focus for the journal's subject matter, design and mode of distribution. Issues will confront linkages between different African regions, nation-states and social identities, and register the unique challenges facing a continent with a shared history of exploitation and marginalisation. At the same time, the journal acknowledges that Africa's myriad social and cultural processes are inextricably linked to global processes.

This highly developmental scholarly mission is very much in line with the vision of the national transformation goals of higher education policy

It is also in line with the UCT mission statement,[2] which speaks of the university's desire to 'recognise [its] location in Africa and our historical context', its commitment to gender equality, and its striving for inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration and synergy'. The mission statement also commits the university to 'value and promote the contribution that all our members make to realising our mission'.

Another interesting aspect of *Feminist Africa* is that it is situated in an academic department, the AGI, that incorporates a network of African feminist scholars, explicitly linking the theoretical aspects of its intellectual mission with 'practical understandings of gender and its importance in the process of social transformation in Africa'. This linkage of scholarly and social engagement missions could provide an interesting perspective on the potential for integration of the different pillars of the university – research communications, teaching and learning and social responsiveness – that the OS project explores at UCT.

1 http://www.feministafrica.org/
2 http://uct.ac.za/about/intro/

Objectives

The objective in investigating *Feminist Africa*'s publication strategy was to identify both positive and negative dynamics inherent in publishing a journal from within a university; and to gain a sense of how the publication efforts of a university department are contextualised in the institutional framework. This would encompass not only the ways in which the publication is using ICTs to good effect for the publication and dissemination, but also to explore the ways in which the university's goals and mission are being achieved.

The case study also aims to examine how a journal based in a university department can utilise ICTs (in this case, online publishing) to disseminate its research better and become a player in global knowledge production.

Third, the case study explores the relationship between scholarly communications (scholar to scholar), teaching and learning, and community engagement, as well as the use of ICTs in integrating these different facets of African feminist studies in an online journal.

Methodology

Given the time limitations of the OS Project and the difficulty of securing interview time with senior academics and other role-players, a preliminary desk review was undertaken to establish *Feminist Africa*'s online visibility and journal profile, as well as any other data such as publication policy, management structure and historical legacy.

Following the desk review, a questionnaire was compiled on the specific issues of journal context, editorship, editorial boards, peer review, authorship, bibliographic indexing, finance, online publishing and marketing/ visibility. The intention behind the five-page questionnaire was to establish an overall picture of the journal and ascertain its approach to formal aspects of the publishing endeavour.

The intention was to interview the convenor of the *Feminist Africa* editorial team (the Editor being currently overseas), who is also the AGI Head of Department, and the questionnaire formed a basis for discussion. In doing the case study interviews, it was not envisioned that any of the respondents would answer every question on the questionnaire, but rather that the list of questions would serve to tease out the issues pertinent to the journal in question.

When considering the interview scenario, it was hoped that editors would view the OS investigation as non-threatening and supportive. Once the journals for case study were identified, editors were approached via email stating the project's objectives and requesting their participation. All of the editors approached were amenable in their response and interviews were scheduled.

Although editors agreed to interviews and were responsive to email correspondence, it was implicit that only one interview slot was realistic in terms of time constraints. Interviews were therefore tailored to establish as much information as possible in a limited time while keeping the approach conversational. Journal interviews lasted between an hour-and-a-half and three hours and took place at the UCT offices of the respective editors.

Overview

Feminist Africa is a publication of the African Gender Institute (AGI) at UCT. Currently in its tenth single-issue volume, the journal provides a forum for progressive, cutting-edge gender research and feminist dialogue focused on the African continent.

Feminist Africa is primarily an online electronic journal. However, connectivity problems in Africa have necessitated the ongoing production of print copies, albeit in low numbers to meet the needs of the members of the Feminist Studies Network, an African-based collective of writers, researchers, teachers, and some activists, who form the core of a listserv run by the AGI. These members and African university libraries and research institutes receive the journal in hard copy. These then have to be mailed to members, most of whom are in African countries, adding to the workload of journal production and dissemination. Whether to continue the production of print copies is a key consideration for *Feminist Africa*, as it is for many other South African journals. While *Feminist Africa* styles itself as an open access journal in its Editorial Statement, there is some confusion when it comes to its copyright notice. (This is discussed in more detail below.)

Journal focus

The journal's website identifies 'a strongly continental focus for the journal's subject-matter, design and mode of distribution'. It goes on to state that issues 'will confront linkages between different African regions, nation-states and social identities, and register the unique challenges facing a continent with a shared history of exploitation and marginalisation. At the same time, the journal acknowledges that Africa's myriad social and cultural processes are inextricably linked to global processes.'[3]

The website statement above sums up the journal's approach as producing global-standard research from within a relatively sophisticated environment (UCT), while still having an intrinsic sense of itself as having a crucial role to play in a developmental context.

Journal background and profile

In 2002 the AGI's Strengthening Gender and Women's Studies for Africa's Transformation (GWS Africa) Project conducted a regional workshop which undertook to establish a gender and women's studies website which would be used to 'continue the work of critically reviewing current research and disseminating African resources and publications to the community of GWS scholars' (GWS website). *Feminist Africa* arose out of a further objective to draw together the debates and experiences of gender research and teaching in African contexts in an African online journal on gender issues. It was envisaged that the journal would be the first of its kind, and would run parallel to and support the coordination of the AGI's online teaching and research activities.

In its conceptualisation, therefore, the journal represents the merging, in a scholarly context, of the three pillars of the university's mission: research, teaching and learning, and social responsiveness.

Since producing its first issue in 2002, *Feminist Africa* has published nine issues, with the tenth issue due in October 2008. These consist of feature articles, Standpoint and Gender Research articles, Bio-Profiles, In Conversation pieces and book reviews.

3   http://www.feministafrica.org/

The journal was recently accredited in 2005 by the DoE, which entitles local authors publishing research articles in the journal to collect publication subsidy. This in itself is of potential advantage to the university, as the UCT Research Office has acknowledged.[4] If university support could help ensure that this accreditation status is retained and, even better, if such support could ensure timely production of journal issues and perhaps even the production of more issues per year leading to wider citation, this would undoubtedly be advantageous to scholars at UCT and in other South African universities publishing in the journal. In addition it could earn enhanced revenues for the university.

Publishing within the university

The AGI is situated in the Humanities Faculty at UCT. One of the biggest challenges facing academic departments or research units within the university is insufficient support. This is especially the case for smaller departments in the humanities who are subject to the overarching university focus on teaching and research and the reward and promotional policies that underpin this focus. As stated above, the AGI has identified that *Feminist Africa* has a crucial role to play in developing gender studies as a discipline on the African continent and then of profiling African gender studies perspectives internationally. In addition, *Feminist Africa* itself has identified as a primary objective capacity-building through the mentoring and development of African authors. The situation at AGI shows that these ambitions can often be in conflict with institutional ambitions and departmental and personal goal-setting that look to student numbers, research levels and the authoring of accredited publications as measures of departmental performance. The financial drivers that underpin these goals in turn create the pressures of academic performance and departmental resourcing, something that the Office of Scholarly Communication at the University of California found was impeding innovation (Candee 2008).

Despite potential conflict in terms of overall focus on output, the fact that the AGI addresses crucial African development issues clearly falls within UCT's mission, which is to:

- Recognise [its] location in Africa and [its] historical context.

- Claim [its] place in the international community of scholars.

- Strive to transcend the legacy of apartheid in South Africa and to overcome all forms of gender and other oppressive discrimination.

- Be flexible on access, active in redress, and rigorous on success.

- Promote equal opportunity and the full development of human potential.

- Strive for inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration and synergy.

- Value and promote the contribution that all [its] members make to realising [its] mission.

UCT provides AGI with an institutional base and services, but the department receives a relatively small percentage of its revenue from the university. It is instead almost entirely dependent on international donor funding. The academic role of the AGI, as dictated by the university, entails the production and development of teaching resources for UCT students and peer-reviewed research output in accredited publications. Any contributions made by UCT-contracted staff to the institute's developmental and publishing goals therefore

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4 Interview, 17 April 2008.

have to be undertaken over and above their defined academic duties. This leads quite obviously to a problem of over-commitment of AGI staff and a resultant strain on the institute.

The Feminist Africa business model

Feminist Africa itself receives no funding from UCT, other than indirectly because the editorial functions, of both Editor-in-Chief and convenor of the editorial team, are carried out by UCT salaried academics. The AGI is committed through its funding arrangements to distribute the journal free of charge and not to run a subscription service. The journal does produce print copies for the GWS network and African university libraries, which are produced and distributed with the support of donor funding.

Feminist Africa is run with the support of donor funding, principally from the Ford Foundation, with further contributions from the Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (HIVOS), the Association of African Universities (AAU), and the Society for Information Display (SID). Ensuring the sustainability of the journal is an ongoing challenge. As the convenor of the editorial team points out: 'Nobody just wants to fund a journal.' AGI management is therefore forced to bundle the funding requests for the journal with other projects or deliverables. The convenor of the editorial team comments that fundraising for the journal is especially difficult in that funding partners who work in this discipline are more likely to support initiatives that would have an impact on the grassroots level – a product or programme that has clear potential to affect change or have an impact on popular consciousness. From the perspective of the OS project, this means that a UCT department, with the support of donor funding, is adding to the intellectual capital of the university's scholarship without concomitant support from the university.

While journal management (Editor, convenor of the editorial team and IT Manager) is housed within the AGI offices, and university resources are used for the daily running of the journal, according to UCT policy, a percentage of the donor funds supporting any outside-funded project have to be allocated to covering overhead expenses, such as office space, IT equipment, library use, etc. In spite of the fact that donor funds cover all production costs, university regulations require *Feminist Africa* to have its suppliers (printers, for example) approved by the university annually, which reduces its flexibility in responding to market forces when sourcing outside services of this kind.

This means that the institution imposes itself in management decision-making processes such as approving suppliers, but appears to show no real interest in the work of the journal. The perception is that the sentiment of the faculty concerned (Humanities) is that 'a department does not produce a journal' and as a result, little attention is paid to the quality of the output. 'After all, it is research,' argues the convenor of the editorial team.

Publishing management

Feminist Africa is self-published by the AGI in that the institute manages all aspects of editorial and production work. An editorial advisory team is responsible for commissioning material, conceptualising all issues and soliciting and managing guest editing. Development editing, copy editing and design are handled by outsourced specialists, working with AGI staff, while typesetting, print, distribution and certain aspects of the online publishing process are outsourced to a publishing service provider. This large network of specialised endeavours

is project managed by the convenor of the editorial team in addition to her departmental management, teaching and postgraduate supervisor roles.

The current situation in terms of management of *Feminist Africa* is that the AGI chooses to operate as publisher. Should the institute decide to change its situation as publisher and, for instance, publish with a professional scholarly publisher like OpenJournals Publishing or Taylor & Francis, nothing would change in terms of its relationship with UCT or in terms of the amount of support it currently receives from the institution. This begs the question why an institute would choose to continue publishing a journal with increasing demands in the rapidly changing scholarly publishing environment; all of which is made that much more difficult by departmental teaching loads and administrative pressures.

The 'terrier' approach to the publishing endeavour in the face of constant adversity is characteristic of many small independent, institute or society publishers in South Africa. Many of these publishers make invaluable contributions to national knowledge production with little or no support or financial resources, and do so using the time of well respected (otherwise employed) academics and researchers.

The answer to why the AGI continues to publish despite the drain on resources, lies in its commitment to its subject area and to building research around the Feminist Studies discipline on the continent. There is an almost missionary zeal among such publishers who accomplish a great deal during after-hours work, sometimes made possible by international funding, sometimes purely voluntary. There is a strong argument that the failure of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the state to capitalise on and support these publishing endeavours weakens the grassroots support for growing strong academics who can publish in a vibrant local publishing environment.

In the course of the case study interview the question was posed as to whether a decision to publish with a publisher rather than self-publishing would not be a solution to alleviating some of the strain experienced in publishing the journal. While there was agreement that such a relationship would take care of some of the management pressures, the convenor of the editorial team did not feel that it would entirely rid her and other members of the journal management team of the burdens associated with the journal. 'We would consider [working with a publisher], but it depends on who it is,' says the convenor of the editorial team. 'It depends on their reputation, on whether they're stable, and on what else they publish. I wouldn't necessarily leap at it with open arms.' She concedes that larger distribution networks would have a positive impact on the journal, but argues that a large proportion of the work associated with the journal is in inviting papers and doing the necessary soliciting of papers. 'We try very hard to go out of our way to [solicit],' she says. 'We know from our own research and networks who is doing interesting work and who the excellent writers are, and we try to pull them in. Even if we got a commercial publisher, we would still be doing that legwork for the content.'

Rather than seeking the support of a publishing partner, the convenor of the editorial team feels most strongly about the need for more support (or at least acknowledgement) from the university. Promotion of the academic journal industry, she argues, is an absolutely key priority.

What we are seeing here, on the part of the university is a manifestation of what Esposito calls the 'free rider syndrome': the failure of higher education institutions or donors to support university publishing, on the basis that publication takes place outside the university (Esposito 2006: 192). In South Africa, this applies in spite of the fact that there is not an established or viable scholarly publishing commercial sector in South Africa (with the exception of law and tax publishing) that could act as such a commercial supplier. Given that South African

publishing, moreover, is not well served by the international scholarly publishing systems, particularly when it comes to regional studies scholarship of the kind epitomised by *Feminist Africa,* the argument for local support becomes even stronger.

While the question of journal publishing is being addressed by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) (Gevers and Mati 2006), the question remains of what role universities need to play in the context of 21st century digital scholarship: how should they support journal publication in the interests of the furtherance of their own intellectual missions and the expansion of access to South African scholarship?

'Local' and 'international' and perceptions of quality

The issue of institutional support is one which could be said to affect all journals published from within a university – whether self-published or not. The *Feminist Africa* convenor of the editorial team believes that the issue is a complex one and is tied up in a number of commonly held preconceptions. Most notably, there is a perception that local journals do not match the quality or stature of international journals, and that if an academic is to have work published which is to be considered significant, it is implicit that such publishing should be undertaken in an 'international' journal. UCT, like many other South African universities, has an ingrained promotion and reward system built on the back of the DoE policy for scholarly publication rewards, which reflects this perception.

That the dynamic of the entrenched scholarly publishing system is a complex one is endorsed by Guédon, who argues for a clearer understanding of the power dynamics in the divide between 'mainstream' and 'peripheral' research. Guédon describes how a publishing cartel gained control over the gatekeeping function in scholarly publishing through control of the Science Citation Index (SCI), so that control of the flow of international scientific information is in the hands of a limited number of western journals and the decision on which journals will be included in the citation index is in the hands of one company. The argument for the inferior status of 'local' journals is a circular one, in which journals from the periphery are excluded on the basis that they do not contribute to 'mainstream' science, when the definition of 'mainstream' is self-referential and refers to the SCI journals (Guédon 2007). While this hierarchy of journal prestige is commonly accepted in South African academe, the spurious basis upon which the distinction of 'local' and 'international' is made is much less recognised, leading to the neglect of local publishing and the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy of inferior quality.

National policies that are geared towards recognition of the value of research according to the metrics of international citation indexes have a trickle-down effect on university departments and research institutes. These institutions are assessed according to their publication record and then exert pressure on academics to publish not only as vigorously as possible, but to do so in overseas journals which appear in the international indexes. There is not only a dangerous conflation of ideas here in that the idea of 'overseas' is seen to equal quality while local product is inferior, but also an active degrading of the local scholarly publishing industry in that authors are in a sense being penalised in terms of academic review and rate-for-job if they choose to publish locally.

The convenor of the editorial team believes that a vibrant local publishing culture would have obvious benefits for young academics. In order for a healthy publishing culture to evolve, recognition (and consequent support) is essential.

Review of the journal

In this section we will examine the performance of the journal in terms of the profile of the Editorial Board and contributing authors; the use of ICTs to deliver the journal's goals; and copyright management.

Profile of the Editorial Board and contributing authors

The Editorial Board of *Feminist Africa* includes African scholars working in a range of African countries and the diaspora. (However, the listing of Advisory Board members on the Editorial Information website page does not supply institutional affiliations of Advisory Board members.) The journal publishes four research articles per issue. There is a strong focus on African authorship from across the continent, and there have been feature articles written by writers based in the USA or UK on feminism in the diaspora.

The profile of the journal is therefore truly international. This is an excellent achievement for a locally published journal, as many South African journals struggle to attract contributions from beyond national borders. This is quite possibly because the journal draws from an established community of African feminist scholars and is strengthened by the developmental role the AGI plays through the GWS African Feminist Network, which collaborates in the online development of African feminist research and curriculum development and maintains a listserv discussion forum.

The international profile of the journal has a perverse effect: while it reflects the characteristics of a high-quality journal, this in fact limits the potential for earning a DoE subsidy. In effect, a local journal earning a really high subsidy would need to be entirely parochial and therefore, by definition, of lower quality. Given that there are such journals in the list of accredited publications (Gevers and Mati 2006), one has to question the effect of the subsidy system on local journal quality.

The role of ICTs in furthering *Feminist Africa*'s publishing agenda

Like most other academic journals, *Feminist Africa* is reliant on various forms of technology for the everyday running of the journal. The journal receives submissions via email and posts html versions and pdfs of the published articles on its website. The journal places no restriction on its authors in terms of posting the published (or pre-press) versions of their work on private or institutional websites and repositories; and copyright rests entirely with its authors.

As with most other academic journals, one of *Feminist Africa*'s biggest administrative challenges is the management of the peer review system. The process is managed by an advisory team, with most of the administrative legwork being taken care of by a contracted administrative assistant. The journal uses a custom administrative system to manage peer reviews which it has evolved for its purposes over time. While there is knowledge of journal management solutions such as Open Journal Systems (OJS) and ScholarOne for this purpose, journal managers show no inclination to experiment with the system. Such systems are designed to save time and resources in publication management, and it would perhaps be to the journal (and the AGI's) benefit to explore the benefits. There is however a sense that the current management is so over-burdened that to explore new technologies is an indulgence – even if they could revolutionise the administrative process.

Moreover, in the context in which the journal operates, it would have to address the fact that many of its potential authors and peer reviewers do not necessarily have computer or online access. This means that any off-the-shelf publishing system would need to be customised to meet this eventuality.

Journal support

The convenor of the editorial team feels strongly that help is required in terms of familiarising local publishers with the available technologies and with incorporating these technologies into their systems. Assistance is also required in helping smaller independent publishing operations to come to terms with technologies which are used in effective indexing in bibliographic databases and with the general management of metadata. These are increasingly specialised areas, with highly advanced concomitant technologies. It is not realistic to expect a university department, institute or professional society publishing a journal to have the resources to research and stay abreast of these technologies.

In an environment where online searching is growing rapidly, appearing at the top of a list of search results makes all the difference in terms of visibility, citation and status. This brings us to the crucial issue that a journal can be producing the highest level content possible, but if users cannot find the work among the myriad other articles online, the effort is in vain. Visibility and the harnessing of competitive technologies become crucial.

When it comes to *Feminist Africa,* a Google search on 'feminism' and 'Africa' does not bring the journal up in the top ten results in an international search. (However, if one inputs 'Africa' first and then 'feminism', it comes up fourth.) Ideally, given the prominence of the journal as the leading African feminist publication, search parameters should be managed so that it always comes up in the top five. If the search is refined to websites from South Africa, which would not necessarily be the way in which an international search would be conducted, it fares much better, with the four top results out of ten. Google Scholar yields the top two results out of ten, with these two articles yielding 11 and 6 citations respectively.

The journal could probably have a better showing if its website provided a more intuitive and rapidly searchable contents list for each journal issue, which is also crucial for librarians and anyone else searching for bibliographical purposes. If one clicks through to the current issue on the website,[5] you see an outline of the categories of articles (Feature Articles, In Conversation, etc.); followed by 'Downloads for this edition', in which articles are identified only as 'Article 9 issue 1', etc. Only by downloading the entire journal (the first option on the list of downloads), are you able to view a consolidated table of contents. This is a laborious process, and the journal runs the risk of losing viewers who do not have the time or patience to click on each link to view the article/author details. Figure 2 shows the table of contents for Learned Publishing (the journal of the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers) on its IngentaConnect table of contents page.[6] This structure is considered ideal by these authors, as the viewer can immediately see title and author details for all articles in the issue, and a single click will take you through to the desired text (if one is a subscriber – it can otherwise be purchased on a pay-per-view basis).

The question is what support is needed from the university to improve this situation. Should a university such as UCT provide support for journal editors on campus by providing a central journal management system? And if so, where should this be sited? (In the US and Canada this tends to be the library.) As the systems are open

5 http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php?page=issue_nine
6 http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/alpsp/lp/2008/00000021/00000004

source and maintenance relatively low in what are user-friendly systems, this might well prove worthwhile as a way of supporting the development of journals at UCT.

When it comes to bibliographical information and searchability, the expertise is available in the library and in the Centre for Information Literacy, while the OS researchers in the Centre for Educational Technology are able to advise on open access issues. Managing journal systems such as this requires minimal server space and the university clearly contains the skills to provide technical support.

Marketing and distribution

The fact that the journal is online contributes to its distribution and reach, as does the fact that the journal is community-based and serves an Africa-wide and indeed worldwide community of feminist scholars. The print version of the journal is supplied to a mailing list of subscribers with limited access to the internet and this is subsidised by donor funding. The journal does a certain amount of below-the-line promotions, for example through UCT online news magazines, but the journal staff cannot afford the time or the money for extensive publicity.

It would be to the advantage of the journal to adopt a Creative Commons licence so that its open access status is picked up by the directory of open access journals (DOAJ) and by Google searchers, as this could substantially increase its global exposure.

Copyright and open access

The descriptive copy on the *Feminist Africa* Editorial Information page describes its 'open-access and continentally-targeted distribution strategy', stating that, '[t]o overcome the access and distribution challenges facing conventional academic publications, Feminist Africa deploys a dual dissemination strategy, using the internet as a key tool for knowledge-sharing and communication, while making hard copies available to those based at African institutions.'

However, there does not appear to be a copyright notice printed in the journal or placed in the prelims of the online publication or on individual downloadable articles. Rather, it appears online in the 'Editorial Information' page of the journal website. The copyright notice reads as follows:

Individual copyright is held by authors and artists. Overall copyright is held by the African Gender Institute. Material, artwork extracts and articles from Feminist Africa may not be reproduced in any form of print or electronic publication without the permission of the Editors agi-feministafrica@uct.ac.za *.Requests for permission to reproduce material will not be granted until one calendar year since first online publication in Feminist Africa has lapsed.*

This copyright notice does not designate the journal as an open access journal and this is probably why the journal does not appear in the DOAJ directory of open access journals (something that would garner it exposure and potentially increased citations). The notice is somewhat confusing: there is an implicit contradiction between the one-year embargo, which would suggest that this is a 'delayed-access' journal and the 'all rights reserved' requirement, that appears to apply even after the one-year embargo. It is not clear what purpose the embargo

serves when permission is in any event needed for any use. Nor does this accord with the open access status declared elsewhere in the editorial information.

The question is what would be gained (or lost) if this journal were to be fully and explicitly open access. We would argue that a CC-BY licence placed in the digital copy of the journal and on each article and in the print version would protect the integrity of the journal and the authors' rights and protect it against commercial exploitation (if indeed that is a risk). Given the African constituency that the journal serves, it would appear that the ability to access the content of the journal without access or price barriers would be a considerable advantage, and could almost certainly extend its reach.

It is probable in any event that readers who access the journal online, in the absence of any copyright notice, would assume it to be open access. What is lost is the extra mileage of being in the relevant directories, getting more exposure through search engines and potentially gaining more citations for its authors.

Lessons learned

For relatively little investment, the university could provide ICT support for journals operating on campus. This could include:

- The provision of an open source journal management system that could render online journal editorial, production and distribution functions more efficient and more professional.

- Bibliographical expertise and metadata management to ensure that journals are properly recorded for library purposes and university tracking of its own publications and their contribution to research.

- Advice on copyright policies and consistent copyright management, including the use of Creative Commons licences.

- Better integration of publishing functions so that journal editors can share expertise and create a community of practice.

- Advice on mechanisms to ensure search results and high citation impact.

Overall, the findings are that there would be strategic advantage in the university taking up its publications and championing them at top level. It could emulate Harvard and other US universities to set up an Office of Scholarly Communications in order to maximise its effectiveness in research dissemination.

Conclusion

Feminist Africa's biggest challenge is to ensure its sustainability. This raises questions for the journal in terms of capacity and whether or not it should continue to appear in print -- core considerations for every South African journal. The AGI's role in publishing *Feminist Africa* is complex in that it is a teaching/research entity operating as a publisher within a university environment. This entails a very high level of commitment from the journal management team who fulfil their role without remuneration and with very little acknowledgement from the institution it forms part of.

The issue of institutional acknowledgement of the publishing exercise extends beyond the AGI, and relates to the overall struggle of small publishers within the university operating in isolation. The AGI has, in a sense, invented its own wheel in terms of how it runs *Feminist Africa*, and how it ensures the journal's continued existence. It would make sense for such pockets of expertise to be capitalised upon. Without exception, all journal editors interviewed for the OS project expressed the desire for professional input and support in the publishing endeavour. Editors also consistently identified a level of isolation in terms of not knowing about the goings-on of other journals published within UCT. Given the widely varying status and expertise of the journals published within the institution, there is an invaluable pool of expertise and resources which could be more actively shared.

The issue of the use of ICTs is crucial. Changes in publishing technologies and practices are taking place at a staggering rate. On the one hand, this introduces the worry of small publishing entities being left behind, but on the other hand, technology has shown its ability to level the playing fields in terms of global competitiveness. Institutes and departments such as the AGI that are running publishing programmes under the strain of meagre capacity and resources perhaps stand to benefit most from some of the technologies available. The use of a specialised journal management system could, for instance, be used to reduce the time taken for managing submissions, peer reviewing and revision of articles, as well as the production process.

Taking a wider view of the institutional context, it is necessary that enterprises such as the AGI receive support from their associated institutions so that they may harness new technologies and so continue to further local knowledge production, develop young academics into globally competitive published authors, and ensure a vigorous and dynamic scholarly publishing environment.

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