

Promoting Discoverability of African Scholarship

Blog post by Michelle Willmers

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The rise of the Open Access movement has within recent years led to a situation in which the Global North research policy environment is increasingly mandating open access for research outputs. Within this context there is a serious danger that open access mandates will serve to heighten the visibility divide in global knowledge production, rendering outputs from the global South near invisible in the deluge of online content from the North. The requirement by funders and research agencies that open access outputs not only be online, but also that content be curated and archived in repositories and databases with associated metadata in line with international best practice, additionally means that the content generated by the North will generally be shared in a fashion that facilitates optimal findability and interoperability.

Visibility and interoperability with other online platforms and databases is crucial not only in terms of boosting access to knowledge, but also in facilitating new forms of digital and inter-disciplinary research. The growing divide in content visibility and curation is therefore also highly undesirable in that it threatens to decrease the scope of the global knowledge corpus by virtue of the fact that knowledge from certain parts of the world will be less likely to have been curated and shared in line with the international protocols that facilitate content exchange and digital scholarship.

In order to address this global situation and stimulate the development of local capacity in new forms of scholarly communication, the OpenUCT Initiative, in collaboration with the Carnegie Corporation, will host a two-day workshop in Nairobi on 10-11 March 2014 to address practical strategies for increasing the discoverability of African scholarship. Proceedings have been designed to surface and address the needs of a wide range of Africa-based research agencies, with a specific focus on network building and linking to international initiatives. Research agencies represented will include: the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), TrustAfrica, the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), the African Leadership Center (ALC), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

The speaker line-up includes:

Bruce Becker (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, UbuntuNet Alliance, CHAIN-REDS, South Africa and Italy)

Laura Czerniewicz (OpenUCT, Cape Town)

Tezira Lore (International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi)

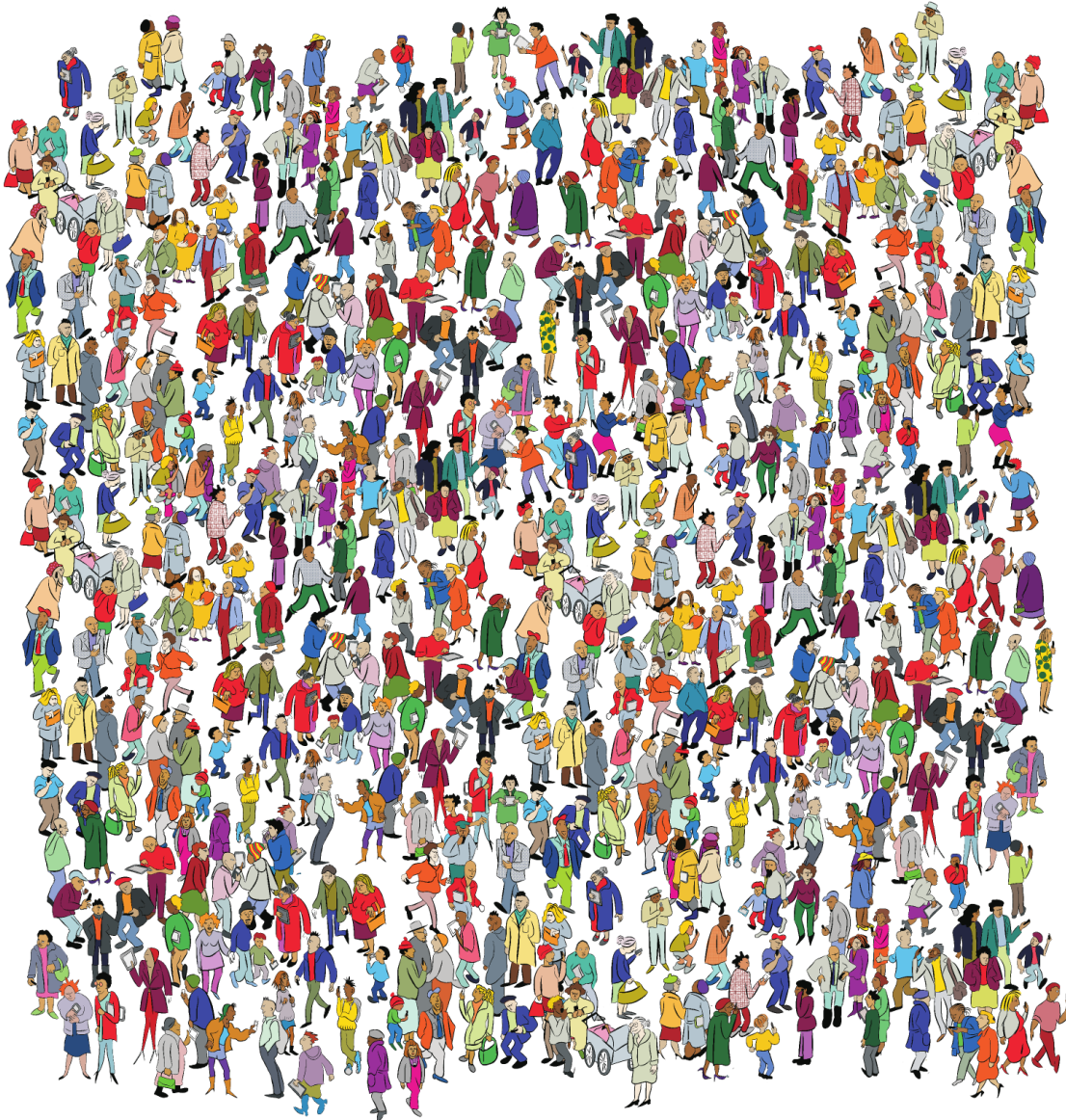
Firoze Manji (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Senegal)

Ernesto Priego (Centre for Information Science, City University London)

Kaitlin Thaney (Director, Mozilla Science Lab, New York)

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