



## Researcher practices in context: a framework

Blog post by Laura Czerniewicz

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Like many others, I subscribe to the fine discourse of open networked scholarship with its associated values of participation, engagement and transparency. I hold dear the possibilities of existing unequal forms of legitimacy and power relations in global knowledge production and dissemination being challenged through the enabling affordances of networked technologies.

Yet scholarly practices are firmly grounded in local realities. It was Castells, almost 20 years ago, who described the opportunities and contradictions of a networked world so well when he said, "Power, money, and information are primarily organized around flows which link up distant locales, and unite them in a shared logic". At the same time he noted "the variable geometry of networked integration and switched off exclusion of the network society translates into the juxtaposition between two spatial forms/processes: the space of flows, on the one hand, the space of places, on the other hand." In short, "People still live in places, and construct their experience, their meaning, and their political representation around these places". (Castells, 1996:469)

It is this juxtaposition that motivated us to explore changing researcher practices in Africa. Under the auspices of the [Scholarly Communication in Africa Programme](#), the locally shaped - scholarly communication practices of scholars in four sites were surfaced; Namibia, South Africa, Mauritius, and Botswana. Scholars shared their experiences in thoughtful interviews with Cathy Kell, and illuminated the nexus between global trends and local realities.

How could these practices be described across contexts in nuanced ways that show the subtleties of social relations, users/audiences and forms of communication? A framework was developed using the heuristic of the research cycle with indicators at every stage. At the same time, researchers interviewed worked in different disciplines and it became clear that it would be more useful to categorise their research by the types of research projects undertaken with their associated practices rather than by disciplinary taxonomies. These five types were developed using Using Boyer (1990), Griffith (2004) and Cooper (2011).



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## Changing Research Communication Practices and Open Scholarship: A Framework for Analysis

*Laura Czerniewicz, Catherine Kell, Michelle Willmers & Thomas King*

The SCAP paper [Changing Research Communication Practices and Open Scholarship: A Framework for Analysis](#) by Catherine Kell, Michelle Willmers, Thomas King and myself has two parts: the first describes the framework and its foundations, locating these in the broader literature. The second applies the general principles developed to the 72 research projects which were described in the interviews (with the proviso that research projects was understood in a loose sense). It is interesting that only ten of the 72 projects fell into the conventional "discovery research" category; sixteen could be categorised as "interpretive". The many papers in the "applied" category are of particular significance in the light of the role of consultancies in African research.

As we observe in the paper, it was striking how importance context is - the history and culture of each of the four institutions studied, and to a lesser extent the history and culture of the countries in which they are located. Even though these universities and the basic features of the types of research they engage in and research cycles that they go through share a number of similarities in terms of overall geography, history and mission, their differences are sufficient enough to create significant diversity in how their scholars respond to the research endeavour. The framework provides a way of surfacing these differences while sharing rich experiences across sites.

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