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Open publishing: a social justice imperative for Africa

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Open publishing: a social justice imperative

Introduction

- Access to information dearth
- Dearth negatively impacted the research output of these institutions
- Spiralling costs of subscriptions is one of the most significant contributors to limited access to scholarly literature
- Last 18 months has taught us as librarians important lessons
- demand is for free quality decolonised higher education
- Decolonised higher education - small markets for African content
- One of the possible ways forward is for libraries to play a much more proactive role - role of 'library as a publisher'
- Focus on the publication of monographs and textbooks



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Definition of social justice

- Social justice is basically a praxis of inclusion in which society provides all individuals with equal opportunities
- Redistribution of resources to improve the situation of the disadvantaged
- Encompasses acts of fairness, equality and justness towards others
- Toll on scholarly output – marginalisation from the learning and/or research processes
- Negative impact on research production as information is necessary for the generation of new information
- Knock-on effect of exclusionary practices relegates the global south to the furthest point in the world's knowledge production chain
- Communities from the global south are strangled by information poverty



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Social justice as an open access pillar

- Social justice pillar of open access must proactively advance the eradication of information poverty and ‘information unfairness’
- The open access movement is guided by the principle that access to information, an absolute necessity for any level of growth and development, must be made available free to all end users.
- Social justice challenges structures that perpetuate poverty and injustice and this is done through the eradication of information poverty and injustice. Open publishing is a possible conduit for this eradication.
- Marketing to researchers is in terms of the benefits
- As much as the openness movement has very altruistic underpinnings, it was promoted to researchers as a process to improve downloads and citation



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Pragmatism versus altruism

- Librarians ideals and professional obligations are in alignment with the openness movement
- Researchers 'donate' their intellectual output in exchange for visibility
- Exacerbating this 'generosity gesture' is the carrot and that is the growth of one of their 'recognition' via the impact factor
- Open access advocates have fallen into the trap of using pragmatic measures to promote openness
- With all good intentions, these advocates utilised this pragmatic approach but have overlooked the powerful altruistic and social justice impact of improving access to critical content to international and/or marginalized communities
- Universities have a social justice or social responsive mission - research output is part of public conversations; it is a public good
- In reclaiming their role as disseminators of scholarly content for democratic discourse, librarians need to strongly advance the principles of social justice
Emphasis should be on development



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Librarians' contribution to social justice

- Academic libraries have done exceptionally well in creating and managing open access repositories
- In more recent years, libraries have been delivering a new service – a 'library as publisher' service

Library as publisher

- Relatively advantaged institutions need to take the lead in sharing scholarly output to engender and nurture a culture of research
- Some South African academic institutions, via their libraries, have stepped-up to the plate to make scholarly content accessible
- Libraries are offering a suite of diamond open access services - library as a publisher



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Open Monograph Press

- University of Cape Town Libraries offers a diamond open monograph publishing service
- Publication of monographs and textbooks
- Open textbooks published and those that are still in the pipeline to be published would address a myriad of challenges including, *inter alia*, spiralling costs of textbooks and the need for local content as they are available online for free and licensed under a creative commons license
- Medical textbooks
- Constitutional law textbook



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Demonstration

- [A Week in the Life of the UCT/GSH Department of Medicine – Preparing for the Next 100 Years](#)
- [Open Access Atlas of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Operative Surgery: Volume 1 - Head and Neck](#)
- [Professor Rob Scott Millar's request](#) (Essentials of ECGs)
- [Zoom](#)



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ATLAS OF PAEDIATRIC HIV INFECTION: An illustrated guide for health care professionals



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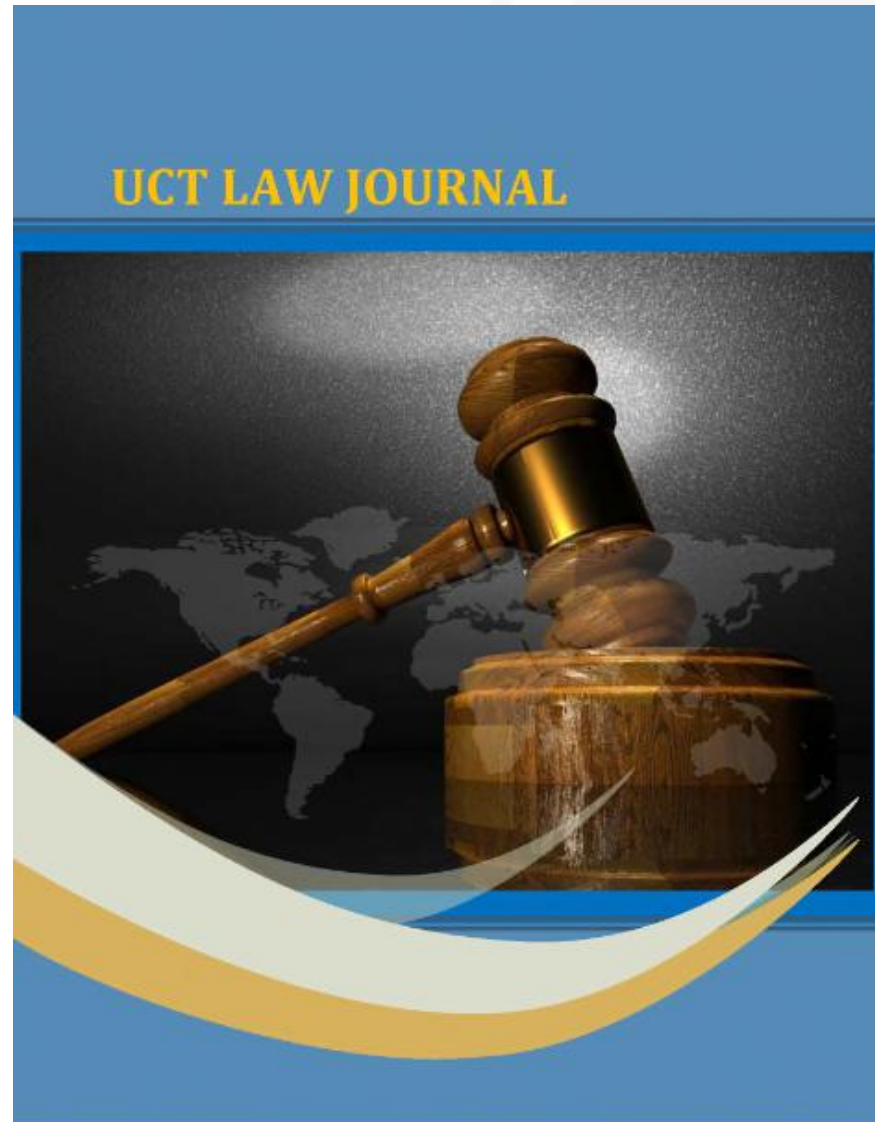
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Attempts have been made by the authors to present the material in the book as completely and up-to-date as possible at the time of publication. However, there are no warranties that the information provided is totally devoid of errors or will remain accurate since new information may become available in the face of changes from new research and clinical experience in the field of HIV medicine. Readers are advised to keep up with new information on the subject matter.



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Conclusion

The role of the librarian is changing rapidly – our core business of yesterday was reference librarianship and this has been captured by the end user. Lets not wait for a judicial enquiry to contest this state of capture. We need to move on and continue with our role as disseminators of information. However, we need to move from being reactive to being proactive. As practising librarians we need to accept that we have a social justice obligation. In an unfair society, it will be a dereliction of duty for librarians not to embrace new trends to share scholarly content. Not to take on new roles to make information accessible to the marginalised. Open publishing is a social justice imperative and librarians need to make this their priority.