

EMBRACING ELECTRONIC SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA

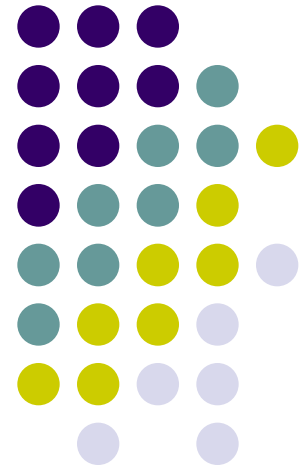
The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
(KNUST) Library, Kumasi, Ghana as a case study.

By

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*Paper presented at the 1st PKP Conference in Vancouver, Canada
11- 13 July 2007*

INTRODUCTION



- Scholarly communication is disseminated for the development of society including the African society.
- This type of communication in years gone came to the public either orally or through the printed media.
- The printed media has presented and still presents information through periodicals, magazines, journals and books.
- These primary information are presented through either peer reviewed or refereed journals or conference papers.

INTRODUCTION

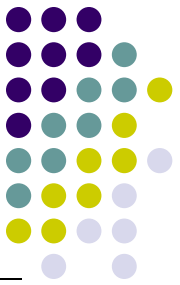


- Scholarly communication is also scholarly publishing.
- Access to scientific and technical information has brought about the development of high quality teaching and research.
- Electronic publishing or online publishing or web publishing is competing seriously with print publishing today.

INTRODUCTION



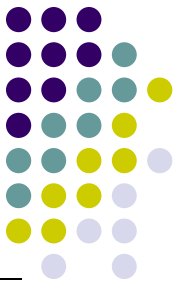
- Electronic publishing includes digital publication of books and articles and the development of digital libraries. It is also being used now in scientific publishing for peer-reviewed papers.
- Broadly, electronic publishing is used to refer to what can be found published online including the new forms of production and distribution of information.
- In recent times, electronic publishing has been making inroads into Africa because of the ICT revolution.



ELECTRONIC SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA

- Electronic publishing has been widely accepted in the developed world. The developing world including Africa is now trying to accept it to reap its benefits.

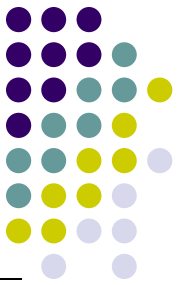
DEMERITS AND MERITS OF ELECTRONIC SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA



Some of the demerits of electronic publishing:

- A lack of standardization among publishers.
- Users rarely know that most journals are still published in print and only a small percentage of them are solely online.
- Only a few online journals have their back issues online.

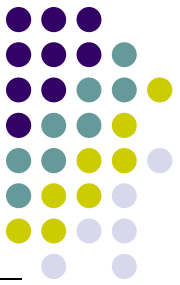
DEMERITS AND MERITS OF ELECTRONIC SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA



demerits ...

- They are unstable in the publishing market and their Uniform Resource Locators (URL) change frequently and servers may crash.
- Lack of a permanent archive, which means that one may not have titles of all past years as in print journals.
- Some institutions do not accept e-journal articles for promotion decisions.

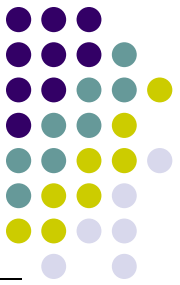
DEMERITS AND MERITS OF ELECTRONIC SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA



Some of the merits of electronic publishing:

- They provide users with online access to various journals.
- Ease and speed of use to a great amount of information sources just at the touch of a few keys.
- Can be accessed by multiple users at the same time, any time, any day.
- They have embedded links that add value to the journal article.

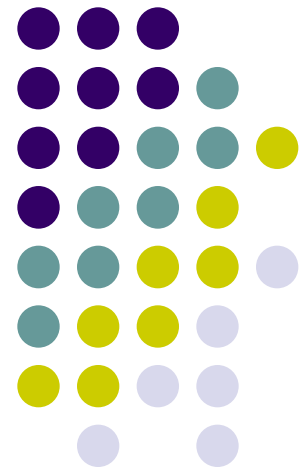
DEMERITS AND MERITS OF ELECTRONIC SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA

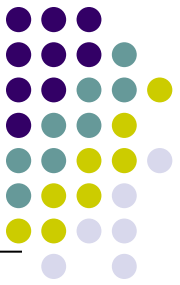


merits ...

- Can make some articles available even before the complete issue comes out.
- Saves shelf space and labour cost in libraries.
- Can include sound, video and other multi-media options which print does not have.

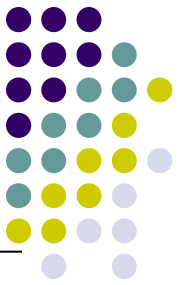
These merits and demerits have strong relationship with the functions of libraries so it is logical that libraries get into the publishing world as publishers of scholarly communication to make their goals complete.





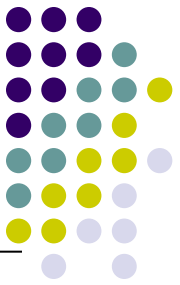
LIBRARIES AS ELECTRONIC PUBLISHERS

- University libraries and documentation centers, perform functions of identification, acquisition, processing, storing, dissemination and validation of information.
- They must now play a key role in the online production of scientific information, by creating electronic scientific journals, setting up open access archives for scientific articles, digitising and putting online, academic works.



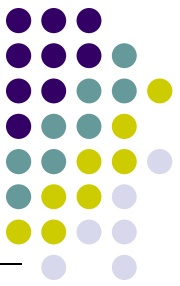
LIBRARIES AS ELECTRONIC PUBLISHERS

- Africa produces a lot of scholarly journals most of which are in print format.
- African academia also produce research reports, technical reports and other scholarly communication that are also in print format.
- African Institutions also need to provide access to knowledge created else where in the world.



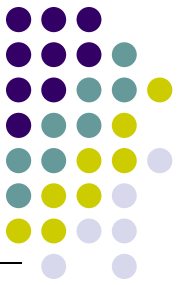
LIBRARIES AS ELECTRONIC PUBLISHERS

- However, it is important for Africa to create knowledge within the continent to be used to transform our societies and to be shared elsewhere in the world.
- An avenue therefore needs to be created to disseminate such created knowledge.
- Libraries which are the age long conduits for information acquisition, repackaging where necessary, and eventual dissemination must do this.



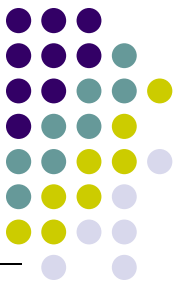
THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

- The KNUST Library system consists of a Main Library and 6 College Libraries.
- Together its stock is about 320,000 volumes.
- It subscribes to about 500 print journals.
- It subscribes to e-journals and has access to some free ones which altogether makes available about 19,000 electronic journal titles to its about 22,000 student population and about 650 faculty and researchers.



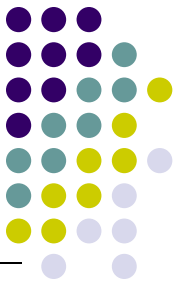
THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

- The staff of the Library have been exposed to several training programs in making different electronic resources available to users.
- Plans are in motion to set up an IR for the KNUST with the server located in the Main Library.
- The establishment of the IR, it is believed is the pad that will launch the Library into the publishing of scholarly communication.



THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

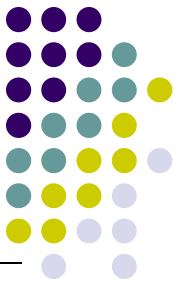
- The Library has considered the merits and demerits of getting involved in electronic scholarly publishing and since the merits are more than the demerits it is taking the plunge into scholarly publishing.
- A welcome development when the PKP software, Open Journal Systems (OJS) was introduced to librarians, researchers, journal editors, potential journal editors, post graduate students, IT administrators, at a workshop held in Kumasi from 23rd to 24th November 2006.
- The workshop strengthened the Library's resolve to go into electronic scholarly publishing because of what its staff were exposed to.



THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

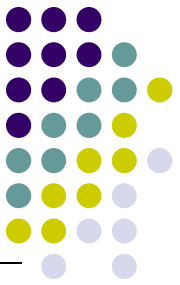
The KNUST Library sees the benefits of getting involved in electronic scholarly publishing as follows:

- Wide dissemination of research information, as many users can have access to the same material at the same time from several work stations world wide.



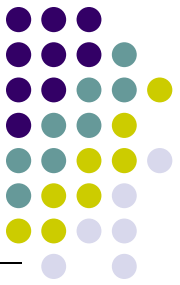
THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

- Speed, removal of distance and timeliness are provided for information seekers in e-publishing.
- Faculty and researchers will have easy links to colleagues world wide.
- Access to links to additional data and images that enhance the article.



THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

- More accurate usage statistics can be compiled.
- Institutions will not need to pay for access to what they have produced.
- The exposure of the university as serious minded and research oriented.
- Good method for detecting plagiarism.

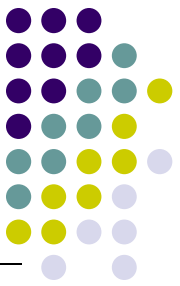


THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

KNUST has also considered several issues which fall into three main categories: technical, social & cultural, and economic in its desire to publish electronically.

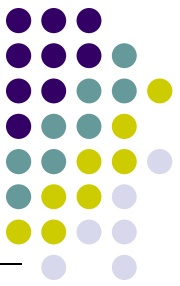
Technical –

- tools to use,
- which type to use,
- standards (HTML, SQML or acrobat PDF) and
- the most useful browsers to use



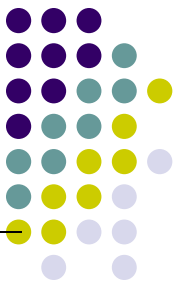
THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

- Social and Cultural –
 - the reaction of computer-phobia scholars to e-journals.
 - will articles in e-journals be given the same weight as those in print format?
 - will e-journal articles be given the same `respect' as those in print format?
 - what will be the response of intellectual property rights and laws to this venture?
- Economic – may be necessary to reduce the cost of subscribing to e-journals from commercial publishers



THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

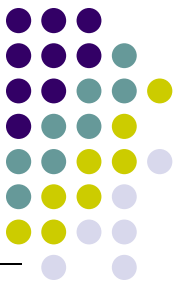
- A well equipped workstation supported by the staff of a university library can house many different journals. KNUST Library hopes to do this.
- The KNUST Library intends to feature, research reports, technical reports, theses, conference papers, articles in journals and any other scholarly communication of its staff in the IR.
- It will in addition publish articles, peer-reviewed or refereed, online.
- This will be in addition to the University's Journal, Journal of the University of Science and Technology (JUST) which is already one of the journals being featured in African Journals Online (AJOL) and being managed with OJS.



THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

Critical decisions that the KNUST Library still needs to make if publishing online journals:

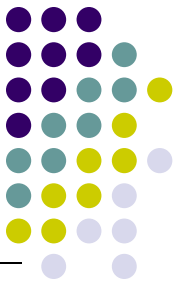
- If the articles are to be refereed or not and what the effect of the option taken will have on the journal.
- If the journal will for a start be only electronic or electronic and print.
- Where the copyright will be placed, in the Library or with the authors, what restrictions will be placed and what will constitute fair use.
- The amount of information to be made available to a subscriber, if it will be the entire issue of the journal or specific papers and how timely the information will be made available.



THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

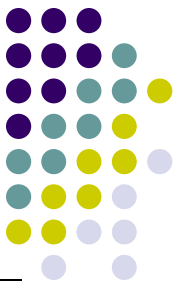
Critical decisions ...

- The role expected from the author when submitting a paper for e-publishing, if it will be the same as for print publishing.
- The type of reading software to be used, if HTML, SGML, or ACROBAT PDF.
- How costs will be covered, if services of reviewers, editors and authors will be free or paid for.



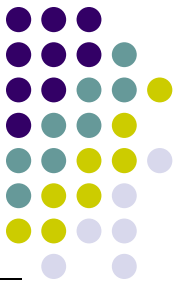
THE KNUST LIBRARY AS A PUBLISHER

- KNUST Library is currently considering these decisions but conditions are ripe for scholars to take control of scholarly publishing and librarians are confident in their abilities as information managers to lead the way as researchers take advantage of the new possibilities in the publication of scholarly research.



THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT (PKP) SOFTWARE

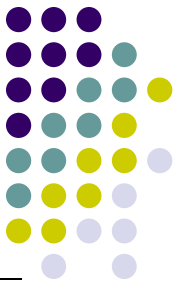
- The Software was introduced to selected persons in the electronic publishing chain – Librarians, Editors, Researchers, and IT personnel - at a 2-day Workshop from 23rd to 24th November 2006 held at the KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana.
- Over 100 participants were drawn from the KNUST as well as other universities and research institutes in the northern sector of Ghana.
- The software has also been introduced in some other African countries – Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda.



THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT (PKP) SOFTWARE

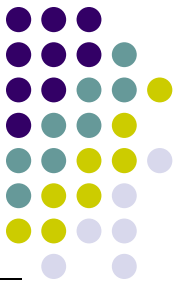
My analysis, in addition to information offered by the Ghanaian participants through interactions and also from colleagues contacted in some of the African countries where the OJS has been introduced are:

- The software as one that is very user-friendly.
- Its processes follow logically.
- Has a lot of in-built guides which are easily understandable.



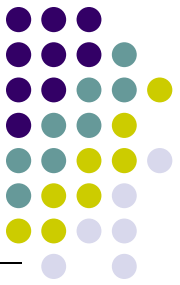
THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT (PKP) SOFTWARE

- Participants at the workshop did not have complete hands-on session during the workshops, but those who tried it later have found that it can be used for several scholarly publishing including institutional repositories.
- It again features all the key tasks necessary for the publication of a journal, inter-relating these tasks.



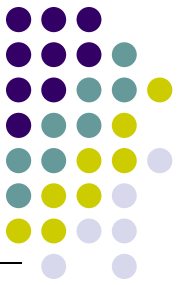
THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT (PKP) SOFTWARE

- Makes provision for cross-checking other functions in the chain.
- Attractive to users because it is free and open source.
- It is also not filled with technical jargon that will scarce non-IT personnel.



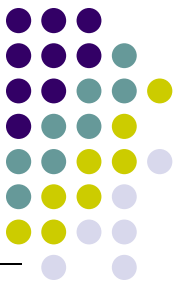
RECOMMENDATIONS

- The PKP Software has been found suitable for use in scholarly publishing in Ghana and by extension Africa.
- The software manufacturers will need to link up with the Government so that it can be approved at that level for institutions to use it. In Ghana, interestingly, all the target groups for the use of OJS now have a single supervisory Ministry – Ministry of Education, Science and Sports - which will make such a bid less complicated.



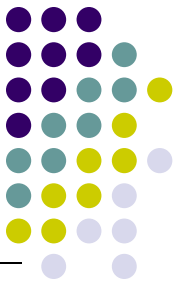
RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is necessary to have a CD-ROM version of the software so that institutions with no regular internet access or slow bandwidth can use it.
- Users will be pleased to receive regular updates of the software which will take into consideration the developments and changes in the field.
- It is important that full training is given on the use of OJS after it had been installed, including training on how to update it, migrate data onto it and to submit unto it.



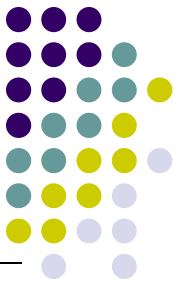
RECOMMENDATIONS

- It will be necessary to train a core of technical IT staff in each country to trouble shoot for the software.
- There must be an in built system in the software which can automatically save data being entered since there are a lot of unannounced electricity supply cuts in our environment. This is to avoid loss of data and repetition of work.
- Where necessary, OJS developers should assist in sourcing equipment support for institutions willing to use the software but having problems in providing the basic equipment for it.



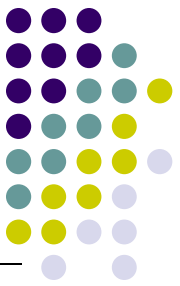
RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is important to do more Public Relations work, that the OJS is a software which will stand the test of time, since people do not believe that a software that is robust and has several features and is also free, will last long.



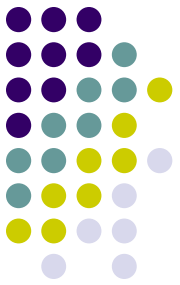
CONCLUSION

- The fear usually expressed by would be clients about getting hooked to a new and good software is that more often than not, they make a flashing entry, make an impact, capture clients and suddenly disappear from the scene soon after.
- This is the worry of persons interested in using OJS. They think that its existence and functions are too good to be true. It is therefore necessary for more assurances to be given that OJS will not die but rather see improvements.



CONCLUSION

- Electronic publishing of scholarly information has come to stay.
- OJS is a suitable software for it.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that it competes favorably with other such software since it already has a head start in its use in AJOL.
- Its use in AJOL is what convinces KNUST Library that it is worthy to be considered for use, since AJOL is a serious minded set up which makes African Scientific information available to the whole world.



Thank you for listening!!!