



Open Access Publishing and Its Implications for Consortium Building in Nigerian Academic Libraries

Abstract

The article discusses Open Access (OA) movement of publishing and its implications on consortia building in Nigerian university libraries. Predicated on an expansive literature review, the study examines how OA publishing principles and practices, such as open access to scholarly literature, institutional repositories, and cooperative publishing models that can foster resource sharing, reduce costs, and consolidate cooperative agreements among university libraries in Nigeria. The review highlights both the potential and challenges that OA offers in the Nigerian context, including infrastructural deficiencies, budgetary constraints, and policy void. Results from the literature form the basis for discussing strategies for academic libraries to effectively instill OA publishing into consortium building activities. This study contributes to ongoing discourse on sustainable knowledge access and collective capacity building in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), institutional repository, open access, open access initiatives, open educational resources

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Introduction

Open access publishing is transforming the mode of dissemination of research outputs in academic libraries across the globe. Through limitless access to research, new opportunities are open for collaboration, and resource sharing among libraries. Open Access (OA) publishing is described as the open online access to scholarly research works, with which anyone can read, download, copy, distribute, and make use of the works with little or no financial, legal, or technical impediments. According to the Budapest Open Access Initiative, (2002), OA publishing makes research literature "freely available on the public internet, allowing any user to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to full texts of these articles." OA's central argument is to democratise the spread of knowledge and make academic products available to a wider range of users outside the subscription walls of traditional publishers. Globally, OA publishing emerged in reaction to the so-called "serials crisis", the dramatic increase in the price of journal subscriptions that outpaced library budgets, particularly in the 1990s and early 20s.

Landmarks such as the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities in 2003 and the launch of leading OA portals such as PubMed Central, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and institutional repositories have been instrumental in advancing OA worldwide. According to Packer,et.al. (2023), "Open Access is not a fringe movement but a mainstream, sustainable path to wider scholarly communication." OA publishing is currently a requirement by most governments, funding agencies and universities.

In Nigeria, scholarly publishing is characterised by rising journal subscription costs, limited access to international scholarly content, and under-developed institutional infrastructures. As Irenoa and Sawyerr-George (2022) observe, "the prohibitive rate of journal subscriptions has severely constrained the acquisition of both foreign and local journals in Nigerian academic libraries". This situation has intensified information inequality and limited the visibility and impact of research outputs. Moreover, persistent financial instability and foreign exchange challenges in Nigeria have further hindered libraries' ability to renew subscriptions to high-cost journals and electronic databases. Hence, in the light of this constrained environment, collaborative responses such as library



consortia have emerged as essential vehicles for shared funding and joint negotiation of better access terms from publishers. However, these consortia still suffer from severe setbacks due to finance limitations, policy incoherencies, and lack of coordinated national frameworks (Aina, 2014).

Open Access (OA) publishing offers significant transformative potential for Nigerian academic library consortia and their member libraries. First, OA reduces dependence on costly subscription-based journals, thereby alleviating pressures on library budgets. As Kumari (2024) observes, "Open access initiatives can alleviate the financial strain experienced by libraries in developing countries by providing access to quality scholarly content without cost barriers." Second, the implementation of OA policies supports the development and expansion of institutional repositories within Nigerian universities, fostering broader dissemination and preservation of locally produced scholarly output.

These institutional repositories are shared spaces by which members of consortia can share research outputs, theses of students, datasets, and grey literature, thereby raising knowledge sharing and visibility. Byczyński (2025) writes that, "Institutional repositories represent a visible indicator of a university's research output and intellectual strength." Not only that, OA publishing fosters new forms of collaboration between institutions, libraries, and researchers. Library consortia are able to leverage OA to negotiate bulk publishing agreements, lobby for national OA policies, and make a collective investment in repository infrastructure. It shifts the agenda of consortia from negotiating subscriptions only to being engaged in reshaping scholarly communication.

However, there are noticeable challenges to the use of OA. Most Nigerian universities still do not have OA policies in place. Also, among researchers, there is minimal understanding of the benefits and limitations of OA publishing. Further, the reliability and quality of OA journals continue to be a subject of concern regardless of initiatives such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) that have embraced more stringent indexing criteria in ensuring journal quality assurance. The fact is unshakably obvious that Open Access publication can play a pivotal role in transforming Nigerian academic library consortia's operational activities and practices.

The Concept of Open Access Publishing

Open Access publishing has fundamentally transformed the landscape of scholarly communication, particularly in the 21st century. As UNESCO (2021) found, Open Access is increasingly considered an essential mechanism for making scientific knowledge a global public good. The last few years' research and studies have explained in more detail the evolving models, benefits, and drawbacks of Open Access paradigms to the global community of researchers. Current literature understands different Open Access models suited for different levels of institutional ability and researcher requirements.

Gold Open Access is referred to as a model where articles appear online as OA journals and are freely available to all users who can download immediately. But writers do pay an Article Processing Charge (APC) for the same. A SPARC report (2023) pointed out that though Gold OA has facilitated opening up access much further, it does generate equity concerns owing to the hefty APCs many researchers, especially from the Global South, are not in a position to afford. On the contrary, Green Open Access allows authors to deposit postprints or preprints of their papers in subject or institutional repositories at no charge. Cushing and Willis (2023) from their study report Green OA to be an important, low-cost pathway to dissemination, particularly to researchers who may not afford APCs. Diamond or Platinum Open Access is also a new paradigm that provides open access to readers and free publishing opportunities for writers. Bosman and Kramer (2022) mention that Diamond OA is growing fast, especially among African, Latin American, and European community-led projects, respecting academic freedom and non-commercial knowledge exchange.

Advantages of Open Access Publishing

The advantages of OA publishing have more and more been supported by empirical data. One of the most important advantages is open access to scholarly content, which equalises the creation and use of knowledge. According to the European Commission (2024), Open Access has a key role in "leveling the playing field" to enable students, researchers, policymakers, and the public to access scientific breakthroughs at zero cost. Beyond increased access, OA publishing significantly increases the visibility and audience of research. A meta-analysis conducted by Huang, Wang, and Zhu (2023) reveal that Open

Access articles are consistently cited 25% more than paywalled articles, indicating that increased availability has a direct effect on increased scholarly attention. In addition, Open Access fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and accelerates societal innovation by enabling a broader range of stakeholders to participate in scientific research, as highlighted in the UNESCO Open Science Outlook (2023).

However, despite these notable strengths, several long-standing challenges continue to hinder the full realization of Open Access goals. One of the most significant is the cost of article processing charges (APCs). Okoye and Mba (2024) report that APCs, which range from about \$1,500 to over \$5,000, often constitute a major barrier for researchers in low- and middle-income countries, effectively replacing the subscription barrier with a publication barrier. According to Okoye and Mba (2024), APCs of between \$1,500 and over \$5,000 present an almost insurmountable challenge to most Nigerian researchers. This economic pressure essentially substitutes the conventional paywall of subscription journals with a novel barrier at publication point, thus marginalising scholars who are already working within tight funding conditions.

In addition, concerns about the quality and integrity of some Open Access journals remain significant. The rapid expansion of Open Access has, in some cases, been accompanied by the proliferation of predatory journals that compromise scholarly standards. Demir (2022) warns that the credibility of the Open Access movement could be undermined if predatory publishing is not addressed through stronger regulatory measures and clearer publishing standards. Beyond financial and quality-related issues, infrastructural challenges also continue to constrain the growth of Open Access, particularly in the Global South.

According to the Global Open Access Monitor (2023), many universities across Africa and Asia still lack the institutional repositories, technical infrastructure, and policy support required for sustained participation in Open Access initiatives. Although the Open Access publishing model has evolved into a complex, multi-layered system that offers clear advantages in making knowledge more visible, accessible, and socially relevant, several challenges remain. Issues related to funding models, publication quality, and infrastructural readiness must be addressed in a systematic and coordinated manner if Open Access is to fulfill its promise of inclusivity and equity. As global momentum continues to grow,



governments, universities, funding bodies, and researchers must work collaboratively to build a scholarly communication environment in which the benefits of Open Access are accessible to all.

The rationale for constructing consortium in Nigerian academic libraries is actually rooted in the pursuit of cheap access to scholarly content, improved bargaining power, and resource sharing among institutions. Initiatives like the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) and EKO-Konnect demonstrate how Nigerian academic institutions have utilised collaboration to address the chronic underfunding of tertiary education as well as the high cost of information resources (Olumide & Ahmed, 2023). Through such consortia, Nigerian libraries have been able to subscribe en masse to key databases and negotiate better rights of access.

Conversely, while consortium development is a powerful way of enhancing access, the concurrent shift towards Open Access (OA) introduces a complex set of new challenges Nigerian institutions. Despite the OA's vision to democratise information access, there are significant barriers that are intensely highlighted in Nigeria and other such low- and middle-income contexts. The most intrinsic of these is possibly the cost of Article Processing Charges (APCs).

Moreover, the issue of quality assurance in OA publishing also poses another significant problem. Demir's (2022) observation of the wider dissemination of predatory journals resonates strongly in the Nigerian academic community, where information on appropriate publishing outlets remains spotty. Predatory publishers easily exploit Nigerian scholars who are motivated by the need to meet the promotion requirements, thereby undermining the integrity of their output publications and, by extension, the reputation of their institutions. This is a two-edged problem: even as Nigerian library consortia are still forced to negotiate access to original scholarly sources, they also must actively pursue sensitising researchers on how to spot genuine OA journals, set up institutional repositories, and pressure national policy formulation to promote quality publishing habits. Infrastructure constraints also present other difficulties to the attainment of Open Access goals in Nigeria.

As it has similarly been noted in broader analyses of the Global South, infrastructural deficits, such as inadequate internet connectivity, unreliable power supply, and limited

digital literacies, hinder not only access but also participation in the global academy of scholars. Nigeria's university libraries, despite the progress made from consortia such as NgREN and EKO-Konnect, also suffer from these systemic vulnerabilities that constrain the functionality and efficacy of digital programmes. Conquering these hurdles will require ongoing investment in digital infrastructure, capacity building, and strategic policy changes to integrate OA principles into national research and education systems.

Thus, while the development of consortium in Nigeria has been highly promising in enhancing the barriers to access, the switch to Open Access presents a tougher environment that entails both library planning and national research support system recasting. Nigerian academic libraries have to not just improve their consortia but develop holistic frameworks to address the monetary, quality, and infrastructural challenges of the current OA context in order to maximise the global knowledge economy.

The Rationale for Consortium Building in Nigerian Academic Libraries

The development of library consortia in Nigeria is a manifestation of a strategic response to the evolving climate of information access, economic constraints, and the global move towards open access (OA). A library consortium is generally referred to as an association of libraries forming an alliance for achieving a common goal, particularly in resource sharing, subscription bargaining, and digital material access. The last few years have also seen the growth of consortiums such as the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) and EKO-Konnect, both of which show the collective effort to increase access to Nigerian research materials by universities. NgREN, started for the intent of high-speed connectivity among Nigerian universities, is an example where public infrastructure directly makes the use of digital libraries possible, such that greater access to research databases is made easier (Olumide & Ahmed, 2023).

Similarly, EKO-Konnect, a cluster of the broader West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN), has played a key role in promoting cooperation between academic and research institutions in Lagos State and further afield. Such consortia are a demonstration of how collective action can bypass the systemic hurdles that individual libraries face, especially in environments of limited budgets and technological inequality.

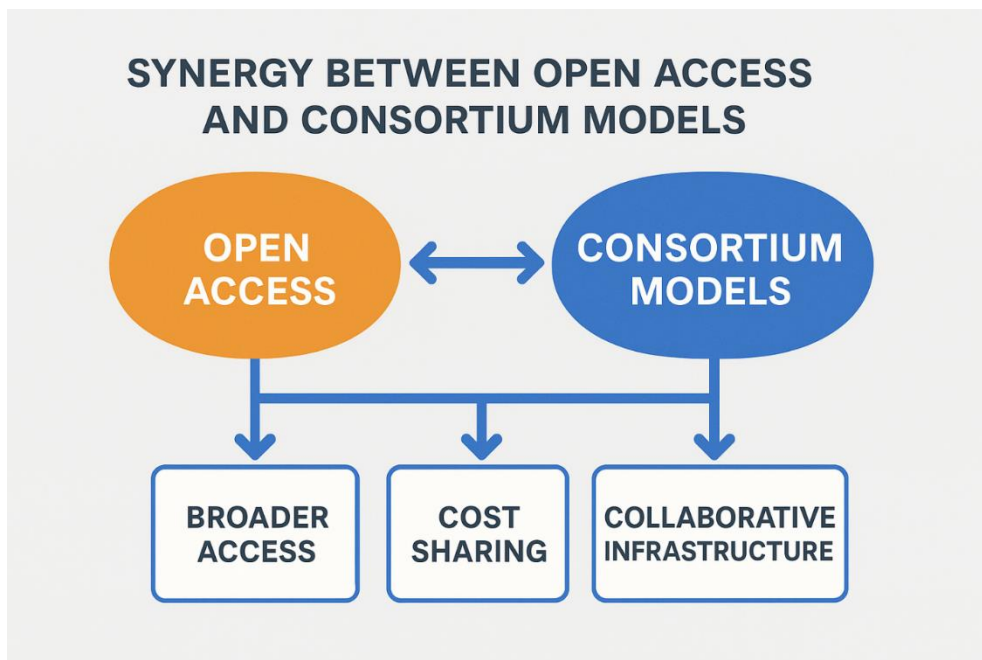
The advantages of such consortium creation are clear and well-documented in recent scholarship. One of the most significant advantages is the sharing of subscription costs for expensive electronic materials. Udo and Emeka (2024) note that collective bargaining reduces per capita institutional expenses significantly and provides opportunities for smaller universities to tap into resources that are out of their reach otherwise. Moreover, combined bargaining power assists libraries in negotiating improved licensing terms, e.g., greater rights of access and improved user conditions. Sharing of resources, another cornerstone benefit, not only expands the range of materials available to library patrons but also fosters a culture of collaboration and sharing of information among institutions (Adebayo and Musa, 2023).

The inability of the traditional models to accelerate decision making, equitable participation by the participating institutions, and insensitivity to new technology underscores the imperatives of change. The latest evidence shows that new consortia have to walk the tight rope of negotiating paid content access and facilitating initiatives to make knowledge freely accessible, and this is evidence of broader global trends in scholarly communication (Okon and Alabi, 2024). The rationale for building and rebuilding library consortia in Nigeria is therefore a response to reality needs and a proactive adjustment to global changes. Consortium initiatives such as NgREN and EKO-Konnect have demonstrated the tangible benefits of collaboration, but researchers are always keen to indicate that success in the future will depend on whether these collaborations embrace openness, technology-centric models of service, and more participative governance structures. In essence, as academic libraries in Nigeria continue to grapple with financial constraints, technological advancements, and scholarly publishing changes, building consortiums remains an essential, though evolving strategy for guaranteeing access to information sustainably.

The Synergy between Open Access and Consortium Models

The intersection of Open Access (OA) publishing and Consortium Models has long been a contentious issue in the academic publishing realm, both holding the potential to transform scholarly resources sharing, access, and financing. Open Access abolishes

paywalls that deny access to research, whereas Consortium Models aggregate their buying power to allow libraries and institutions access to a wide collection of material. The interaction of these two models introduces a new remedy to the problems caused by the rising costs of academic journals and the uneven availability of research materials.



Source: Okojie, F. E., et al. (2020).

Open Access: A Portal to Unhindered Research Access

Open Access is a publishing model in which free and unlimited access to scholarly articles, research papers, and other scholarly writings is allowed. The primary advantage of Open Access is that it democratizes knowledge, enabling researchers, students, and the public to gain unrestricted access to the latest research for free. The model has gained popularity as a way to offset the high cost of subscription journals, which has a tendency to limit quality research only to institutions that are in a position to afford expensive journal packages.

Consortium Models: Shared Resource Sharing

Consortium Model is where a number of institutions, typically libraries, collaborate and share resources and aggregate procurement deals for research databases, journals, and other scholarly materials. By pooling their money, consortia can negotiate more favourable

pricing on expensive resources and make them available to a broader group of institutions, such as small universities and low-budget libraries. This model has been widely adopted in academia because it allows institutions to utilise their resources in order to offer a wider range of journals and databases to its users.

The Synergy between Open Access and Consortium Models

The complementarity of Open Access and consortium models lies in their shared goal of enhancing access to scholarly content while reducing costs. Among the significant ways in which such models complement each other are:

1. **Greater Access to Research:** Open Access eliminates paywalls, with unrestricted access to research outputs, complementing the collective negotiating power of consortia. Where there is no Open Access material, consortia can contribute towards access to subscription journals. Together, this ensures that institutions have access to an enormous range of scholarly material, both freely available and behind paywalls.
2. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Open Access significantly reduces the need for institutions to spend money on individual journal subscriptions, while Consortium Models help in lowering the cost of accessing academic material. Consortia can negotiate more beneficial pricing mechanisms for member institutions, which results in their ability to provide access to numerous types of materials without the high costs associated with conventional publishing models.
3. **Optimisation of Resource Utilisation:** The Open Access and Consortium Models collectively allow institutions to optimize their resource utilisation. Open Access resources can be used free of charge, reducing the need for content prioritisation based on cost. Concurrently, consortia offer a balance where institutions are offered quality content that may not yet be available through Open Access, offering an overall balanced pool of academic resources.
4. **Fostering Scholarly Cooperation:** This synergy between Open Access and Consortium Models also fosters greater cooperation within the academic community. Open Access promotes a culture of sharing and cooperation, in which researchers make their work available for free, while Consortium Models create an infrastructure

of institutions that can pool their resources to make such cooperative effort possible. This synergy creates a more cooperative academic culture, in which knowledge is more readily and widely shared.

5. **Sustainability of Scholarly Publishing:** With the adoption of Open Access and consortium models, scholarly publishing and the wider academic community can move toward greater sustainability. Open Access helps reduce dependence on expensive subscription systems with continually rising costs. At the same time, consortia enable institutions to maintain access to essential scholarly resources that are not yet available in Open Access form. As noted by Niels Moller and Maria Keeton, this two-pronged approach can promote more stable and equitable access to scholarly materials in the long term.

Findings and Support for the Synergy

Open Access has significantly increased the availability of scholarly literature, particularly in disciplines where access to journals was previously restricted by high subscription costs. Similarly, library consortia have enabled member institutions to achieve substantial cost savings, allowing resources to be redirected toward research activities, staff development, and the acquisition of equipment. The union of these models has been seen to enhance the diversity and inclusiveness of scholarly publishing. Open Access opens the field to researchers in developing nations or underprivileged institutions, whereas consortia make it possible for even smaller institutions to acquire high-end, costly content. The combination of Consortium Models and Open Access is a powerful solution to the challenges faced by academic institutions in providing equal access to scholarly materials. Together, the two models produce an open, collaborative, and sustainable academic community. By combining the cost advantages of consortia with the openness of Open Access, institutions can provide research for everyone at no cost, promoting knowledge, and democratising learning.

Implications for Resource Sharing and Scholarly Visibility

One of the biggest advantages of Open Access is that it has the potential of boosting the visibility of scholarly products, especially in a scenario where journals and research funding may pose an issue to access, such as in Nigeria. OA provides Nigerian researchers with the chance to maximize the reach and impact of their work through the provision of a free access to the whole world. As highlighted by Adomi (2020), Open Access removes barriers to research visibility, enabling Nigerian researchers to contribute to global knowledge networks while improving the citation and recognition of their work. Institutional repositories are at the core of it.

In facilitating Nigerian universities to harbor research outputs in their own virtual space, institutional repositories provide a model for local visibility. As Akintoye (2021) states, Nigerian university institutional repositories have been effective in highlighting faculty and students' research output, contributing a lot to the dissemination of knowledge both locally and globally. In addition to institutional repositories, local Open Access journals have also contributed significantly to increasing the visibility of Nigerian research.

Consortia models further extend the scope of resource sharing and academic visibility through the establishment of centralised systems for collective negotiation and resource provision. Consortia are collaborative networks of institutions that pool their purchasing power to secure access to a wide range of scholarly resources, including databases, journals, and other academic materials. This collective arrangement enables smaller institutions, particularly those in developing countries such as Nigeria, to access high-quality research resources that would otherwise be beyond their financial reach.

One of the most significant advantages of consortia in Nigeria is their capacity to enhance scholarly output. By combining resources, consortia can support the development of robust digital infrastructures capable of hosting diverse forms of academic content, thereby making Nigerian research more visible on the global stage. For instance, the Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULIB) has played a pivotal role in promoting resource sharing among academic institutions in Nigeria. According to Okojie et al. (2020), the consortium has facilitated member institutions' access to essential scholarly materials while also enabling their research outputs to be indexed in international databases and

repositories. This centralised approach not only improves access to research materials but also increases the global visibility of Nigerian scholarship.

In addition, consortia provide a platform for research partnerships and collaborative academic initiatives. Ige and Akinyemi (2021) argue that the shared infrastructure provided by consortia enables Nigerian researchers to engage with their international counterparts, participate in collaborative research projects, and contribute to joint publications, thereby enhancing the global visibility and impact of their work. Furthermore, Onwudinjo and Eze (2023) note that Open Access plays a critical role in demystifying the barriers to accessing information, hence democratizing knowledge for Nigerian institutions, students, and researchers. Open Access allows Nigerian students to access scholarly resources that were not available to them before, making the learning environment more inclusive and equitable (Ugwuegbulam, 2022).

Financial and Policy Implications of Open Access and Consortium Models

Redirection of Funds: Subscriptions to Repository Development

Arguably the most significant monetary impact of the OA model is the redirection of funds that would otherwise have gone towards journal subscriptions into the establishment and maintenance of institutional repositories. Subscription models have increasingly proven to be unsustainable due to increasing costs, which have placed significant financial pressures on academic institutions. According to Gajendra and Narayan (2021), "The cost of journal subscriptions keeps increasing, outpacing institutional budgets, particularly in developing countries, and thus institutions have to seek other funding models such as OA." OA publishing offers an opportunity for research institutions and universities to shift funds from expensive subscription charges to OA infrastructure. This includes building and maintaining institutional repositories, which are a low-cost and enduring solution for the dissemination of scholarly literature.

Article Processing Charges (APCs) and Subsidies

One of the key financial mechanisms of OA publishing is the Article Processing Charge (APC), which authors normally pay to fund publication charges in OA journals. While APCs render OA publishing economical for publishers, they pose new financial issues for

researchers and institutions, particularly for countries with few financial resources. To address this challenge, the majority of institutions and consortia have designed APC subsidizing policies and funding schemes to finance their researchers. Such subsidies facilitate the publication charges not to be sole responsibility of individual researchers or institutions. Mohamad and Idris (2021) validate in their research that, "Subsidising APCs is a key strategy in ensuring that researchers, especially those in developing countries like Nigeria, can publish in reputable OA journals without financial barriers."

The Role of Consortia in Negotiating APC Waivers or Discounts for Member Institutions

Consortia also negotiate APC waivers or discounts for their member institutions and do, in some measure, reduce the cost burden on OA publishing. When multiple institutions collectively bargain with publishers, consortia can secure very large discounts or even waive APC fees on researchers' behalf. One of the best examples of this is how consortia get involved in negotiating OA deals with top publishers such as Springer, Wiley, and Elsevier. According to a report by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (2021), "Consortia have become necessary in enabling access to OA publishing by institutions from low- and middle-income countries through securing discounted APCs or full waivers." For example, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) has been instrumental in negotiating discounted APCs for member institutions, thereby enabling researchers from these institutions to publish in OA journals without incurring the usual cost burden that comes with the high APCs

Institutional and National OA Policies Supported by Library Consortia

Implementation of national and institutional OA policies is necessary to drive the OA movement and provide justice in access to scholarly materials. National and institutional OA policies can make the change process from traditional subscription-based systems to OA publication easier by offering clearly defined standards for funding, publication, and repository stewardship. Institutional OA policies are typically authored by university research departments and libraries along with academic faculty members. These policies set the conditions for OA publishing, e.g., depositing articles in institutional repositories and funding criteria for APCs. National OA policies are government-drafted and set a standard for supporting OA efforts across a country. In most countries, library consortia play an

important part in lobbying and advocating the implementation of these policies. As Ngugi (2022) explains, "Library consortia have played a key role in promoting national OA initiatives through their collaboration with policymakers to develop structures that support institutional and national OA objectives." Presently, Nigerian universities are adopting OA policies, in line with national directives, to make available local research and contribute to the global knowledge pool.

Strategies for Academic Libraries to Implement Open Access Publishing effectively in Consortium Building Activities

Integrating OA into academic library services has the potential to increase the visibility and extent of research outputs, especially in collaborative environments like consortia. However, to realise maximum benefit from OA publishing by academic libraries, they must incorporate strategic measures to embed OA practices effectively in consortium building activities.

1. Raising Awareness and Informing Stakeholders

One of the simplest things academic libraries can do in order to implement OA publishing among the activities of a consortium is raise awareness and educate stakeholders faculty, researchers, administrators, and librarians, on the benefits of OA and how these benefit the academic community. Libraries can host workshops, webinars, and information sessions that provide information on OA publishing models, institutional repository systems, and scholarly visibility benefits of open access. As Johnson (2022) points out, "Awareness campaigns in scholarly libraries have a key function in dispelling resistance to OA publishing because many researchers are not cognizant of its benefits and implications for subsequent scholarly visibility." Besides, libraries must create easy-to-access guides and materials explaining the OA publishing model, APCs (Article Processing Charges), and how consortia work to make OA journals accessible.

2. Institutional Repository Strengthening

Consortia academic library members must prioritize institutional repository building and enhancement to support OA publishing. Institutional repositories are essential infrastructures for scholarship storage and dissemination, particularly OA scholarship. A properly managed repository allows researchers to share their work freely with the global

academic community, making it more visible and citable. In a consortium, libraries can collaborate to make repositories interoperable institutionally so that research outputs from all member institutions can be accessed without a hitch. According to Okojie et al. (2020), "Collaboration among institutions in a consortium centralizes research outputs, making them readily accessible and shareable across a broader community of scholars". Further, libraries are required to collaborate for the harmonization of metadata and repository systems, so that it becomes easier for users to search and access OA content in multiple institutions. By developing robust institutional repositories, libraries can ensure OA research is easily accessed, contributing to the growth of the international knowledge base and achieving the consortium's goals.

3. Negotiating Open Access Agreements with Publishers

Academic libraries that have formed consortium can assume a leadership role in negotiating OA agreements with publishers, making discounted or zero APCs available for member institutions. These negotiations are particularly critical for consortia in low- and middle-income countries, where the APC cost can be a serious impediment to OA involvement. Libraries can utilize the bargaining power of consortia to negotiate improved terms from publishers, securing discounts or waivers on APCs for researchers at member institutions. As observed by Ochieng (2021), "By leveraging the combined strength of consortia, academic libraries can negotiate deals that reduce the cost of OA, making a more equitable and sustainable publishing environment." Furthermore, libraries can collaborate with publishers to support the financing of the launch of OA journals and increase the availability of high-quality OA channels in underrepresented disciplines in OA publishing.

4. Encouraging Open Access Policies at Institutional and National Levels

Academic libraries have an important advocacy role to promote the adoption of OA policies within institutions and nationally. Members of a consortium can collaborate to develop coordinated OA policies aligned with institutional goals and country mandates. Major areas such as repository deposit mandates, open data mandates, and promoting OA publishing within academic staff incentives and tenure conditions need to be addressed. National OA policies can have a significant influence on making publicly funded research freely accessible to the public. By coordinating with government agencies, academic libraries in consortia can influence policy decisions in favor of OA publication, such as mandates for

OA as a condition of funding for research projects. As posited by Ugwuegbulam (2022), "National OA policies are instrumental in guiding the development of OA practices and ensuring that research outputs are shared widely for public benefit." Consortium libraries may also act with policymakers to ensure adequate funding of OA activities, e.g., development of repositories and APC subsidies. By creating a shared voice for OA within consortia, libraries can make possible broader institutional and national change in the direction of open access to knowledge.

5. Collaborative OA Journals and Platforms Development

Collaborative development of OA journals and platforms is another essential work that scholarly libraries can accomplish in consortia building efforts. By resource pooling, libraries in consortia can start maintaining high-quality OA journals so that scholarly output produced within member institutions can be disseminated extensively. New, discipline-specific OA journals can also be created through consortia for the particular needs of their academic constituencies. Additionally, libraries can help to ensure the journals are of high editorial quality, thus drawing quality research and enhancing the reputation of OA publishing. As stated by Akinyemi (2021), "Collaborative journal development allows institutions to build a model for sustainable OA publishing that benefits their researchers and enhances the global scholarly communication system".

Conclusion

Incorporating of Open Access (OA) publishing within the work of consortia development is critical in producing an open, more democratic scholarly publishing world. In combination with well-orchestrated actions, academic libraries are capable of promoting major changes in OA uptake through emphasising awareness building, establishing institutional repositories, securing advantageous APC arrangements, mounting influential OA policies campaigning, and forming collective OA journals. The collective strength of consortia allows libraries to promote the visibility and audience of scholarly research and ensure broader access to knowledge. As academic libraries are more likely to collaborate and share resources, they will not only strengthen the foundations of OA publishing but also influence the future of scholarly communication. This plan will facilitate the open flow of

information internationally, allowing researchers and institutions from diverse locations and disciplines to take an active role in the changing academic environment. Ultimately, sustained efforts of academic libraries will play a critical role in realising the vision of open, accessible, and inclusive scholarly communication for all.

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