What is OceanDocs – Africa?

OceanDocs – Africa is an e-repository of scientific publications related to marine science and oceanography. The service was developed as an ODINAFRICA service, supported by the Government of Flanders and IOC. The e-repository covers content only of African authors working in a marine or oceanography institution in Africa or non-African authors working in an ODINAFRICA affiliated institution.

Goals of OceanDocs – Africa

- Make publications of marine science and oceanography in Africa more easily and freely accessible to the African Ocean (and coastal area) research and management community, to enhance scientific cooperation communication at the regional level;
- Promote African marine science and oceanography research at the global level;
- Facilitate publishing of research findings by African scientists;
- Ensure secure archival of African marine science and oceanography publications.

OceanDocs – Africa enables researchers to deposit the full text of their works: articles, conference papers, technical reports, working papers, thesis and more. The information managers and librarians of the participating institutes will help the researchers with the submission of their publications.

OceanDocs – Africa is a new service to enhance scientific communication in marine science and oceanography in Africa and will not interfere with the classical book and journal publishing methods. Researchers can publish in a scientific journal and at the same time submit their publication to OceanDocs – Africa (*). OceanDocs will cover other regions too, starting with Latin America.

(*) Nearly 90% of the international scientific journals accept the posting of the author’s version of an article on a personal or institutional website even after it is accepted for publication. It is the task of the information manager to control the publisher’s policy at http://romeo.aprnts.org/.
E-Repositories: A new way of access to scientific publications

In a few years time, thanks to the internet, international (commercial) scientific journals have become available as electronic journals. At the same time the internet offers alternatives to these commercial scientific journals. Research institutes can set up their own journal. These open access journals are growing steadily. The Directory of Open Access Journals (http://www.doaj.org/) contains thousands of titles.

Another way to enhance the accessibility of scientific publications is the creation of a repository. Since the development of a specific standard in 1999-2001, the OAI-Protocol for Metadata Harvesting, hundreds of repositories were created by universities and research centers all over the world. Most of these repositories are institutional repositories containing the publication output of universities and research institutions.

In the field of marine science and oceanography important collections are being created. Examples:
Archimer, Archive Institutionnelle de l’Ifremer - http://www.ifremer.fr/docelac/
AVANO (http://www.ifremer.fr/avano/), developed by Ifremer, is the first marine and aquatic science harvester. It offers an access to the e-repositories about the marine and aquatic sciences (aquaculture and fisheries for instance, but also geosciences, biology, ecology, ...) including OceanDocs Africa.
Woods Hole Open Access Server - https://darchive.mblwholibrary.org/
E-Prints Soton (University of Southampton) - http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/
DRS (National Institute of Oceanography, India - http://drs.nio.org/drs) has joined the OceanDocs E-repository in December 2006).

OceanDocs - Africa is participating in this innovative approach to scientific publishing. Other IODE-ODIN (IODE Ocean Data and Information Networks) groups are also starting their own repository under the umbrella of IOC/IODE.

Searching e-repositories

A number of general purpose Internet search engines are already covering repository content. OAIster (http://oaister.umd.umich.edu/o/oaister/) is a new search engine specifically devised for repositories and OAI-compliant websites. Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com/) and Scirus (http://www.scirus.com/) also include repositories in their database.
I am Prof. Dr. Leo Egghe of the Hasselt University. My research domain is informetrics and bibliometrics. I publish in international journals like Mathematical and Computer Modelling, Information Processing & Management (Elsevier), Journal of Information Science (Sage), Scientometrics (Springer), JASIST (Wiley) and others.

When the information specialist of the library asked me to participate in the e-repository project of Hasselt University by submitting my publications I had my doubts. In the first place I did not want to have problems with my publishers about copyright. Secondly I always have some apprehension about the workload of such a project. Nevertheless after some assurances of the part of the project leader, I accepted to submit my publications to the e-repository.

The information specialist explained me that most of the major publishers have changed their policy regarding copyright and accept that the author’s version of an article is posted on a personal or institutional website or e-repository. I have a lot of paper copies of my articles in a cupboard or on the table of my office. Maybe I could get rid of this heap of paper.

The library also proposed to help me to submit the existing collection of documents. I had to go through my publication list, but once this was realized I was positively surprised with the result.

I now have a tool to manage my publication list. The publications are securely archived. I do not have to send reprints to my peers and above all, my table is empty now. I have also seen that my articles are now included in Google Scholar and OAlster.

The library also announced that a statistical module will be added to the e-repository software. I am very curious about the download statistics because now the access and visibility to my articles is much enhanced. I am therefore confident that my research will be cited more as some articles already announced.

You can find my papers at Document Server@UHasselt (http://doclib.uhasselt.be/dspace/handle/1942/585)

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Website: http://ioc.unesco.org

Five reasons to submit documents to OceanDocs – Africa

1. Articles which are available in an open access e-repository are cited more than articles which are only available through commercial publishers.
   - “The finding is that,…, freely available articles do have a greater research impact. Shedding light on this category of open access reveals that scholars in diverse disciplines are adopting open-access practices and being rewarded for it.” In: Do Open-Access Articles Have a Greater Research Impact? By: Antelman, Kristin.(2004) College & Research Libraries, , 65 (5), p372
   - New search engines are created for repositories: OAIster - Aquatic Commons
   - Existing bibliographic databases are beginning to include repositories in their indexes

2. The open-access e-repository presents the scientific output of a scientist.
   - the author’s publication list is easily managed
   - reprints are not necessary – the article is always available on the repository server
   - hence the author’s visibility is enhanced

3. The open-access e-repository presents the scientific output of an institute.
   - to the research community
   - to the funding agencies
   - hence the institute’s visibility is enhanced

4. An e-repository is an added service to the classical commercial publishing.
   - The majority of the scientific publishers (more than 80% and growing) accept that the author’s version of an article be posted on a repository
   - The content of the author’s version can be the same, but without the lay-out of the published version

5. Gray literature (reports, local journals) gets a higher accessibility and impact.