

Open access but persistent divide: What are we missing of the challenges of African biomedical journal editors?

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What OA means for African researchers

The same it means for the rest of the world.

- The removal of pay walls and other nonfinancial tolls to access research, sometimes research done on the continent
- The timely access to knowledge and other research products

Africa is a major beneficiary of the Open Access movement; there is no doubt about that...!



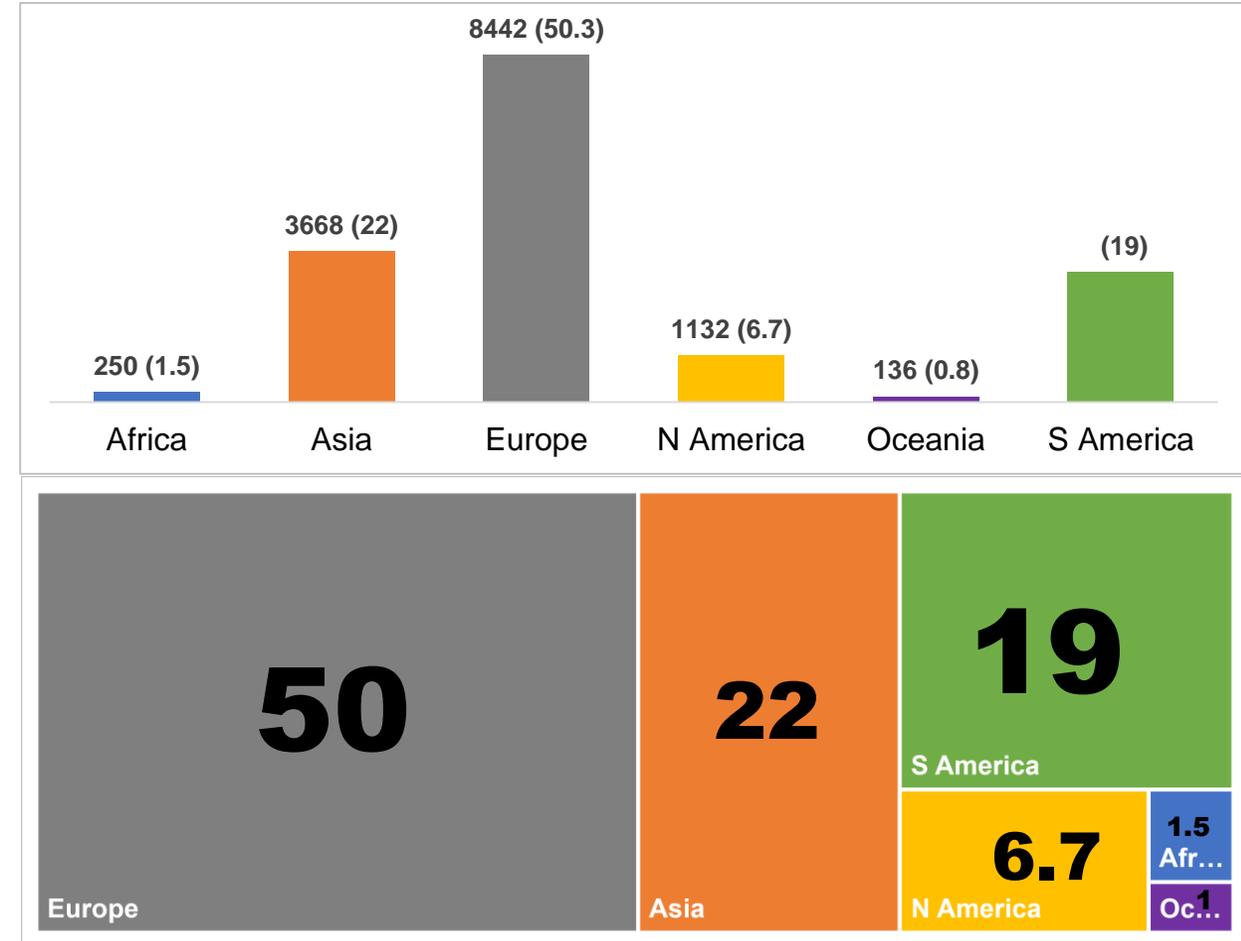
Africa contribution to Open Access

Using the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) as a proxy

- **250 items** from Africa (1.5% of the total) from only 11 countries (out of 54)
- **Four countries** account for 80% of the African contents on the DOAJ
- The same patterns exist in other indexing databases

OA Africa contents in **Africa Journal Online**

- 530 Journals
- 271 Open Access



Data: DOAJ website (Accessed 6 Sept 2021)

What is there to know about African research and African journals

Research

- Externally sponsored research is published in non-African journals, most of the time
- Individual vs Team research
- Non-sponsored researchers (the majority) tend to research what they **can research**, not what should be researched

Journals

- Few African journals have the resources and know-how to comply to publishing industry standards – **Challenges:** human resources, technology, editorial processes

Why is Africa under-represented?

Why is Africa under-represented as contents provider in OA directories?

- Challenges faced by African Journal editors force them to prioritize?
- The requirements of the DOAJ not easy to meet (increasingly complicated, moved from a copyright credo to a “bunch” of complicated requirements?)
- The benefits of inclusion in the DOAJ not clear to African journal editors?
- Challenges faced by African journals to adhere to best publishing practices?
- Are there unconscious biases against Africa Journals (perceived as low quality, predatory in nature?)

What does that mean to African Journals

- Academic institutions, funders increasingly consider been listed in an OA directory, as a sign of adherence to open access principles and best practices
- Some African institutions, some international funders of research will only support, for examples, Article Processing Charges if the journal is included in the DOAJ

At the same time: The development of an African Open Access industry is challenged more than ever, limiting the prospects of emergence of an African led OA industry



What does that mean an African OA industry: “the big boys in my backyard”

- The old distinction between provincial and international relevance is over: big OA publishers will publish everything
- Established open access publishers are moving towards global monopolies (PLOS Global Health, Lancet Regional are few examples) or setting African denominations of existing shops

The emergence of a native, open access African industry will be increasingly challenged in this new market environment.

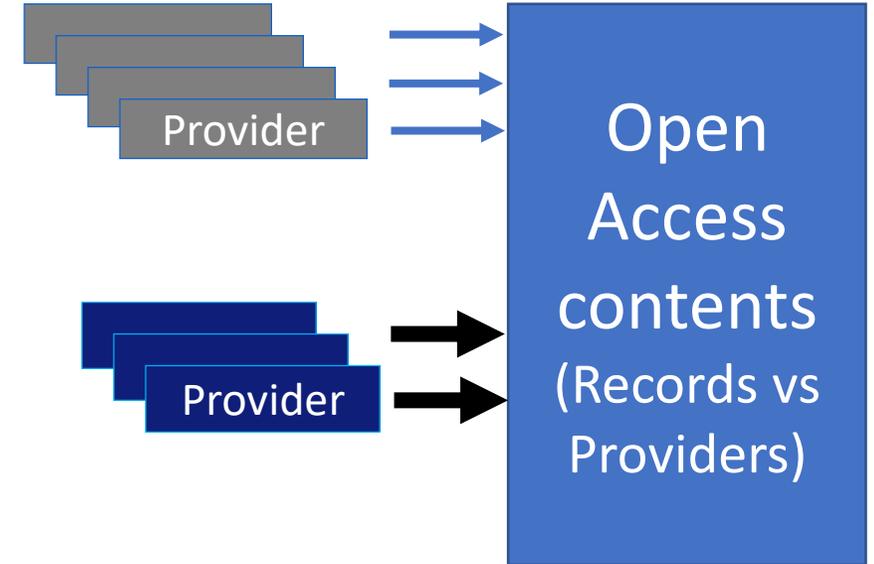
Prevalence and determinants of modern contraceptive utilization among women in the reproductive age group in Edaga-hamus Town, Eastern zone, Tigray region, **Ethiopia**, June 2017.

Tukue D, Gebremeskel TG, Gebremariam L, Aregawi B, Hagos MG, Gebremichael T, Tesfay HN, Arefaine ZG.

Availability of PPEs and training status of health professionals on COVID-19 in Silte Zone, Southern Ethiopia
Mohammed Muze, Bahredin Abdella, Abdilmejid Mustefa, Abas Ali, Abdulfeta Abdo, Abas Lukman, Abdulfeta Shafi, Shuk Mutteba, Bayesa Tolasa, Sister Hossae, Sultan Shukur, Ebrahim Ahmed, Abdu Kemal, Tabela Erena

OA community: the key questions

- The question: why now? The status quo has been going on for years and decades
- Will the current wave of Diversity and Inclusion (DAI) last?
- What is the incentive to diversify?
- What has been done so far? Who has the solution?
- What should be addressed: Increased diversity in the published records? Or increased diversity in the providers of the records



The number of records in the OA contents from Africa has most certainly increased through non-African providers

What the OA community can do

The Open Access Community should walk the talk of diversity and inclusion in OA

- Understand the challenges of African OA contents providers, including African journals
- Define clear objectives and metrics for “diverse open access”
- Build coalition with local institutions, journal editors, advocate, build capacity through outreach activities
- Diversify the Open Access management/oversight structure, incorporate diverse perspective/views to address unconscious biases



Thank you

