

Chapter 6

Institutional Repository as a Knowledge Management Tool for the Enhancement of Library Visibility in the 21st Century: A Case of Midlands State University

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ABSTRACT

The chapter focused on the institutional repository as a knowledge management tool that enhances the visibility of libraries in the 21st century. The researcher mainly relied on content analysis to gather research data. The researcher took a swipe on the uptake of institutional repositories the world over and an analysis of how an institutional repository could be used as a knowledge management tool was done. The researcher also conducted a situational analysis of the MSU institutional repository and assessed the impact of the digital repository on the visibility of the library. The author used the Webometrics Ranking of Universities in Zimbabwe to assess how universities are ranked in Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Institutional Repositories are digital libraries in which institutions deposit their academic research output. Lynch (2003) as quoted by Sheeja (2012) describes an institutional repository as a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members. The content that is deposited into the repository is determined by the policy that is crafted by the library hence the differences in resources on repositories of different institutions. Overall, the resources found on these digital libraries contain information apropos to the parent organization or institution. Russell et al. (2016) note that institutional repositories are increasingly common in research libraries, but each has a distinct scope specific

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to its own institutional mission. An institutional repository has become a critical hub of information resources in the 21st century as has been witnessed by the huge number of libraries establishing these digital libraries. Blankenship and Haines (2008) note that universities in growing numbers have since established institutional repositories to house a wide variety of locally produced materials. Blankenship and Haines (2008) further state that, in a survey of Association of Research Libraries, member libraries in January 2006, 43% of the eighty-seven respondents reported having an operational institutional repository, with 35% planning for one by 2007. Most libraries are establishing institutional repositories so that clients have unlimited remote access to the resources. The harvesting and storing of resources on the institutional repository form part of the knowledge management practices and the establishment of these institutional repositories on the public domain constitute to the visibility of the library. The main objectives of this chapter were:

- To find out how the institutional repository was being used as a Knowledge Management tool
- To establish the strategies put in place to harvest research for uploading onto the institutional repository
- To find out how resources on the institutional repository enhanced the library visibility

INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES AS A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOL

Firestone (2001) in Sheeja (2012) defined knowledge management as a process where organizations have formulated ways in the attempt to recognize and archive knowledge assets within the organization that are derived from the employees of various departments or faculties and in some cases, even from other organizations that share the similar area of interests or specialization. University libraries establish institutional repositories in a bid to harvest all research done by resident authors in order to proffer an enabling environment for researchers to share knowledge remotely on a platform that allows for unified access. When creating an institutional repository, a library does not only create an electronic archive and end there but it also takes into account strategies that ensure that there is consistency of metadata across the entire repository and that there is authority control and complex controlled vocabulary. Hakopov (2016) points out that a modern digital information repository, apart from serving its direct purpose, may assist users in a much broader way. Combined with expert classification systems like ontologies and powered by modern semantic technology, Hakopov (2016) notes that it is more than just an electronic archive, but rather forms a complete knowledge organization system.

Ismail, Yaacob and Kareem (2008) note that the rapid growth of data and technologies trigger the transformation of data to useful information, known as knowledge and nowadays, the academic society is more aware of the importance of knowledge and ways to acquire, recognize, capture, retrieve, use or measure, manage and share the knowledge in the form of knowledge artifacts. Ismail, Yaacob and Kareem (2008) identify tacit vs explicit knowledge, knowledge artifact and Community of Practice (CoP) as three concepts of knowledge management which could be used to help understand the formation of successful institutional repositories. Nonaka (1991) in Ismail, Yaacob and Kareem (2008) defines tacit knowledge as the knowledge that resides in human brain and is difficult to be captured such as teaching and research skills whereas explicit knowledge is that type of knowledge that exists in the form of documents, reports, mathematical equations etc. which can be packaged, codified and transferred easily. Ismail (2012) as cited by Kassahun (2016) indicates that explicit knowledge can be formally and

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