

Open Access Policy Development Experience from Mzuzu University in Malawi

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Profile and Context

- Mzuzu University (Mzuni) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1997
- Six faculties: Faculty of Education; Faculty of Environmental Sciences; Faculty of Health Sciences; Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; and Faculty of Science, Technology, and Innovation
- The University has about ten thousand students

Policy & Key Elements of Change

- The policy covers the following priority areas: Administration, Contents, Access, Metadata Presentation Format and Data Usage.
- The policy presents the following guidelines: Contents guidelines, Submission guidelines, Metadata guidelines, Format guidelines, Article Access guidelines and Selection and retention guidelines, Replacement guidelines, Withdrawal guidelines, Intellectual property guidelines, Privacy guidelines, Quality control guidelines and Preservation guidelines.
- On selection, retention and withdraw, it was agreed that the policy should state clearly that depositing in Mzuzu University Institutional Repository will attract no any economic benefits.
- Workflow: Mandatory submission of research outputs by the author to the Digital Repository Manager and Quality Assurance Officer. Published documents included in the repository are consistent with publisher's copyright rules and conditions.
- University Librarian coordinates and manages the Institutional Repository.

Motivation for Change

- A digital repository policy is very necessary for the proper management and function of a digital repository –

“A policy was needed to provide guidelines that will help to define characteristics of resources that can be included; terms for depositing such resources and use of the resources among others” (Mzuzu University Digital Repository Policy 2018).

Processes & dynamics for developing, implementing and managing change

- Consultative workshop on 12-14 December 2017 that included Deans, Directors, Assistant Registrars', Management Accountant, Librarians, The National EIFL Coordinator, Late Mr Geoffrey Salanje and a guest facilitator, Rosemary Otando, Deputy University Librarian from University of Nairobi; opened by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Late Prof. Fred Msiska.
- Key issues raised: The need for full time repository staff and the need for Open Access Committee with a composition of Deputy Vice Chancellor, University Librarian, University Registrar, Director of Research, Coordinator of Intellectual Property, ICT Director, and Librarians. This committee would report to University Senate. The mandate of this committee is to preside over policy issues whilst overall management of the Open Access Digital Repository would fall in the hands of the University Librarian as the manager of the repository.
- The policy approval process: University Library Committee, Senate and University Council

Timeline for development and implementation

- The Digital Repository Policy development process started in 2015 and went a long way in facilitating stakeholders' meetings and approval processes among other things.

Challenges

- Low response from the stakeholders after input from the workshop
- Took time to be considered for discussion at Senate
- Referred back at Senate level for consultation with the Heads of Departments
- Very few Heads of Departments responded
- Printing costs led to print of few copies
- Implementation plan was not developed

Impact

- Since its approval by Mzuzu University Council in 2019, a number of positive developments have been registered albeit with a few challenges too.

The operationalization of the policy has led to the following positive developments:

- Constituting of a Library Digital Repository Committee to oversee the establishment and operations of the open access repository.
- Setting up of a Digital Repository Unit in the Technical Services Section of the Library and identifying staff to run routine jobs of the unit.
- Facilitated capacity development of staff to manage the day-to-day activities of the open access repository.
- Assisted in the designing, installation and configuration of a new and more vibrant repository using web technologies which can be accessed from <http://repository.mzuni.ac.mw/>
- Helped in the speedy growth of the collections of the Repository
- Facilitated increase in the use of the digital repository as statistics indicate that there were 7,054 item views and 1,716,663 searches from March 2019 to 16 September 2021.

However, COVID-19 restrictions that compelled staff to work from home slowed down activities related to the Repository such as collection development and marketing

End of Presentation.

Thank you (Zikomo Kwambiri)