



FACILITATING THE OPEN SHARING OF RESEARCH

Celebrating 20 years of the EIFL Open Access Programme

Photo by Shashank Pradhan for EIFL

“EIFL’s unique ability to work with their national library consortia in over 35 developing and transition countries allows the organization to facilitate the open sharing of the wealth of research produced to create a global research commons, one of the greatest ambitions of the open access movement.”

– MELISSA HAGEMANN, BUDAPEST OPEN ACCESS INITIATIVE

EIFL was among the original signatories to the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) that coined the term open access (OA), and in 2003 we launched the Open Access Programme (EIFL-OA) to take forward the BOAI vision. We take pleasure in sharing a history of how we have worked with our national and international partners to open up research and remove barriers to sharing knowledge.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF OPEN ACCESS AND OPEN SCIENCE

“EIFL is the true global leader in promoting open and equitable access to knowledge in developing and transitional countries. Their work sets the standard for effective open access advocacy, and has resulted in millions of individuals gaining access to critical information.” — Heather Joseph, Executive Director, SPARC, which co-organizes Open Access Week in partnership with the OA Week Advisory Committee.

“Before any major change in open access could take place, an understanding of the evolution, meaning, and importance of the practice had to be taught,” recalls Anna Chulyan, Director of the National Library of Armenia, and EIFL Country Coordinator in Armenia.

Our early work focused on advocacy, awareness raising and training. Our aim was to foster a culture of OA and open science in our partner countries, and to build the knowledge and skills needed to develop OA policies and to set up OA infrastructures — the open repositories and open journal platforms needed to enable OA to research outputs.

In July 2004, we organized our first OA event, a national workshop in Pretoria, South Africa. We followed this with workshops in Lithuania and

Poland, reaching policy-makers and academics in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the next two years, we intensified our advocacy and awareness raising efforts, with events in several more countries, including Bulgaria, China, Serbia and Slovenia.

We organized a regional OA event in South Africa in 2006, for nine Southern African countries. In 2007 we organized the first OA event in West Africa, with participants from Ghana and Nigeria; our work in eastern Africa began with national workshops in Ethiopia in 2008 and Kenya in 2010.

The impact of these events was profound. Agava Stanislaus, National Secretary of the Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) and University Librarian at the National Intelligence and Research University College, recalled the impact of the 2010 workshop in Kenya: “The workshop sparked the interest and curiosity of researchers, students, university administrators, journal editors and librarians from institutions across Kenya. It facilitated the sharing of knowledge and insights about the potential of open access, setting the stage for the transformation that was to follow,” he says.

With growing confidence, our national library consortia partners began conducting advocacy and awareness raising campaigns at their own institutions.

We encouraged libraries to join in International Open Access Week celebrations. The first OA Week was co-organized by EIFL in 2009, and OA Week has become an annual celebration for the international OA movement. Every year we receive news of creative celebrations in our partner countries.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN ACCESS AND OPEN SCIENCE POLICIES

“EIFL’s open access programme has had a significant impact since it began 20 years ago, leading to the adoption of OA policies and implementation strategies in many institutions across the global South and other regions.”

— Leslie Chan, Associate Professor at the University of Toronto Scarborough.

We recognized early on that policies would be the key to establishing OA as the norm in our partner countries. And so, from the start, we provided advice on policy to universities, research organizations and funders; we participated in policy discussions and offered policy guidelines and templates.

Although policy development and adoption processes take time, there has been remarkable progress in our partner countries. At the end of 2017 we celebrated a policy milestone — 100 national and / or institutional OA policies adopted. Today, just six years later, that number has almost doubled, to 189.

In 2021, UNESCO’s 193 member states formally adopted the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science — the first-ever international standard for open science. EIFL participated in the development of the Recommendation through an inclusive global consultative process, and Iryna Kuchma, EIFL-OA Manager, was one of 30 international experts appointed by the UNESCO Director General to serve on the Advisory Committee that prepared the draft recommendation.

The Recommendation has sparked the revision of existing policies as well as the formulation of new ones, and we expect many more open science policies to be adopted in our partner countries in the coming years.

“EIFL has been an instrumental partner in developing the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science and is at the core of the global efforts focusing on its implementation,” says Ana Peršič, Programme Specialist, Open Science, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, Natural Sciences Sector, UNESCO.

ESTABLISHING OPEN ACCESS INFRASTRUCTURES

Open access repositories

“EIFL has been a valued partner, both in terms of bringing diverse voices into the COAR working groups, but also helping to convene the right players around the table in different countries to progress open access policies and repository infrastructure.” — Kathleen Shearer, Executive Director, Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR).

In 2005, with support from EIFL, the University of Zimbabwe launched the first institutional OA repository in the EIFL network. Today 13 institutions in Zimbabwe have OA repositories. “It has become standard practice that students’ theses and dissertations are deposited in the institutional repositories,” says Blessing Chiparasha, Librarian at Bindura University of Science Education and EIFL OA Coordinator in Zimbabwe.

In 2008, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) launched an institutional OA repository, the first in Ghana and in West Africa. “When EIFL first became involved in Ghana in 2003, institutional capacity for sharing and publishing research in OA in Ghana did not exist,” recalls Richard Bruce Lamptey, Librarian at the College of Science Library at KNUST and EIFL Country Coordinator in Ghana. Since 2008, OA in

Ghana has flourished, and today there are 27 institutional OA repositories.

In many countries, establishment of just one institutional OA repository produced a snowball effect. By the end of 2008 there were over 100 OA repositories in EIFL partner countries, disseminating half a million research publications. By the end of 2017 there were over 1,000 repositories, providing OA to millions of research publications.

The most commonly used repository software in our partner countries is the free and open source software, DSpace. To help repository managers, administrators and librarians to maintain and improve their DSpace repositories we developed (and regularly update) a checklist, 'How to make your OA Repository Work Really Well'.

Open access journals

"EIFL has facilitated the development of thousands of open access journals and repositories, as well as influenced policy-making at a national and international level. DOAJ also benefits directly from EIFL's expertise and advice through their participation in our Council." — Joanna Ball, Managing Director, Directory of Open Access Journals, (DOAJ).

In 2003, print was the predominant mode of publishing in our partner countries. Very few journals were published online or in OA.

Among the first of our partner countries to launch an OA journals portal was Serbia, where EIFL-supported advocacy and awareness raising workshops led to the launch of an OA journals portal at the National Library in 2005.

By 2016, the number of Serbian scholarly journals that were freely available online had grown. However, the transition to e-publishing was incomplete — Serbian OA journals were basically traditional print journals with online versions, often in PDF format, recalls Milica Ševkušić, librarian at the Institute of Technical Sciences of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and EIFL OA Coordinator in Serbia.

To address this situation EIFL supported a 10-month project, working with our partner library consortium, KoBSON, and the National Library of Serbia.

"This project improved the quality of publishing practices and raised awareness of the importance of journal policies, Creative Commons licences and meeting the standards needed for inclusion in international directories, for example, the DOAJ," says Milica.

Today, 400 Serbian journals are published in OA, with over 200 listed in the DOAJ. "For local scholarly publishing open access is the default option. Usage statistics reveal that the content in Serbian is read all over the world, as well as that scholarly works are used beyond narrow academic circles, which encourages researchers to open up their publications," says Milica.

In 2021 we funded projects in five countries (Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Kenya and Lesotho), improving the skills of journal publishers, editors and managers, and increasing and improving OA journal publishing. To increase visibility and accessibility of journals and to enhance their reputation, we encouraged good practices to ensure that journals would be eligible for indexing in international directories.

To support journal publishing, we produced (and regularly update) the 'EIFL checklist of good practices in using Open Journal Systems software (OJS) for journal editing and publishing'.

OPEN ACCESS AND OPEN SCIENCE TRAINING

"EIFL has played a significant role in developing Open Access capabilities globally, fostering intercultural understanding, and establishing collaborative learning environments." — Natalia Manola, CEO, OpenAIRE

Over the past 20 years, EIFL OA and open science training have reached over 300,000 scholars, researchers, research administrators, librarians, journal publishers and editors. To ensure the future sustainability of OA and open science training we have trained trainers and contributed to the development of courses,

manuals, guides and toolkits that are freely available online.

From 2014 to 2019 we led and coordinated the training for the EU-funded FOSTER (Facilitating Open Science Training for European Researchers) project, working with project partners. The training reached 14,000 people, mostly early career researchers, in 41 countries. Among the achievements of the FOSTER project was the development of a portal with a wide range of e-learning and training resources.

We also co-chair the Training and Support Standing Committee in OpenAIRE, which launched OpenAIRE Open Science Train-the-Trainer Bootcamps in 2022. The committee developed the OpenAIRE online training platform and material, which EIFL has used for its own bootcamps. In 2023 EIFL-OA organized two five-day open science train-the-trainer bootcamps for librarians, research staff and others who were delivering or planning to deliver open science training. The bootcamps were extremely popular — 136 trainers from across EIFL's network enrolled — and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

"The training enhanced my knowledge and skills in open science and in developing training materials on open science. I intend to use what I learnt for teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students," said a participant from Mzuzu University in Malawi.

"This bootcamp has provided me with valuable knowledge and an opportunity to take a fresh look at the training we offer to the university community," said a participant from the Kaunas University of Technology in Lithuania.

EIFL-OA also encourages the development and integration of open science and research data management (RDM) in university courses for postgraduate students.

In Lithuania, with a grant from EIFL, Kaunas University of Technology Library developed an accredited online RDM course for PhD students.

In Estonia, the University of Tartu, and several other universities, academic libraries and

research organizations now offer courses in open science and open data. "These courses demonstrate the institutions' commitment to fostering open science and research data management skills among PhD students. Based on feedback, it can be emphasized that early career researchers are very willing to practice open science," says Elena Sipria-Mironov, librarian at the University of Tartu Library and EIFL OA Coordinator in Estonia.

20 YEARS OF EIFL-OA IN NUMBERS —



19 national and **189** institutional open access and open science policies.

1,200+ open access repositories.

4,100+ open access journals.

312,900+ people trained from 2004 - 2023.



CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL OA MOVEMENT

Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) — original signatory

Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR) — founding member

Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS) — founding member

OpenAIRE AMKE — founding member

Open Access Week — founding member

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our 20th Anniversary celebrations, and thank you to Arcadia, the European Commission, Open Society Foundations, SPIDER (the Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions) and Wellcome for supporting the EIFL Open Access Programme over the years.

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