POSITION PAPER

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**COMMITTEE: UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CULTURAL ORGANISATION**

**COUNTRY: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

**AGENDA: Promoting Open Access to Scientific Information and Research**



**Challenges for Open Access:**

* **Low level of awareness of the potentials of Open Access amongst researchers, librarians, publishers/editors of scholarly journals and policy makers;**
* **Lack of government framework and policy regulations to guide institutions make researchers unwilling to share research information online and increase their skepticism about the quality and impact of OA journals;**
* **Lack of Open Access policies and research funders' OA mandates;**
* **Lack of skilled staff to manage Open Access projects and to maintain the standards of quality assurance and good scientific practice.**
* **There is also a lack of OA journals being published in Arabic.**
* **Overview:**
* **The Arab institutions began to express their strong commitment to fostering an enabling environment for Open Access (OA) in October 2006 during**[**Nidae Al-Ryadh**](http://openaccess.inist.fr/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=36)**of Free Access to Scientific and Technical Information. This was the first Arabic declaration in support of OA by the participants in the Second Gulf-Maghreb Scientific Congress (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, February 25-26, 2006), which calls for free access to all scientific literature on the internet. It supports the idea that scientific literature should be ethically disseminated without any financial, legal, or technological barriers, as long as authors' intellectual property rights are respected.**
* **Currently, there are approximately 2900 OA digital repositories internationally listed on the**[**OpenDOAR**](http://www.opendoar.org/)**- an authoritative quality-assured world directory of academic Open Access repositories -- with about 37 repositories in Arab states and ~525 Open Access Journals published in Arab countries listed in the**[**Directory of OA Journals**](http://www.doaj.org/doaj?func=home&uiLanguage=en)**(DOAJ), of which 28 are available in Arabic language. This number accounts for  a comprehensive directory that covers all open access scientific and scholarly journals that use a quality control system to guarantee the content. DOAJ also currently indexes 3977 OA articles which are published in Arabic. This accounts for 0.02% of a total of ~1,976,226 articles available on DOAJ.**[**53 OA journals**](http://road.issn.org/issn_search?afs:filter=geoArea%3D%22Arab%20States%22&afs:filter=language%3D%22ara%22&afs:sort=registrationYear%2CDESC&afs:filter=language%3D%22ara%22#.VdsxJDjsnIU)**published in the Arabic language are listed in the**[**Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources (ROAD).**](http://road.issn.org/en)
* **According to Thomson Reuters Inc., the total number of scientific research articles originating from Arab countries stood at 13 574 in 2008 and the average expenditure on scientific research has fallen short of world average over the last four decades (UNESCO Science Report, 2010). In 2014, the Global innovation Index (GII) report revealed that the total Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as a % GDP by high economy Arab States (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman) in 2011 was less than 0.2% (world average: 2.08%). This can be largely associated with the resource-extracting activities in these countries that tend to crowd out investment in other productive sectors, therefore hindering R&D innovation capacity.**
* **Furthermore, in Arab states, research is done mainly through Higher education institutes and their affiliated research centers with minimum share of the private sector. The total Scopus output from the Arab World during the period 2003-2013 is topped by Egypt, with approximately 85,000 publishes. This number can be largely associated with the Hindawi publishing corporation based in Cairo, Egypt.**
* **By 2015, the Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies (ROARMAP) lists one institutional OA policy from Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) and two institutional OA policies from Algeria's .** [**University of Bouira**](http://roarmap.eprints.org/775/)**and**[**Université M'hamed Bougara - Boumerdes**](http://roarmap.eprints.org/653/)**. There are no research funders' OA policies from the Arab world registered in**[**SHERPA/JULIET**](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet/index.php)**.**
* **UNESCO's Global Open Access Portal for Arab States currently provides detailed OA profiles for: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt,  Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon,  Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.**
* **Enabling Environment:**
* **The majority of Arab states have successfully ridden the IT wave, and the cost of internet access in most Arab countries is lower than the average value for all the world’s countries. Only three Arab countries–Sudan, Mauritania, and Djibouti–have a noticeably higher cost than the world average. There is a rapid growth in ICT strength in the Arab States, which can be increasingly leveraged to improve visibility to the regional research publications output. As of 2014, four out of six high economy Arab States have made it to the top 50 countries in the world with highest ICT access (UAE ranks 24th, Bahrain ranks 27th, Qatar ranks 31st and Saudi Arabia ranks 34th).**
* **Among the examples of international cooperation in the region, agencies and programs that are active in the region for Open Access initiatives include**[**EIFL.net**](http://www.eifl.net/)**- an international not-for-profit organization based in Europe with a global network of partners (Helping in setting up IR and training support),**[**INASP**](http://www.inasp.info/en/)**(**[**AJOL**](http://www.ajol.info/)**), [BioMed Central](http://www.biomedcentral.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)(free membership scheme for qualifying universities and research institutions in low-income countries),**[**SCOAP3**](http://scoap3.org/)**- Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics (partnership) and in many cases with**[**UNESCO**](http://en.unesco.org/)**sponsorship. Availability of scientists and researchers is higher than developing countries but less than OECD countries- There are about 35,000 fulltime researchers, half of this number works in Egypt. International collaboration is high due to funding availability. Governments have procured advanced technologies.**

**Major Projects and Initiatives:**

[**Majaliss**](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID%3D29118%26URL_DO%3DDO_TOPIC%26URL_SECTION%3D201.html)**- UNESCO’s Digital Library - the Digital Library of classical Arabic literature, offers a modern platform for sharing hundreds of freely accessible classical works of Arabic literature and provides access through Internet and digital format to the cultural heritage of the Arab world.**

[**Yemeni Manuscript Digitization Initiative**](http://ymdi.uoregon.edu/)**(YMDI) - is a team of research librarians and leading scholars of Arabic Literature, classical Islam and Middle Eastern history, whose mission is to preserve and present, for the first time, access to the largest and most important set of unexamined Arabic manuscripts in the world today from the private libraries of Yemen.**

[**The Digital Assets Repository**](http://dar.bibalex.org/)**(DAR), is a system developed at**[**The Library of Alexandria**](http://bibalex.org/)**. DAR acts as a repository that preserves and archives all types of media (including books, slides, negatives, manuscripts, maps, audio and video) and provides public access to over 200,000 books, which are now available on DAR's website.**

[**The Supercourse**](http://www.bibalex.org/Supercourse/assist/sum.htm)**is a global partnership anchored in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA). It is a repository of lectures on public health and prevention targeting educators across the world. The Supercourse has a network of over 65,000 scientists in 174 countries who are sharing for free a library of more than 4700 lectures in 31 languages.**[**Science Supercourse**](http://ssc.bibalex.org/home/list.jsf)**project aims to provide the most updated and accessible online science lectures free of charge to assist educators and scholars from developing countries**

[**e-Omed project- The Open Digital Space for the Mediterranean**](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/portals-and-platforms/global-open-access-portal/access-by-region/africa/ethiopia/)**(Espace Numérique Ouvert pour la Méditerranée, e-Omed), initiated in March 2009 by the Moroccan Virtual Campus (MVC) and**[**Université Numérique Ingénierie et Technologie**](http://www.unit.eu/fr)**(UNIT), France and supported by UNESCO.The mission is to build open digital libraries in countries across the Mediterranean sea through a comprehensive framework of educational resources and facilitating co-production, exchanges and localization of educational content and pedagogical practices in the region.**

[**Hindawi Publishing Corporation**](http://www.hindawi.com/)**- A rapidly growing academic publisher that offers Gold Open Access scholarly journal publishing - with more than 300 Open Access journals with a range of academic disciplines through several years now. In the Gold Open Access model, publishers are publishing service providers rather than content providers. These publishers do not depend on the copyright law in the way subscription publishers do and will continue to operate in a (hypothetical) world where copyright law does not exist.**

[**QScience.com**](http://www.qscience.com/)**launched by**[**Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation (BQF)**](http://www.bqfp.com.qa/authors)**, a peer-reviewed online publishing platform. It provides free access to the full text of its research articles and offers the Gold option for Open Access to all its journal articles. Qscience is a member of Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). On 13 February 2014, QScience.com announced that they are waiving Article Publication Charges (APCs) for all authors who submit their work to QScience Connect and input their ORCID identifiers on submission.ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) provides a non-proprietary alphanumeric code to uniquely identify scientific and scholarly authors. ORCID addresses the problem that a particular author's contributions to the scientific literature can be hard to discover online as most personal names are not unique and can change (such as with marriage, spelling preferences, transliteration etc.) ORCID provides a unique and persistent identifier, similar to that created for content-related entities on digital networks by digital object identifiers (DOIs). QScience has made this decision to encourage researchers in the Arab world to participate in the ORCID initiative. The APC waiver will present authors with the opportunity to experiment with OA publishing and in turn contribute to an increase in Open Access (OA) publications, as well as improving their discoverability through use of a persistent identifier.**

**By 2014, The Qatar Foundation's collaboration with Bloomsbury had also led to the publishing of 14 OA journals in English/Arabic.**

[**Arab Initiatives of Open Access (AIOA):**](http://aioa.blogspot.fr/)**established in the 4th quarter of 2007 as a response to the absence of a significant Arab presence in the OA world. AIOA encourages and maximally promotes the adoption of OA in the region.  In the absence of the concept of OA in the Arab World, AIOA provided readers and researchers with a**[**blog**](http://aioa.blogspot.fr/)**that introduced OA in theory and practice. This blog is maintained by Dr. Sulieman AlShuhri, Amal AlSalem, Dr. Abdel-Rahman Farrag, and Dr. Ramadan Elaiess. The blog not only covers recent developments in the open access field, but also delivers its content in Arabic. Achievements of AIOA:**

* **Translation service: the Book "Policy guidelines for the development of Open Access (2012)" by Dr. Alma Swan has been translated from English language to Arabic.**
* **AIOA has developed its own database "Arab Digital Repositories"**
* **AIOA has contributed to a number of local and international conferences**
* **Agreement with some scholars and publishers to publish their works under an OA policy eg. the Book Endowment (Waqf) policy.**