

Partnership puts SA's research on global stage

A NEW partnership between academic publishers would make South African academic research more visible in the global research sphere, the Academy of Science of SA (Assaf) said this week.

Thomson Reuters, one of the main academic research databases in the world, has partnered with the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), an open-source database, Assaf announced. This partnership will be implemented in January next year.

South Africa is trying to position itself as a knowledge economy, but it is often difficult and expensive for international researchers to access South African research. An important marker for a research article is citation the number of times the article is cited in other researchers' work.

However, 'large amount of South African research appears in journals published in South Africa, which are not always easily available overseas', Department of Higher Education spokeswoman Vuyelwa Qinga said this week. 'These journals are seldom part of large international electronic databases, meaning that the full-text research is hard to access outside of SA.' SciELO was developed in Brazil, but a South African arm, which includes research from South African scholarly journals, was recently added. 'SciELO publishes about 40 000 new articles every year from over 900 open-access journals from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Portugal, SA, Spain, and Venezuela,' Assaf said.

Susan Veldsman, director of Assaf's scholarly publishing unit, said: 'The partnership allows us to generate citations for the SciELO collection. This knowledge is an important tool for researchers to gauge how important their articles are, whether they are cited internationally, and whether people are seeing them, nationally and internationally.'

SciELO included developing countries. 'It's about enhancing indigenous knowledge', said Ms Veldsman. 'This knowledge will now appear alongside international published research.'

SciELO's journals were open-source, so while they were included in the Thomson-Reuters Web of Knowledge, articles would be free, Ms Qinga said. 'This means that the full-text articles can be downloaded for free from anywhere in the world, opening up international access to South African research.'

The main focus was accessibility and visibility, Ms Veldsman added.

'Other people can see what we are doing, and what we're capable of ...

SA is doing incredible research, and the rest of the world should know.'

She was unable to disclose the cost of SciELO's inclusion in the Thomson-Reuters database, but said that 'it depends on how many journals will be on our platform. It will be a fee based on a pro rata amount per journal.'

Source: Bdlive,

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/science/2012/08/10/partnership-puts-sas-research-on-global-stage>

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