

Asian Open Access Meeting Report

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Introduction

On March 4, 2016, the National Institute of Informatics (NII) hosted a meeting of the Asian open access (OA) community in Tokyo, Japan. The meeting was co-organized by COAR, the Confederation of Open Access Repositories and held in conjunction with the Research Data Alliance Plenary meeting. The aim of the meeting was to introduce members of the Asian open access community from different countries to each other and launch an Asian community of practice for OA) that will facilitate greater knowledge sharing about trends and challenges.

Although there is already an international open access community, such as the Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), the topics addressed in these international contexts are often of relevance to the most advanced countries in terms of open access adoption, rather than from the viewpoint of the countries that are less developed. In addition, the physical distances and time differences make it difficult for Asian countries to fully engage in international discussions.

In order to fill gaps and connect the OA community within continents, the establishment of a local Asian community is crucial. This meeting provided the opportunity for participants to share current status, success, concern and problems related to the open access activity in the Asian region. The discussion also focused on how to better share OA related activities and practices within the region in the future, and included an important discussion about the librarian's role in managing research data.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and India, as well as external observers from COAR, Europe and Brazil. This report provides a summary of the meeting and outlines the next steps that were agreed upon by participants.



Asian Open Access Meeting

Information Sharing

The first half of the meeting was focused on sharing information from across regions and organizations:

COAR: COAR is an international initiative aimed at bringing together the repository community. The vision of COAR is to develop a global knowledge commons based on a foundation of open access repositories. COAR began by focussing on publication repositories, but is now working to help its members expand services into the data realm. COAR undertakes its work in 4 areas: (1) Acting as a global voice for the repository community in the international arena and promoting repositories in that context. (2) Working to align repository networks and ensure interoperability across repositories around the world (3) Helps build capacity at the local level and (4) Supporting the adoption of value added services on top of repositories, such as a new project they are looking at to develop peer review services for repositories.

Malaysia: Malaysia has two major public research funders: The Ministry of Higher Education and The Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry of Higher Education funds the vast majority of research (80-90%). Malaysian funders do not have open access policies in place. They have a three tiered system which will allow some researchers to pay article processing fees to make articles openly available.

In terms of institutions, Malaysia has 21 universities and 1 applied university. The council of librarians in Malaysia is working supporting members in adopting repository services, but these still mainly focus on

collecting theses and dissertations. They have a national initiative called “Malaysian Theses Online”. They also have a number of local journals supported by institutions that are open access.

There is really no national-wide coordination around open access but it is anticipated that there will be more intense discussions about OA in the near future. Rankings are very important in the Malaysian context and the World Ranking of Universities inclusion of open access activities is a motivating factor to become involved in open access.

Japan: Last year, the Japanese government published a report on Open Science, which has put open science onto the agenda of the various government ministries, which are now grappling with how they can support the expansion of open science in Japan.

In Japan, there are also two major national funding agencies. The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), which is very big and tends to be somewhat conservative and the JST, which is smaller but able to be more agile. The JST has an open access policy, but it is not a mandatory policy. They want to advance to open access, but first they need to know how many articles are produced in Japan, and how many of them are already open access. Using the Web of Science, they estimate that about 12% of the articles published in the international journal literature are open access.

In terms of repositories, at the infrastructure level, Japan is quite well developed, with over 650 institutional repositories at universities across the country. However in terms of policy and the culture of open access, there is still significant work to do to socialize the community about the values around open access and open science. In addition, the Japanese university system is operated based on staff rotations, meaning that every three years staffing changes, and the skills and knowledge for managing the repository is lost.

The National Institute of Informatics is building a JAIRO cloud, which will help build capacity for data management in Japan. NII also hosts a harvester that aggregates metadata from all the repositories via the OAI-PMH protocol.

Kyoto University was the first university in Japan to have an open access policy. The other universities want to follow and it is anticipated that several more universities will have implemented policies in the coming year. Despite the policy, the library is finding it very challenging to get researchers to deposit into the repository. In addition, there are many different stakeholders on campus with different interests. The university administration wants to begin tracking faculty citations and therefore have started to require researchers to input information into the research administrative database as well as the institutional policies. This is somewhat redundant and confusing for researchers and the University is looking at how they can merge or simplify the processes. Still a big challenge remains in regards to how to get researchers to adhere to OA policies.

Singapore: Two major research funders in Singapore (A-STAR and the National Research Foundation) have implemented open access policies. These policies recommend deposit of articles into OA repositories, and also allow for open access via gold publishing. In addition the National Medical Research Council has recently adopted a policy for publications and are looking to develop an open data (or data sharing) policy. They are currently working on how to deal with the issues of privacy in the policy context and it is expected that a policy will be in place sometime in the second half of 2016.

Traditionally, it has been the libraries that have been engaged and pushing the OA agenda at the universities. Of the three major universities in Singapore, two have OA policies (NTU + SMU), while the largest institution, National University of Singapore (NUS) does not have a policy yet.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong has eight universities that pride themselves on their high quality of research, following the British system. However, in terms of open access, they are behind mainland China and this is likely because there has been no top down push for OA requirements from governments or funders. All the universities have institutional repositories, but these are not very active. Two or three universities are encouraging researchers to deposit, but there is no tracking or monitoring of compliance levels. In 2008, Hong Kong University started an open access group, but the momentum has slowed. In contrast, the institutions and funders are very focused on impact factors and having their researchers publish in high impact factor journals and have implemented incentives for researchers to do this. Similar pressures and requirements for open access would greatly help move open access forward in the Hong Kong context.

India: India has been working on building repositories at institutions across the country. There are now approximately 56 repositories hosted by university libraries. And, according to the Global Open Access Portal, in December 2014, India's Ministry of Science and Technology, the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) released a new Open Access Policy. Under the new OA policy, researchers who receive or have received funding since 2012 or use resources from these departments are mandated to deposit, within two weeks after acceptance by a journal, copies of the final papers and supporting data in institutional repositories where the information can be accessed by the public.

Other Asian countries: There are a number of other countries not represented at the meeting who are actively engaged in open access, especially China and Korea, which both have very robust institutional repository systems and also are harvesting content at the national level. Other countries such as Myanmar are working with EIFL to develop their repository networks and the first OA policies.

Observers from two other countries and regions were present at the meeting and briefly described the current situations in their contexts:

Brazil: Brazil has a very robust open access environment with strong policies around making articles open access and a well-developed infrastructure of open access journals and repositories. The next steps for Brazil are to start looking at how they can better manage their research data and therefore they are looking at building capacity in this area and also developing infrastructure.

Europe/OpenAIRE: Open access in the European region has progressed significantly, in large part because of the OpenAIRE project, a European Commission project to build a European open access infrastructure. OpenAIRE harvests the content from repositories across Europe and provides information to funders and other stakeholders about open access papers. OpenAIRE also has 33 open access desks in all participating countries and these contact points support the adoption of common guidelines and standards across European countries, as well as provide support for institutions around open access in general. There are still many regional differences across Europe in the maturity of repository infrastructure across Europe. OpenAIRE and other OA projects in Europe have also developed a lot of training materials that may be adapted for other regions such as Asia.

Discussion

It was clear from the information sharing session that there are a lot of differences across the Asian countries in how they are approaching OA and the levels of implementation. Some countries have strong policies, while others have none; some have very robust repository infrastructures, while others are still working on developing this; and some countries have central coordination of activities, while others don't. This heterogeneity reflects important cultural differences across the countries.

The group discussed a number of issues. While countries with policies tend to be further developed in terms of open access implementation, it was recognized that policies are not enough to ensure widespread adoption of open access. It is (fairly) easy to start a repository. The major challenges are social/cultural ones, mainly the need to change researchers practices. This is not easy to do. There must be explicit incentives embedded in the researchers' evaluation and tenure processes in order to really motivate them to change their practices. Many researchers still do not recognize the value of OA and therefore are not really interested in making their papers open access. Many researchers are confused about the difference between gold and green, or don't even know about the repository option for OA. In addition, in many countries, there are incentives (in some cases even cash payments) to publish in the highest impact journals possible, even if those journals do not have OA-friendly policies.

Even if researchers are allowed to deposit their articles into repositories, many researchers do not, and librarians in many institutions across Asia are depositing on behalf of faculty members. But is this a solution that will work if we want to capture the majority of the research publications in the repository? This is a highly resource intensive activity and probably cannot scale. If we start to consider the issue of expanding beyond publications to collecting research data, the task becomes even more demanding. In addition, sometimes there is a big disconnect between communities that should be working together, for example, the librarians, researchers, computing and technology centres, administrators and policy makers, and so on. Bottom-up solutions can only go so far and it is recognized that some level of national coordination and requirements can help address many of these issues. Strong national leadership and champions in the area of OA has been very helpful in moving OA forward in the countries that are farthest ahead.

The group also discussed DOI's and how each country was managing them. JST mints DOIs for free for any Japanese researcher. KISTI is a member of DataCITE, although DataCITE DOI's are only for data and cannot be used for publications. Other countries are getting DOIs from other external bodies. The costs of DOIs are an issue for some countries.

Next Steps

There was a consensus at the meeting that an Asian OA community of practice would be very helpful for discussing challenges, sharing knowledge and potential solutions, developing relationships across countries, and ultimately increasing the pace of OA adoption in Asia. This community will act under the auspices of the COAR umbrella and COAR will ensure that the Asian community remains connected with the other regions. There will be no membership fees for participation in COAR Asia, and there is no requirement for Asian participants to join COAR.

The group identified three important layers (representing three communities) that could benefit from this OA community of practice: (1) funders/governments who are responsible for policy development, (2) national infrastructure bodies who aggregate content and support national services for OA, and (3) libraries who manage repositories and work on the ground with researchers to collect content.

The following activities were proposed as next steps:

1. Start an Asian OA mailing list, which can be used for informal communication. Identify local contact points in each country to add to the mailing list.
 2. Invite colleagues from other Asian countries not present to join the community: China, Korea, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Myanmar, Taiwan, and Thailand. (what about the others)
 3. Develop an online portal to enable countries to provide up-to-date information about their activities with the community.
 4. Organize an in person meeting in the fall of 2016 (possibly September/October)
 - a. Malaysian colleagues volunteered to host the meeting
 - b. In conjunction with a smaller closed meeting to share information, the aim will be to develop a program that will attract people to attend.
 5. Consider the option of implementing a regional harvester for Asian OA repositories
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