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University libraries in South Africa and open access



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EG Malherbe Library, 24 October 2011

Serials crisis and open access

- ❑ Increase in journal subscription costs outstrips many library budgets
- ❑ Cancellation projects have become a routine
- ❑ Librarians have been investigating alternative solutions such as open access (OA)

Librarians caught in the middle

- ❑ Provide access to research resources to scholars
- ❑ Scholars in turn as a result of the publish or perish paradigm are mandated by their institutions to publish to secure tenure and promotion
- ❑ Scholars cede their copyright to publishers
- ❑ Publishers sell the research back to the libraries at above inflationary prices

The South African context

- ▣ South African academic libraries are not exempt from the effects of the serials crisis
- ▣ Most journal are paid for in United States (US) dollars and British pounds
- ▣ The fluctuating rand or exchange rate
- ▣ Academic institutions receive subsidy for articles published in “accredited” journals
 - DHET
 - ISI
 - IBSS
 - SAPSE

Defining OA

- Using the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002) and the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing (2003) definitions:
 - open access concerns scholarly literature (peer-reviewed or not)
 - that is subject to copyright (not in the public domain) and
 - is made available free of charge by depositing it in a long-term reliable, standards-compliant online repository
 - with a licence permitting unrestricted access and utilisation
 - subject only to proper authorship and ethical norms.

Harnad's 'subversive proposal'

- Key figure in OA debate and has worked relentlessly to promote OA
- In 1994 Steven Harnad posted 'A subversive proposal' to the discussion list based at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute
- The intention of 'A subversive proposal' was to legally bypass restrictive copyright

Harnard's definition of OA

- ❑ Open access is not synonymous with OA publishing (gold OA)
- ❑ OA means free online access to the 2.5 million articles published yearly in the 25,000 peer-reviewed research journals
- ❑ Peer-reviewed journals only accessible to users at institutions that can afford a subscription to the journal
- ❑ Hence the original intention of scholarly communication: “the free exchange of ideas” has been seriously undermined
- ❑ Research thus loses its potential usage and impact

Open repositories

- Digital collections of research articles that have been placed there by their authors or their institutions either before or after publication
- Krishnamurthy (2008: 50) identifies the following types of OA within the context of academic institutions:
 - Eprint archive (authors self-archive).
 - Unqualified (immediate and full OA publication of a journal).
 - Dual Mode (both print subscription and OA version of a journal are offered).
 - Delayed open access (OA is available after a certain period of time).
 - Author fee (authors pay a fee to support OA).
 - Partial OA (some articles from a journal are available through OA).
 - Abstract (OA limited to table of contents and/or abstracts).
 - Co-operative approach (institutional members support OA journals)

Green OA

- ▣ Authors self-archive their peer-reviewed final drafts online in their institutional OA repositories immediately upon acceptance for publication
- ▣ Articles are free for all
- ▣ Providing green OA is entirely in the hands of the research community who provide the content
- ▣ A transition to green OA can be mandated by the research community (research institutions and funders)

Gold OA

- ▣ Peer-reviewed journals can be converted to OA publishing
- ▣ Publishing all their articles free for all online
- ▣ Authors' institutions or funders pay the cost of publication
- ▣ Providing gold OA is in the hands of the publishing community, the purveyors of the content
- ▣ Transition to gold OA cannot be mandated by the research community since it depends on the publishing community

“Irony”

- ❑ The costs of publishing today are being paid for by research institutions through journal subscriptions
- ❑ The potential funds to pay for the gold OA are locked into institutional journals subscriptions
- ❑ The research community, institutions and funders should mandate green OA

Recent literature OA

- The annual *Library Journal*, “Periodical price survey 2007: serial wars”, “Periodicals price survey 2008: embracing openness” and “Reality bites: periodicals price survey 2009”, conducted by Van Orsdel and Born (2007; 2008; 2009)
- Van Orsdel and Born (2008; 2009) note that the marked changes brought on by the advance of OA has so far had little effect on the price of subscribed journals, the notable exception being some 3300 peer-reviewed journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), all of which are free
- In “Seeking the new normal: periodicals price survey 2010” Henderson and Bosch (2010) note that OA initiatives have had only a modest effect on the publishing industry as a whole.
- Open access journals are not yet considered mainstream publishing venues and while the number of peer-reviewed, full open access journals represents 10% of all peer-reviewed journals, estimates are that only 2% to 4.6% of total articles published are OA.

The influence of OA on journal cancellations in university libraries in South Africa

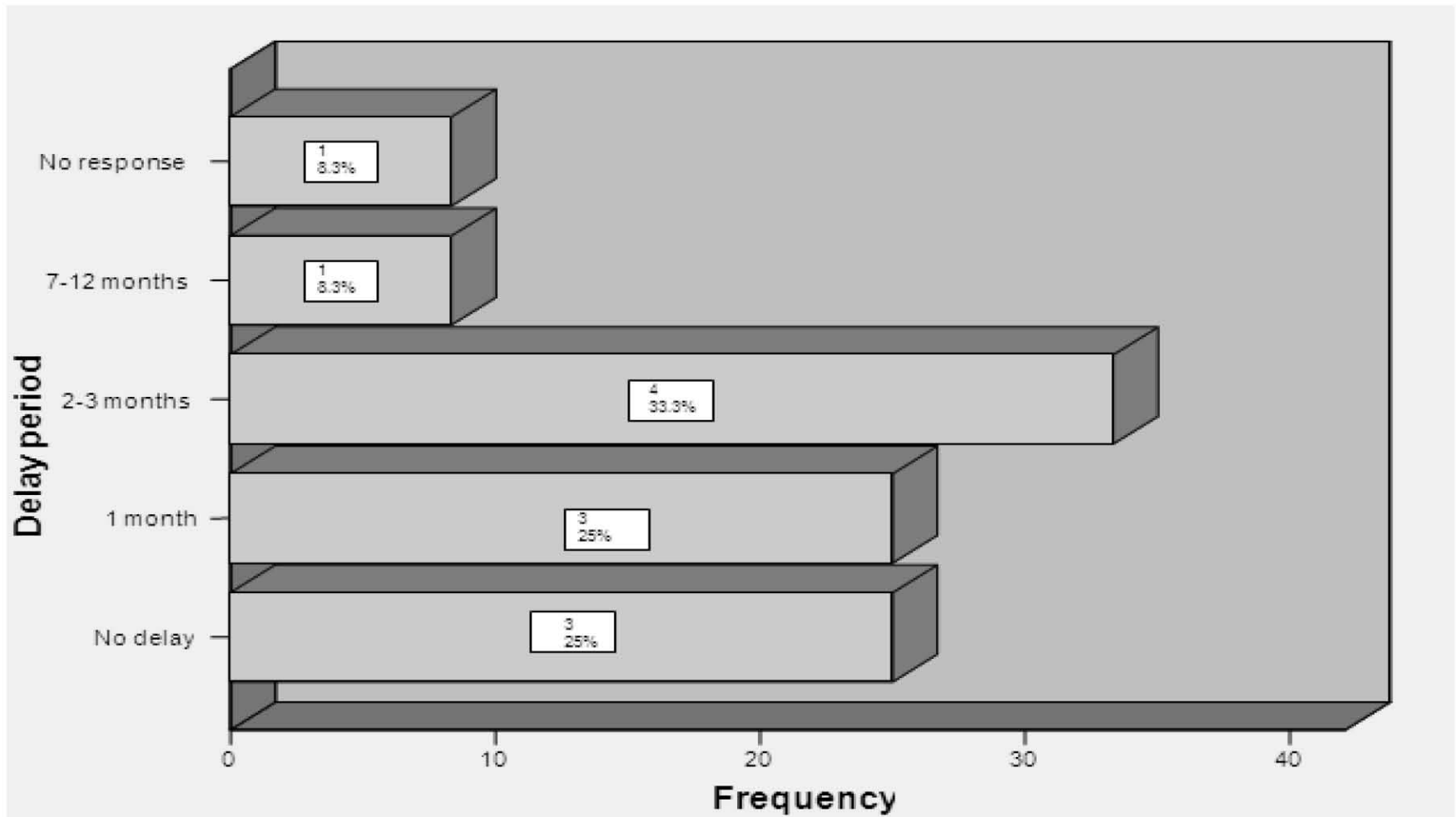
- ▣ A quantitative approach
- ▣ Data collected using online self-administered questionnaire (created using SurveyMonkey) directed to the heads of university libraries in South Africa
- ▣ The 17 units of analysis were drawn from the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) Heads of Academic Libraries list.
- ▣ In the absence of a library head the periodicals or serials librarian completed the survey
- ▣ A total of 12 university libraries (representing 70.6%) responded

Results and discussion - Factors relating to a journal which becomes available in an aggregation product

N=12

Factors relating to a journal which becomes available in an aggregation product	Responses	
	Yes	Percent
Length of embargo period after which content is included	9	75%
Extent of archive included in aggregation	6	50%
Promptness of adding new material	5	41.7%
Functionality in aggregation	5	41.7%

Results and discussion – Length of the delay period



Results and discussion - Factors influencing the delay period

- In terms of the factors influencing the delay period, the table below shows that the subject area for the journal was considered important in determining the appropriateness of the delay period by a vast majority of the libraries (91.7%). Only half the libraries (50%) considered the frequency of the journal a factor in determining the appropriateness of the delay period.

N=12

Factors influencing delay period	Responses	
	Yes	Percent
Subject area	11	91.7%
Frequency of journal	6	50%

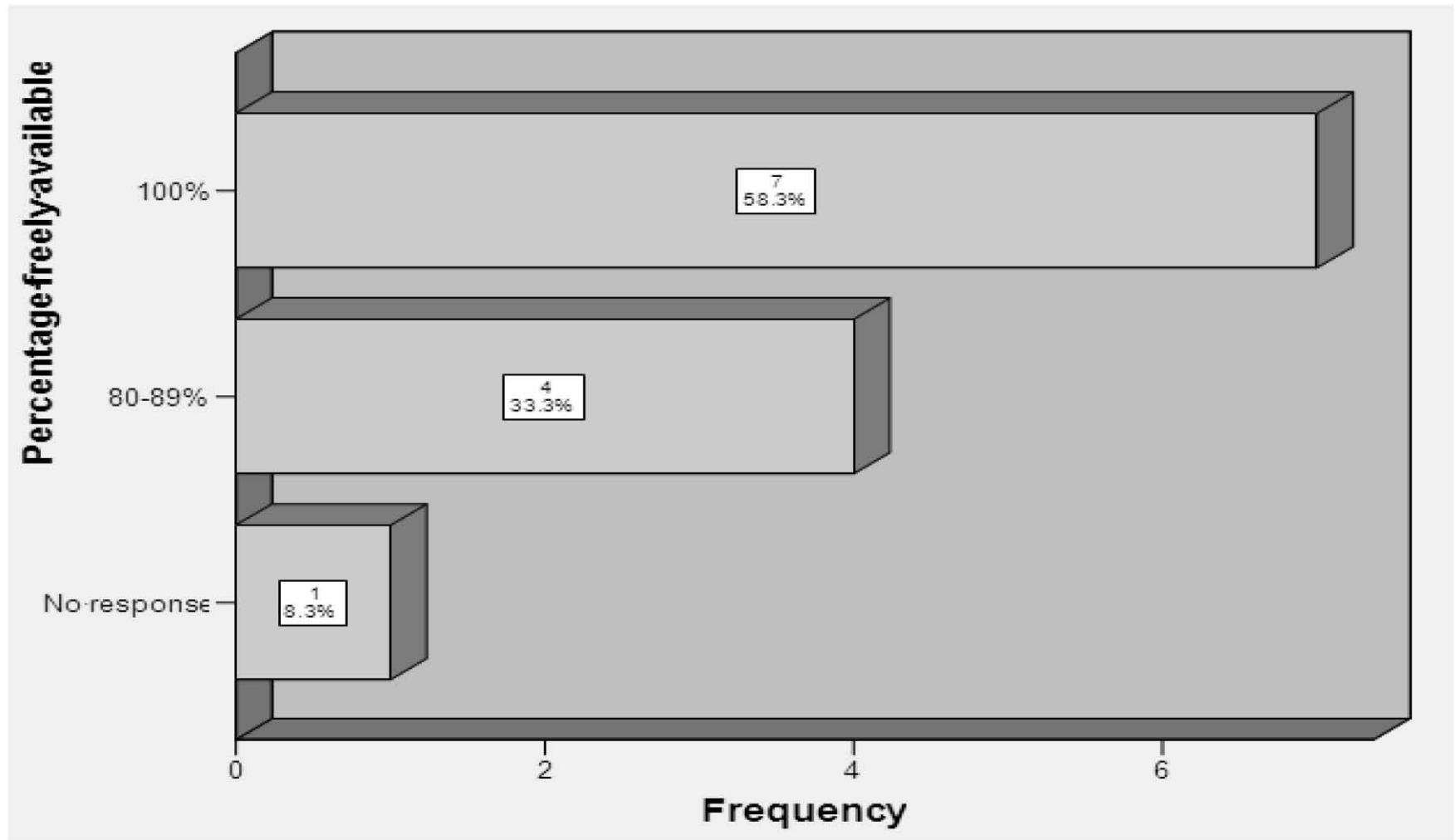
Results and discussion – Acceptable substitutes for journals

- In terms of acceptable substitutes for a journal, 91.7% of the libraries viewed an archived copy of the publisher's final PDF as an acceptable substitute for the journal. This finding is consistent with that of the ALPSP study (Ware 2006). Journals in their postprint and preprint format were not considered acceptable substitutes since postprints were acceptable only for two (16.7%) libraries and preprints for one (8.3%) library.

N=12

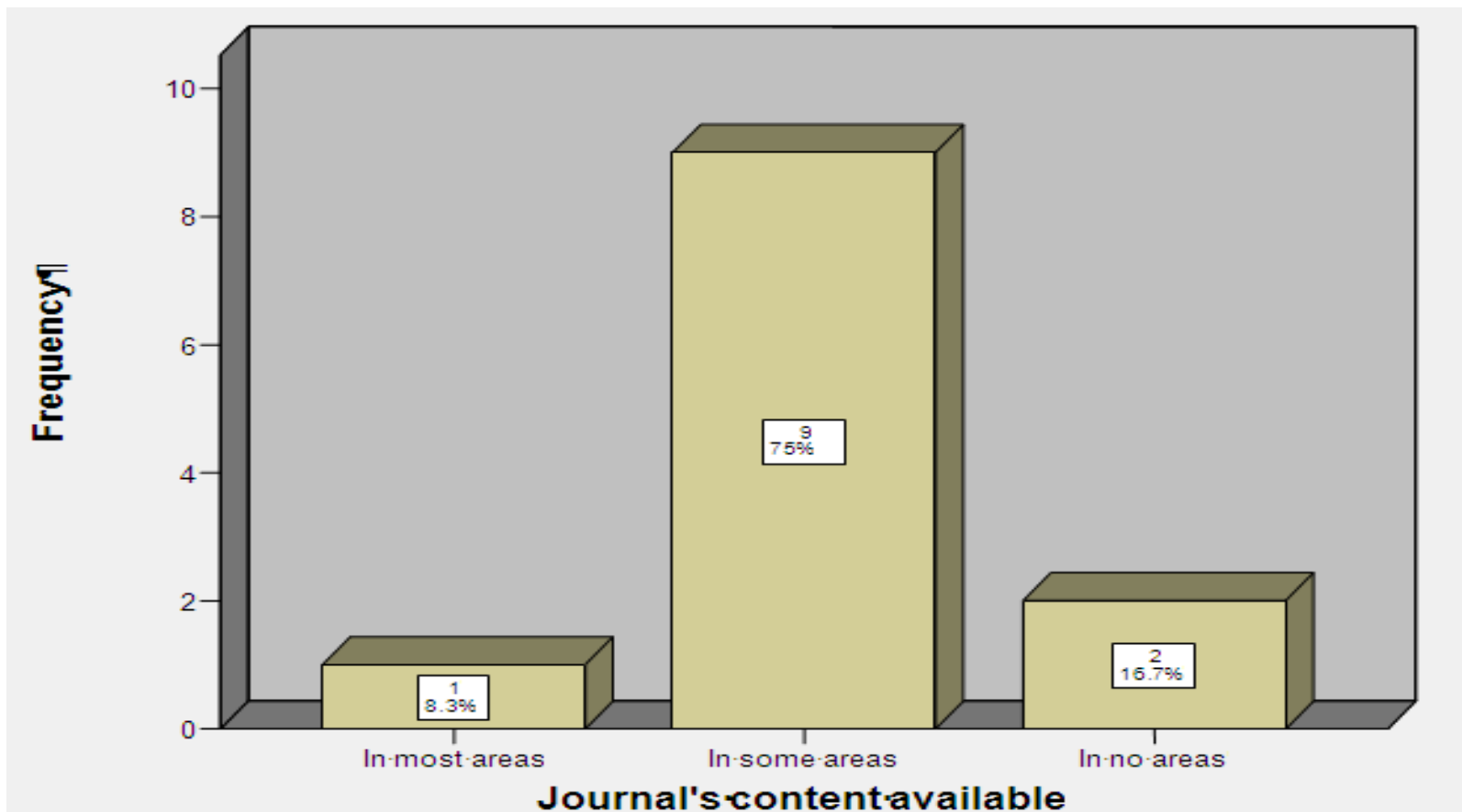
Acceptable substitutes	Responses	
	Yes	Percent
Final journal PDF	11	91.7%
Postprint	2	16.7%
Preprint	1	8.3%

Results and discussion – Availability of content in an OA archive



Results and discussion – Journal content online

- This finding suggests that most of the journal content that is available in South African university libraries is not freely available in OA archives. University libraries therefore, are dependent upon maintaining their journal collections through paid-for subscriptions.



Results and discussion – Plans to estimate overlap

- More than half of the libraries (58.3%), did not have plans to put in place systems that would allow them to estimate
- Only five (41.7%) had planned to put in place a system that would allow them to estimate the overlap
- This would suggest that more than half the libraries had no plans to take advantage of any freely available content that overlapped with their journal content.

Results and discussion – Reasons not to cancel because of free content

N=12

Reasons for not cancelling subscriptions to free content titles	Responses	
	Yes	Percent
Concerns about long-term availability of free archives	8	66.7%
Concerns about completeness of free archives	6	50%
Lack of additional functionality provided by the published version	6	50%
Preprints/postprints not adequate substitute	4	33.3%
Academic staff demand print edition	4	33.3%
Academic staff demand for 'the real journal'	4	33.3%
Lack of integrating with library cataloguing system	4	33.3%
Lack of reference linking	2	16.7%
Lack of adequate metadata	1	8.3%

Results and discussion – Institutional support for an OA archive or repository

- ❑ Fortunately, the present study found that half (six or 50%), of the university libraries' parent institutions supported and contributed to an eprint or open access repository for institutional publications
- ❑ The other six libraries therefore were not fulfilling their role of assisting in the transition to OA
- ❑ Only half of the libraries were exploiting the opportunity to make their knowledge output more widely known and accessible by utilising the OA paradigm
- ❑ The benefits of these OA repositories, such as speed of dissemination, increased access, usage and citations for South African scholarship, are not being realised.

Conclusions

- University libraries in South Africa are dependent on paid-for journal subscriptions
- Maintaining these subscriptions will become more and more difficult as a result of increasing subscription costs and the fluctuating rand
- To mitigate some of these difficulties, university librarians should make a concerted effort to facilitate access to local research by way of institutional repositories and free content available via green OA

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions the following recommendations were made by the study:

- University libraries must put in place plans to take advantage of the freely available content that overlaps with their collection
- University libraries need to take advantage of the funding opportunities provided by organisations such as the NRF to establish such institutional repositories
- Also, university libraries must ensure that their staff are adequately trained and have the necessary knowledge and skills to administer and maintain their institution's repository

Recommendations ...

- ▣ South African university librarians need to start considering journals in their preprint and postprint form as acceptable substitutes for the journal
- ▣ University librarians should encourage local scholars to make use of OA by alerting scholars to such initiatives
- ▣ University librarians should lobby their institutions to formulate a policy that mandates scholars to submit their articles (green OA) to their institutional repositories