

The background of the slide is a photograph of the University of Cape Town campus. In the foreground, there is a large green lawn. In the middle ground, there are several large, multi-story buildings with red-tiled roofs and classical architectural features. A prominent building with a portico and columns is visible. In the background, the iconic Table Mountain rises against a clear blue sky.

Seeking an African solution for equity and inclusion: the African continental publishing platform

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Introduction

- Scherlen (2020) - “twenty years after the OA movement began, we are still far from a truly Open Access world of knowledge exchange”
- Bruna (2022) - “one of the great ironies of open access is that you grant authors around the world the ability to finally read the scientific literature that was completely closed off to them, but it ends up excluding them from publishing in the same journals”
- Jaumont and Moja (2022) - “... geographic bias in academic research ... [and this] is still occurring on a large scale. ... [This] is an indicator of the struggles with unequal power relations between the North and South as far as knowledge production is concerned”

Examination of international vs national

- There is a differentiation between national and international
- Print publishing processes
 - had editorial boards – for diverse geographic representation
 - contribute to upholding academic rigour
- Print era
 - national journal - bulk of the editorial board were from one country
 - majority of the papers published were the country
 - journal would be published nationally with a national board and with national content, determined by national aims and scope, and most probably sponsored by a local university or professional association.

Examination of international vs national

- Ironically - the same definition was not valid for journals from the global north, specifically from the UK and the USA
- Same golden thread has been pulled through into current digital age
- *Although we appreciate your scientific efforts represented by this work, I regret to inform you that we do not consider this work to be of sufficient interest to our readership to warrant publication*
 - who determines what researchers may want to read?
 - readership is anyone who has access to the internet – is this determination still valid?
 - scholarship gatekeeping

Examination of international vs national

- NOW - journals start out to be international from the start
- selecting board members
 - peer reviewers
 - content from all over the world
- Internet has dramatically increase accessibility and discoverability
 - ‘insufficient interest to our readership’ is still a narrative being used
- Africa needs to change this narrative
- Diamond open access is the way to go
- Need to work with a narrative that we are able to manage as opposed to an imposed narrative that we have to continuously succumb to.

Systemic inequalities in the scholarly ecosystem

- Continental platform attempts to address systemic inequalities
- Scholarly communication process is still governed by the voluntary labour of academics
- Library needs to take on the mantle of supporting the academy
 - look beyond paywalls and copyrights
 - paywalls need to be replaced with open highways for the bidirectional flow of scholarly information
- Continental platform is NO silver bullet but it aspires to disrupt the unjust knowledge hierarchies, and break down the global north dominated publishing ecosystem

Tenant model

- Continental platform was developed around the concept of a tenant model
- Model offers each participating institution the opportunity to retain their identity
- Look and feel of journals and books will be reflective of the institution
- About participating institutions taking ownership
- Prestige of the participating institution needs to be upheld which we believe the platform delivers

UCT's publications on the platform

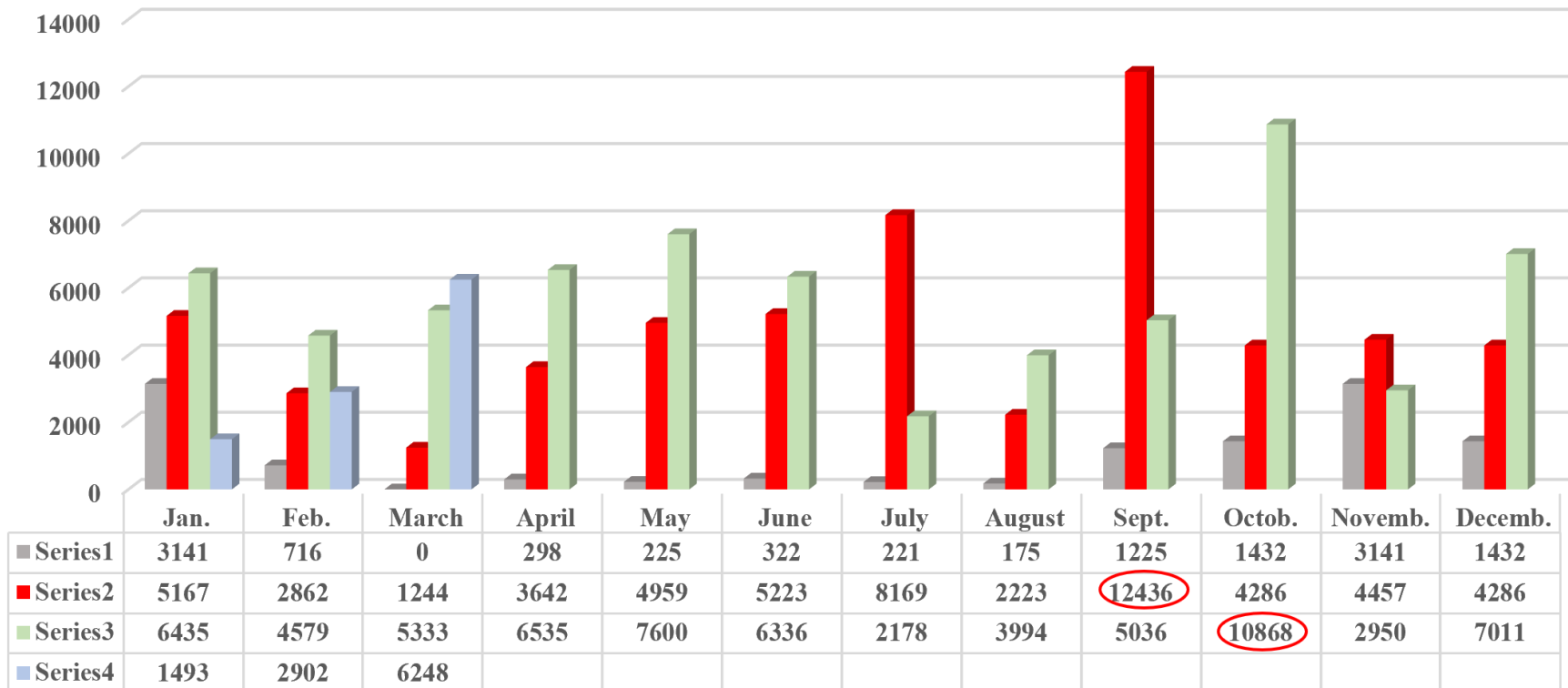
- Published 25 monographs and publishes six journals
- Two of the six journals (<https://journals.uct.ac.za/>) are included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) - *Journal of Construction Business and Management* and *Journal of African Real Estate Research*
- Other South African institution - is the Durban University of Technology
- First non-South African university to adopt the platform is the University of Namibia
- Three universities in Zimbabwe and one in Cameroon
- Training sessions have been done for institutions in Ghana and Nigeria
- Post conference workshop - African Library and Information Associations and Institutions funded by the Hewlett Foundation

The impact of open: A platform for inclusivity

- A great deal of effort has gone into the development of the platform
- Question that begs an answer – **can we demonstrate impact from publishing open**
- Use the *Constitutional law for students* textbook to show how access has contributed positively to teaching and learning and research
- Diamond open access publication addresses the social justice issues of equity, inclusion, development and empowerment

The impact of open: A platform for inclusivity

Downloads N=150 780



The impact of open: A platform for inclusivity

- Solicited more than 150 000 downloads
- 101 470 (67.3%) from South Africa and the other 49 310 (32.7%) rest of the world - 154 countries including Global North countries.
- Steep rise in the downloads just before the examination period
- Deep dive on the impact of the textbook on student success of Black students
- Percentage pass of Black students
 - average for 2016-2018 was 65%
 - average for 2020-2022 was 74%
- Post the launch - years 2021 and 2022 percentage pass was 80%

The impact of open: A platform for inclusivity

	No. of Black students	Fail %	Fail %	Pass %	Pass %	Downloads Sept/Oct	Pre intervention
2016	115	36	31	79	69		Pre intervention
2017	137	44	32	93	68		
2018	136	47	35	89	65		
2019	132	50	38	82	62		Intervention
2020	133	50	38	83	62		Post intervention
2021	132	27	20	105	80	12 436	
2022	176	35	20	141	80	10 868	

Conclusion - future plans for the platform

- Association of African Universities has endorsed the platform
- September 2021, the AAU co-hosted a webinar with UCT
- AAU recognition of the major challenges in skills shortage
- Engaging in ‘train-the-trainer’ programme
- Will be face-to-face training in four regions, namely north Africa, east Africa, central Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria being treated as an independent region given the number of academic institutions in Nigeria
- This is a platform built for Africans to share their scholarship and ownership should reside with African researchers

The background of the slide features a large, light grey watermark of the University of Cape Town crest. The crest includes a shield with a book, a banner with the motto 'SPES BONA', and a crown above. The text 'THANK YOU' is centered in a bold, blue, serif font.

THANK YOU

