

INTRODUCTION TO PREPRINTS

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Nigeria (hybrid)



What are Preprints?



Typical Publication Process

- Researcher does research and produces manuscript
- Manuscript is submitted to journal for consideration
- Journal editors engage experts in the field for their input on the manuscript, if the topic is deemed of interest.
- Experts provide comments which may range from rejection to additional studies, analysis to acceptance which the author/ researcher may be required to do.
- This is the peer review process and may take months and in some cases even more than a year.



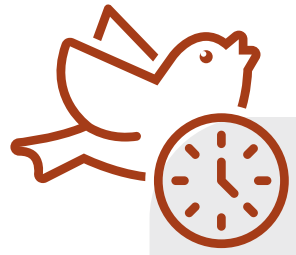
Problems With This Process

- Time
- Bias
- Rejection
- Access and cost
- Gatekeeping



Solution

A way in which a researchers work can be valued prior to this process. A way in which the body of work can still make its impact outside of the traditional journal publication process. Enter, preprints.



Early Drafts



**Post-submission
to journals**

Preprints

Preprints are scholarly papers that precede the formal process followed of peer review and publication in academic journals.

**Revision/
Update**



Preprints Vs Journal Articles



Publication status

Preprints are preliminary versions of research papers that have not yet undergone formal peer review by a journal. Whereas journal articles have been peer-reviewed, revised, and accepted for publication in a specific academic journal



Peer Review

Preprints undergo minimal or no formal peer review before being posted on preprint servers. While authors may seek feedback from colleagues or mentors before posting a preprint, the content has not been evaluated by external experts in the field. Journal articles, on the other hand, undergo rigorous peer review by experts in the field before being accepted for publication.



Accessibility

Preprints are freely accessible to anyone with an internet connection and can be downloaded and read without subscription or payment. Journal articles, especially those published in subscription-based journals, may be behind paywalls, limiting access to those without institutional subscriptions or financial resources.



Citation and Recognition

While preprints can be cited in scholarly publications, they may not carry the same level of academic recognition or credibility as peer-reviewed journal articles. Journal articles are considered the gold standard of scholarly communication and are often used as a measure of academic productivity and impact.

Why are Preprints Relevant?



Timing of Dissemination

Preprints allow researchers to share their findings with the scientific community quickly, often before the official peer review process begins. Thereby bypassing the lengthy peer review structure that is associated with traditional publishing. This expeditious sharing of knowledge facilitates collaboration, sparks scientific discourse, and accelerates the pace of discovery across various disciplines.



Accessibility

Preprints are freely accessible to anyone with an internet connection and can be downloaded and read without subscription or payment. This open access model promotes widespread dissemination of research findings and fosters collaboration across geographical and institutional boundaries. Effectively doing away with financial barriers.



Early Feedback

Preprints offer researchers the opportunity to receive feedback from peers at an early stage, facilitating iterative improvements to their work. This open peer review process enhances the rigor and quality of research outcomes, ultimately contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge.

Why are Preprints Relevant?



Addressing Urgent Issues and Public Health Emergencies

Preprints can be particularly valuable during public health emergencies or other urgent situations where timely dissemination of research findings is critical. By bypassing the lengthy peer review process, preprints allow researchers to share important findings quickly, potentially informing public health policies and interventions.



Establishing Priority and Priority of Discovery

Posting a preprint establishes a public record of the research findings and the associated date of submission. This can be important for establishing priority of discovery and ensuring that credit is given to the researchers who first reported the findings.



Exploring Controversial or Speculative Ideas

Preprints provide a platform for researchers to explore speculative or controversial ideas that may not be suitable for publication in traditional journals. This can encourage innovation and creativity in research by allowing scientists to share preliminary findings and hypotheses without fear of rejection or criticism.

Challenges With Sharing Preprints



Lack of Formal Peer Review

Preprints bypass the traditional peer review process, which serves as a quality control mechanism for assessing the validity and reliability of research findings. Without peer review, there is a risk that inaccurate, incomplete, or poorly conducted research may be disseminated, leading to misinformation or confusion within the scientific community and beyond.



Credibility and Trust

The lack of formal peer review and vetting of preprints may raise concerns about their credibility and trustworthiness among researchers, policymakers, and the general public. Without the stamp of approval from peer reviewers and reputable journals, preprints may be viewed with skepticism or caution, particularly in fields where rigorous peer review is considered essential for establishing the validity of research findings.



Potential for Misinterpretation

Preprints are often preliminary versions of research papers that have not yet undergone thorough scrutiny by experts in the field. As such, findings presented in preprints may be subject to change or revision based on feedback received during the peer review process. There is a risk that preprints may be misinterpreted or misrepresented by readers who are not aware of their preliminary nature, leading to unwarranted conclusions or actions based on incomplete or unreliable information.

Challenges With Sharing Preprints



Delayed Publication in Journals

Some journals have policies that discourage or prohibit the submission of manuscripts that have been previously posted as preprints. As a result, researchers who choose to share their work as preprints may face delays or barriers when submitting their manuscripts to journals for formal peer review and publication. This can prolong the time it takes for their research to be officially published and recognized within the academic community.



Ethical and Legal Considerations

Preprints raise various ethical and legal considerations, including issues related to patient privacy, intellectual property rights, conflicts of interest, and compliance with journal policies. Researchers must carefully consider these factors when deciding whether to share their work as preprints and how to manage potential risks and responsibilities associated with early dissemination of research findings.

Myths Associated with Preprints



Preprints are low-quality or unreliable

One common misconception is that preprints are not trustworthy because they haven't been peer-reviewed. While it's true that preprints have not undergone formal peer review, many preprint servers have their own screening processes to ensure that submissions meet basic standards of quality and integrity. Additionally, preprints often undergo post-publication peer review, where they are critiqued and commented on by the broader scientific community.



Preprints lead to "scooping" of research

There's a concern among researchers that posting a preprint could lead to their work being scooped by competitors who might rush to publish similar findings in a peer-reviewed journal. While this is a valid concern in some competitive fields, studies have shown that the benefits of early dissemination through preprints often outweigh the risks of being scooped. Additionally, preprints come with a timestamp, providing evidence of priority for the authors.



Preprints bypass the peer review process entirely

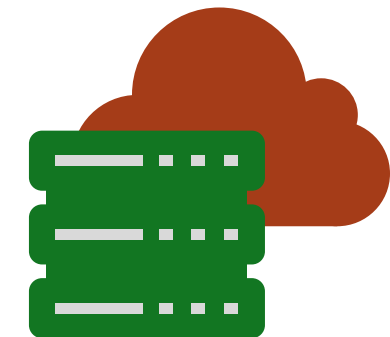
While preprints are not peer-reviewed before being posted, they often undergo thorough peer review during the subsequent journal submission process. Many journals welcome submissions that have been previously posted as preprints and may even consider reviewer comments and discussions that took place on preprint servers.

AfricArXiv



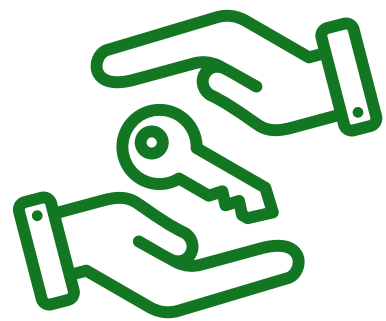
What is it?

AfricArXiv is an open-access repository for African research outputs. It is a platform where African researchers can share their preprints, post-prints, conference posters, and other scholarly works across various disciplines. It aims to increase the visibility and accessibility of research from and about Africa, as well as to foster collaboration among researchers on the continent and globally. AfricArXiv is part of the larger Open Science movement, promoting transparency, inclusivity, and the democratization of knowledge.



Organization

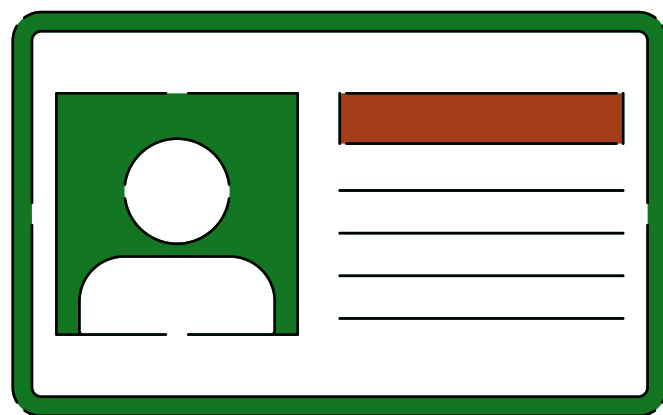
Established by Access to Perspectives and Currently hosted by UbuntuNet Alliance, AfricArXiv is geared to meet the needs of African researchers using the understanding that UbuntuNet Alliance has gained from being the regional research and education network of Eastern and Southern Africa.



AfricArXiv Features

Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)

The platform automatically assigns DOIs to new submissions free of charge for submitters and also allows for the uploading of documents that already have DOIs



ORCID

- Login and sign up
- Author lookup during Item submission
- Profile import
- Publications import and AfricArXiv export to ORCID

AfricArXiv Repositories

➤ **General Repository**

This is the repository that is available for all researchers to submit their research output including preprints.

Through this repository you have:

- Visibility
- Access to openness
- Collaboration
- Preservation
- Promotion of local initiative (language etc)

➤ **Other Repositories**

- UbuntuNet Alliance
- Harmonization, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Africa
- AfricArXiv

africarxiv.ubuntunet.net





Thank you.



UbuntuNet Alliance

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Access to Perspectives

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