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Report on the 2nd Ibero-American Conference on Electronic Publishing in the Context of Scholarly Communication (CIPECC 2008)

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IBICT (the Brazilian Institute for Information in Science and Technology) hosted the second edition of CIPECC, from 17-21 November 2008 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This biennial conference series accepts works and communications both in Portuguese and Spanish.

A full day of pre-conference workshops was held on 17 November. The themes were vast and interesting for almost anyone working in information science, with topics ranging from Digital Preservation (by Miguel Ángel Arellano - Brazil) to the Social Web (by Ewout ter Haar and Everton Alvarenga - Brazil). The SciELO team, represented by Rogério Mugnaini (Brazil), held a workshop in bibliometrics,[1] and Robson Almeida (Brazil) held a workshop on RSS feeds and their usage within the context of Scholarly communication.

The main conference took place over the next four days, making room for a great number of presentations from submitted works, and there were also several invited speeches interspersed throughout the conference schedule. The official start of the conference was 18 November with three invited speeches. I had the honor of opening the conference and spoke about the technologies supporting Open Access (OA), how they relate with each other and with other concepts and technologies already widely used in other contexts—especially Web 2.0. I pointed out that I believe it is not the technology that is keeping us from going beyond current boundaries; rather it is our inability to break free from mindsets that were created in an earlier, very limited, context, and I urged the audience to dare to think anew.

Ernesto Spinak (Uruguay) followed with his speech about bibliometrics. He described the field and its theoretical and philosophical foundations, and was particularly firm

when distinguishing the field of bibliometrics and its methodologies from the field of Webometrics.[1] Spinak presented several distinct metrics, and their usage goals and contexts. Furthermore, he questioned whether there are currently "enough instruments to measure and evaluate the academic action"..."in particular, the information offered via Open Access". He concluded his talk by proposing a research program for scientometrics[3] in the Web context, identifying research and controversial areas.

Sely Costa (Brazil), was the third invited speaker in the opening session, and she presented a personal reflection on the appropriate relationship between Open Access (OA), science and society in Brazil. Costa drew on existing studies but also on her vast personal experience as an OA evangelist in Brazil. She gave several examples of conversations she has had with colleagues, rectors and politicians supporting the idea that it is necessary to go simultaneously for both top-down and bottom-up approaches concerning Open Access policies in Brazil.

Under Theme 1 (Institutional, governmental, national and international policies for Open Access), it is worth highlighting the talks by Hélio Kuramoto (Brazil), Eloy Rodrigues (Portugal) and Abel Packer (Brazil). Kuramoto presented an overview of OA, IBICT's initiatives taking place now in the area, and the current status of Brazilian policies regarding OA. He emphasized that IBICT develops OA strategies in the scope of a vast set of coordinated actions that delineate the national policies towards access to scientific information. According to Kuramoto, it hasn't been that long since there were no national systematic actions for promoting the storage and dissemination of Brazilian scientific literature. He also defended the fact that the Brazilian national journals depend heavily on public funds. Such public support has made it easier for these journals to reach the status of "gold"[1] with regard to OA. Kuramoto further discussed actions in progress that aim to establish a national policy for OA.

Eloy Rodrigues's presentation focused primarily on international policies, especially those taking place in Europe, and he paid special attention to both the European Universities' Association and the Portuguese Rector's council recommendations. Eloy took advantage of the opportunity during his talk to insist once more on the need for institutional mandates for Immediate Deposit and Optional Access (ID/OA).

During his presentation, Abel Packer clearly described the work done in the last couple of years on SciELO to comply with the most relevant international standards and best practices in the OA area. He acknowledged that some years ago there was a gap between the SciELO policies and technologies, and the ones being adopted by the OA community worldwide. Packer justified this gap by pointing out that SciELO's online OA publication of full-text journals actually began before the birth of the international OA movement. He then showed how the SciELO project has completely aligned with current OA trends and policies without any loss in SciELO's innovative capabilities.

Under Theme 2 (Science Communication Metrics), two talks are especially worth mentioning. The first is a talk given by Horácio Zimba (Mozambique) and his supervisor, Suzana P. M. Mueller (Brazil). They presented a paper on the results of a

research study about the presence of works from Portuguese-speaking African countries in ISI and SCOPUS databases. The period studied covered 1998 through 2007. Results demonstrate that the two databases do not differ in coverage, and that the five African countries studied (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé e Principe and Mozambique) have a very low presence in both databases. The study also established that most of the papers found in ISI and SCOPUS were co-authored with American, European and South African peers, in the areas of medicine and agriculture and related areas. Of the works of the five Portuguese-speaking African countries, Mozambique emerged as the most represented, with about 50% of those publications. In the discussions that followed the presentation by Zimba and Mueller, the importance of OA was stressed as a means to increase visibility and access for African countries in databases like ISI and SCOPUS.

The second talk under Theme 2 that deserves attention is the one by Giselle Silva (Brazil) and her supervisor, Lena Vânia Pinheiro (Brazil), who offered a geographic and conceptual cartography of bibliometrics/informetrics in Brazil. They started their presentation by giving a historical perspective of the area in Brazil, and the results of their study pointed to the expansion and increasing importance of bibliometrics/informetrics there. They provided a good perspective on the convergence of academic competences and experiences in post-graduation programs and research agendas.

Theme 3 (Intellectual Property and Ethics) included several interesting presentations, of which special note is given to the invited speech of Charles Pessanha (Brazil). Pessanha spoke about the ethics of science information dissemination, its problems and solutions. His talk revealed his vast experience and knowledge in this interesting field. Time passed quickly for us as we tried to assimilate his words of wisdom.

Under Theme 4 (Information infrastructure for Open Access), Carmen Roncy de Carvalho (Brazil) presented results of a very interesting study on university libraries and institutional repositories (IRs) in Brazil. Among other findings, her study showed that IR initiatives occur mostly in public universities (although there are a few examples of private universities that have an IR). Support for OA does not appear to be the main motivation for implementing an IR, rather the primary motivations are to comply with specific demands and the need to digitally store the institution's scientific memory. In order to ensure a good relationship between the IR user communities and those providing the technological expertise for the IR, 40% of the analyzed IRs are maintained and coordinated by two or more sectors within each university. The main depositors have been professors, researchers and post-graduation students. The number of available documents, the average of which is fewer than 3,000 for the majority of the IRs studied, is considered small by the author. She further stated that the databases with more than 3,000 documents are, in practice, OPACs with links to the full text versions. DSpace and TEDE (the Brazilian version of Virginia Tech ETD) are the most widely used IR systems in Brazil. In general, the results of the study point to the need to prepare the Brazilian university libraries to deal with issues related to OA technology and funding, in order to strengthen and leverage the small number of Brazilian initiatives that are under way.

Also under Theme 4, Sueli Mara Ferreira (Brazil) lectured on Institutional Repositories and new ways of providing IR accessibility and visibility. Ferreira began by presenting a historical perspective of IRs in Brazil and then went on to look at the next step forward: new metrics for science. The recent move to IRs favors reflection and critical analysis using the current evaluation model that is centered exclusively on the Impact Factor—a situation she defends. She referred to a worldwide research tendency to include usage data (e.g., number of downloads and other logged data) and alternative metrics in the way research is evaluated. Ferreira's research group has been focusing on this subject for the last couple of years.

Under Theme 5 (Quality and sustainability of electronic scientific periodicals), Ruth Martins and Roberta Cerqueira (Brazil) presented a very interesting perspective on the historical evolution of a Brazilian electronic journal on the history of sciences that has been included in SciELO since 2000: Manguinhos. They provided several statistics regarding the journal. Inclusion in SciELO made the journal Open Access, which motivated more visibility of the journal and, as a consequence, a rise in the number of submissions to it. On the other hand, they reported a rise also in the number of papers rejected and a decrease in the number of subscriptions to the journal. Among the most interesting and surprising statistics for non-Latin-American professionals is the distribution by continent of the origin of submissions and visits: 54.2% of submissions and 26% of visits come from Central and South America; 13.6% of submissions and 25% of visits come from Northern America; and 30.5% of submissions and 47% of visits come from Europe!

Last, but not least (still under Theme 5), Gustavo E. Fischman (Argentina and USA) gave an invited talk on OA and Scientific Journals in Latin America. He started by expressing his satisfaction both for the success of the PKP tools in Latin America and for the work being done in the OA area. He then introduced Willinsky's ten flavors for OA. After that, he highlighted two points: 1) that doing research today requires continuous reflection and critical engagement with new publishing technologies, such as OA, and 2) researchers throughout the world should consider the ethical implications and scientific potential of making their research publicly available. Dr. Fischman concluded that a deeper commitment to any of the ten flavors of OA encourages researchers to engage in forms of public responsibility and accountability that will result in the strengthening of scientific information production as well as a more substantive contribution to the democratization of access to knowledge.

The CIPECC 2008 conference also included a session for post-graduate students to present their current work in a way that resembles a doctoral consortium.

The conference was vast and interesting. The Steering Committee is now looking for expressions of interest for organizing it in another Ibero-American country in 2010. Those interested should contact Dr. Sely Costa at <selmar@unb.br> or Dr. Lena Vânia Pinheiro at <lenavania@ibict.br>.

Notes

1. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliometrics>.

2. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webometrics>.

3. "Scientometrics is the science of measuring and analysing science. In practice, scientometrics is often done using bibliometrics that is measurement of (scientific) publications." (Definition from Babylon free dictionary <http://dictionary.babylon.com/>).

4 See <http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/>.