

Editorial: Libraries in African Studies

David Tréfás

Basel University Library
david.trefas@unibas.ch

In June 2017, Basel became the focal point for African Studies. Both the 7th European Conference on African Studies (ECAS) and the 11th annual meeting of European Librarians in African Studies (ELIAS) were held in Basel. The current issue of the 027.7 – Journal for Library Culture addresses some of the presentations held at these conferences and also features an international cooperation with the newly-found East African Journal of Information Science.

The ELIAS meeting, which was organized mainly by Susanne Hubler-Baier of Basler Afrika Bibliographien and staff from the Basel University Library, were hosting specialists from Europe, from the African Studies Library at Michigan State University, and the Korea-Africa Centre in Seoul. Further speakers came from the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, ASC Leiden, Basel University Library, the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden, and the Library of Les Afriques dans le Monde in Bordeaux.¹

The first article in this issue has been written by Alice Spinnler, Martin Reisacher, Andreas Ledl, and David Tréfás, who are all affiliated with the Basel University Library. The article sets out the "Basler Africa Portal" project, which aims to enhance the visibility of research carried out about Africa, especially research conducted in Basel. The portal could also be used to make visible and bring into scientific communication realms all the related research conducted by African colleagues. Africa has been in the focus of Basler research institutions for centuries. Many a Basler researcher has spent some time in Africa, and it is only right that their research data and publications should be brought together and made accessible through one portal.

In her article "Measuring the Societal Impact of Research with Altmetrics: An Experiment", Ursula Oberst from the Library African Studies Centre in Leiden (ASCL) examines how altmetrics enhances visibility of publications published at the ASCL. Unlike traditional metrics, altmetrics measures the number of times a research output is viewed, downloaded or mentioned online. The article highlights the advantages and disadvantages of this tool and has reached the conclusion that, although altmetrics helps to discover a pearl in an oyster, in African Studies a viewer needs a stroke of luck to spot a gem.

A very special article, "The legal implications of providing information services in Public University Libraries in Kenya" by Salome Waigumo Mathangani from the Methodist University Nairobi and Japheth Otike from Moi University Eldoret. Their study investigates the legal

¹<http://eliasnet.pbworks.com/w/page/25672398/FrontPage>

implications of providing information services based on a sample of 77 librarians from public university libraries in Kenya. The article suggests that librarians should use their wealth of knowledge and expertise to seek interaction with policy makers and make relevant and useful contributions to law and information in order to set up a relationship with mutual benefits.

The publishing of this article in 027.7 is a result of a fruitful collaboration between this journal and the newly established journal East African Journal of Information Studies based at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. The cooperation between the two open access journals aims to widen the audience of both journals by connecting and promoting content. Therefore, information research in the German speaking world will be visible in East Africa and also the other way round. It is a grass-roots project which will finally become visible to the public.

Last but not least we also included an article on this issue which is not related to Africa in any way. It is rather an additional contribution to our previous issue focusing on computational linguistic and libraries.² The contribution by Christian Reul, Christoph Wick, Uwe Springmann, and Frank Puppe, all affiliated to the University of Würzburg, is entitled "Transfer Learning for OCRopus Model Training on Early Printed Books". In the article, a method is presented that significantly reduces the character error rates for OCR text obtained from OCRopus models trained on early printed books when only a few diplomatic transcriptions are available. The research was based on using a self-trained mixed model on early Latin prints and the two standard OCRopus models on modern English and German Fraktur texts. The experiments have shown that the average number of errors can be largely reduced and therefore using OCR means improvement.

²http://0277.ch/ojs/index.php/cdrs_0277/issue/view/129