

**HOW TO FIND OPEN ACCESS ARTICLES
MANUAL**

Guidelines for
Online Literature Research

Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights (RIGDPR)
Ahfad University for Women (AUW), Sudan

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This manual has been written and edited by RIGDPR staff member Dr. Enrico Ille, in November and December 2013.

Dedication

This manual comes as an amalgamation of efforts to help all students of the Master Programmes at the Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights (RIGDPR) at Ahfad University for Women (AUW), Sudan.

Other students may find it a first-hand guide contributing to enhance their capacities to find published academic studies. To all our Sudanese young generations and those who continue to pursue education regardless of age we forward this piece of work to support them in their pursuit for excellence, leadership and professionalism.

Balghis Badri

Director of the RIGDPR

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0. Introduction

This guide will give you some hints how to go beyond the offline search for academic literature by using resources available through the internet. These resources are not just an extension of the – still crucial – search in libraries. They can provide a significant augmentation of – active or passive – participation in academic communication, especially in frame of institutions with limited resources to acquire printed publications.

The following section will reflect a little bit more on the wider implications of this participation – or the lack of it – with a focus on African universities. Then I will give some recommendations for online literature search, including a list of online platforms which are useful starting points for such a search.

Given the institutional frame for this publication, there will be a strong bias for social sciences, but many of the sources given here facilitate to go beyond this disciplinary focus.

This also means that this is not a guide on how to collect data or to find other primary data for research. It is also not helpful to get acquainted with the ways to find printed scientific literature in the libraries at the university or other institutions you are affiliated with.

It is nevertheless intended to give you important information to support your research process and studies. We hope that you find this guide useful in this regard.

1. Access to research publications in African universities

The issue of augmenting the access to information on ongoing research has been widely debated. It is not just an issue of enhancing equal chances between researchers to participate and share contributions to ongoing scientific debates. In a wider frame, the politics of knowledge have been discussed as one of the fields, where power asymmetries are generated and strengthened.

Concerning Africa, these debates were often interwoven with issues raised by post-colonial critique, and many critical voices questioned the modalities of producing and distributing research. Although it is not intended to get into these issues here, the following contribution also belongs into this frame.

In this guide, I will concentrate on how to make use of existing structures. In spite of a strong tendency to commercialize and legally protect (and thereby limit access to) research, there have been several developments enhancing access to a wide range of publications.

There have been different judgments on these developments: William Lawton and Annie Burrows of the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education asked “Is there a technical fix for sub-Saharan universities?” and cautioned that “it may take more than Going Google to redress structural geopolitical inequality” (Lawton & Burrows 2013).

It might be argued, too, that open access initiatives, such as institutional repositories – a digitally published collection of an institution’s research and other outputs– are, on the one hand, creating more visibility, or some visibility at all. This may be a way out for numerous research efforts accessible only to a very limited number of readers.

On the other hand, open access may limit the researcher’s control over her or his research, its dissemination and usage. Not only in low-income

countries, this is more than an ethical question, but can clash with economic interests or even economic necessities as well.

In any case, a 2010 study of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in four east and southern African universities found an immense improvement of journal availability, but a lack of academicians and students actually accessing those journals and using them to improve their own research (Harle 2010: VII).

It is observations like this that motivate this guide, which simply intends to point out some existing, easily accessible sources for academic studies. Since the access to journals by payment differs strongly according to individual and institutional means as well as existing access schemes (see below), I will concentrate on open access journals.

2. What are good sources for open access journal articles?

Jos Damen noted already in 2009 that the distribution and access to – commercial and non-commercial – electronic journals is “so widespread and *ad hoc* that a complete overview of all online journals is not possible” (Damen 2009: 9). Even a focus on African Studies still provides to wide a field, and so this guide has the simple task of pointing into some directions, where easily accessible scientific articles can be found.

Damen already discussed several difficulties users of online journals can experience, from changing URLs – sometimes solved through the permanent so-called Digital Object Identifier (DOI) – to limitations of the infrastructure, such as slow and unstable connections. However, he also pointed out several initiatives designed to enhance availability of journals for those, who are often marginalized in this regard.

Most of these initiatives come from universities and organizations for scientific knowledge distribution. Apart from that, international

organizations developed their own access programmes for the fields they work in, also in cooperation with publishing companies, for instance with Elsevier (<http://www.elsevier.com/>).

The following overview of such initiatives does not claim to be comprehensive, it is intended as a stepping stone, from which more focussed sources – defined by discipline, topic, region, etc. – can be reached.

If you want to extend your knowledge on similar online sources, just follow the very vivid scene of open access advocates in the internet, such as the Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org/science>), the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL, <http://www.eifl.net/>) and the Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA, <http://www.itoca.org/>).

Once you identified research institutions that work in your research field, you can also always check their publication and download sections; for gender-related issues you may check, for instance, the websites of UN Women (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library>) and UNFPA (<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications>). Some institutional repositories require registration; at the RIGDPR such an available repository is the one of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Pages/default.aspx>).

Many of the websites listed here provide further links at well, which you might follow, such as ilissAfrica's Open Access Guide (<http://www.ilissafrika.de/en/howto/OpenAccessGuide.html>). Another very good point of departure for your own search on this topic is The Africa Desk (<http://www.africadesk.ac.uk/pages/>), “a collaboration between the British Academy and the African Studies Association of the UK, with support from The Association of Commonwealth Universities and SCOLMA, the UK Africanists librarians group” (<http://www.africadesk.ac.uk/pages/about>). The Africa Desk has also a page on journal access (<http://www.africadesk.ac.uk/pages/research-resources/access-journals>).

Open access African Studies received a lot of attention, but some initiatives can also be found from the North African and Middle Eastern region. UNESCO advanced information on its Global Open Access Portal, which specifies access by region, putting Sudan under the Arab states (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/portals-and-platforms/goap/access-by-region/arab-states/sudan/>). The platform is another good place to stay updated on current initiatives, also on the regional level and in other countries.

Unfortunately, an alphabetical list of Open Access Journals in Middle Eastern Studies seems to have disappeared, (<http://amirmideast.blogspot.com/2010/12/alphabetical-list-of-open-access.html>), although the related blog and project, Access to Mideast and Islamic Resources (AMIR), is still active. Some of the offers concentrate on books, such as Library of Alexandria's Digital Assets Repository (DAR, <http://dar.bibalex.org/webpages/dar.jsf>).

A search for Africa- and Middle East-based repositories on OpenDOAR (<http://opendoar.nottingham.ac.uk/index.html>) may show some more results. You can also have a look at databases such as Yale University's Arabic and Middle Eastern Electronic Library (AMEEL, <http://www.library.yale.edu/ameeljournals/>), but since they don't have a strong open access profile, I will not focus on them in this guide.

In addition, there are also many more collections of openly accessible books and other research and education materials, such as the British Library for Development Studies' Digital Library (<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/3>), and universal catalogues, for instance the World Catalogue (<http://oaister.worldcat.org/>), which will be immensely helpful in an online literature search. The British Library offers also many theses for download through its ETHOS system (<http://ethos.bl.uk>).

You can also take a look at the extensive list of journals of Women and Gender Studies you find on RIGDPR's website (<http://www.ahfadgender.com/node/92>).

Finally, be aware of the complex landscape of pre-print accessibility, where journals provide versions of articles before printing. These articles mostly don't have the final page numbers, so you cannot quote from them, but they are still an important additional way to keep informed about on-going research. Some services, such as SHERPA/RoMEO (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php>), provide information which journals have such a policy.

Academia.edu

Although neither a database nor a catalogue, this academic networking platform has also the function to make one's papers known to other members of the network. Registering an account might give you access to a wider range of recent articles, organized by your research interests.

More information:

<http://www.academia.edu>

African Digital Library

A collection of electronic publications, this library is made accessible to everybody resident in Africa, which is proven through a registration process.

More information:

<http://www.africaeducation.org/adl/Default.htm>

African Journals Directory

This directory allows to search in more than 1,900 journals in all disciplines, and although access may vary according to the journal you want to access, there are many full text articles available. The same platform has also an archive with full access to articles of eleven social science and humanities journals.

More information:

<http://africa.isp.msu.edu/AEJP/about.htm>

African Studies Centre Leiden

The Centre does not provide a search engine, but rather a list of free e-journals, which is good for finding specific articles or to discover new journals in a certain research field.

More information:

<http://www.ascleiden.nl/?q=content/list-free-africa-related-e-journals>

AGORA – FAO’s Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture

This initiative by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN brings together more than 3,500 key journals and 3,300 books. Access is free for low-income countries, but subject to a registration process.

More information:

<http://www.aginternetwork.org/en/>

AJOL – African Journals OnLine

Being among the most important initiatives for Africa, this platform, based in South Africa, facilitates access to peer-reviewed, African-published scholarly journals. Many articles you will find are free; more may be accessible through institutional access. Beyond an Africa focus, you can find other Journals Online projects from the same programme (JOL, <http://www.inasp.info/en/work/what-we-do/projects/journals-online/>).

More information:

<http://www.ajol.info/>

ARDI – Access to Research for Development and Innovation

Cooperation between the World Intellectual Property Organization and publishers led to this platform for scholarly literature of science and technology. It has the same conditions of access as the other large UN initiatives (AGORA, Hinari, OARE).

More information:

<http://www.wipo.int/ardi>

BioMed Central

One of the major players in open access publishing, BioMed Central has this crucial platform to search for up-to-date research, especially with a focus on life sciences.

More information:

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/journals>

Connecting-Africa

This is an offer from Leiden with several thousand titles about Africa from 90 repositories, including information on several hundred European Africa experts and organizations.

More information:

<http://www.connecting-africa.net/index.htm>

DOAJ – Directory of Open Access Journals

Based in Lund University in Sweden, this directory provides several hundred thousand articles from a broad range of subjects. You may also consider visiting the respective directory for books (<http://www.doabooks.org/doab>) and the Directory of Open Access Resources (OpenDOAR, <http://www.opendoar.org/>).

More information:

<http://www.doaj.org/doaj?uiLanguage=en>

Free Medical Journals

Having one of the central databases for the medical sciences, this search engine allows to search in more than 4,000 journals.

More information:

<http://www.freemedicaljournals.com>

GDN – Global Development Network

Rather than a search machine, this gives another list of sources for free online journals, provided by a network attempting to improve access to policy-relevant research produced in the global South.

More information:

http://www.gdnet.org/cms.php?id=free_online_journals

Google Scholar

With more than 1 million books online, Google entered the academic publication business in a strong, dominant way. Leaving copyright issues aside, it can be in any case a good tool to get an overview over published books and articles, including full free access to older publications.

More information:

<http://scholar.google.com/>

HighWire Stanford University

Stanford University makes a large number of journals available through software that detects via your IP if you are from a low-income country. Therefore no registration and login is required.

More information:

<http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/devecon.dtl>

HINARI – WHO’s Access to Research in Health Programme

Being part of the Research4Life initiative, Hinari provides many articles for free, while more may be available through institutional access.

More information:

http://extranet.who.int/hinari/en/journalList_print.php

Hindawi Publishing

An Egypt-based publishing company of peer-reviewed journals, Hindawi offers access to articles of more than 500 journals with a – although not exclusive – focus on natural sciences.

More information:

<http://www.hindawi.com/about/>

ilissAfrica – Internet Library Sub-Saharan Africa

ilissAfrica is a major initiative to make – often widely dispersed – research and information on Africa easier to find. Although it leads mostly to library catalogues at some European universities, you will find a wide range of electronic material and websites, too. Some of the other platforms listed here have been integrated. Note also that there is a search engine under m.ilissafrika.de designed for access by mobile phones.

More information:

<http://www.ilissafrika.de/en/>

InTech

A natural science-oriented open access publisher, InTech gives access to six important peer-reviewed journals.

More information:

<http://www.intechopen.com/journals>

Internet Archive

Intended as universal internet library, this non-profit organization provides access to a collection of more than a million texts, more than hundred thousand movies and audio recordings, all historical materials in the public domain and copyright-free documents.

More information:

<http://www.archive.org>

OARE – UNEP’s Online Access to Research in the Environment

Being part of the Research4Life initiative, OARE provides many articles for free, while more may be available through institutional access.

More information:

<http://oare.oaresciences.org/content/en/journals.php>

Persée

The French National Library provides this platform with a focus on online journals of social sciences and humanities.

More information:

<http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home>

PubMed

This huge database of biomedical literature belongs to the US National Library of Medicine. Many, though not all, of the articles have links for free full text access; the search engine allows filtering out only those fully available articles.

More information:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>

QScience

This is an online publishing platform of the Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Journals, also offering some open access peer-reviewed journals.

More information:

http://www.qscience.com/page/author_services_journals

ROAR – Registry of Open Access Repositories

Established as a tool to find institutional repositories, ROAR is a good way to find recent research outputs of a wide range of institutions. It

not only links to the repositories, but also provides information on how actively they are maintained and extended.

More information:

<http://roar.eprints.org/>

Sabinet African Journal Archive

The aim of this South Africa-based non-profit organization project is to provide an archive of scientific articles from Africa, having up to date more than 100,000 articles.

More information:

<http://www.sabinet.co.za/?page=about-aja>

Wikipedia

Already good for a first look in many searches, Wikipedia also has – since May 2009 – a list on African Studies Journals.

More information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_studies_journals

WorldWideScience

This meta-database combines a large number of scientific databases, giving access to reportedly more than 400 million pages of scientific information. It includes the databases of DOAJ and JOL.

More information:

<http://worldwidescience.org/>

3. What access schemes currently exist?

There are several publishers, who normally charge high prices for access, but offer special conditions for users from low-income countries. The access to their publications depends on agreements with specific institutions, so you have to find out, what exactly is accessible through your own institution.

In general, librarians or the office of international relations will have to register through an online form or by email, then the institution receives an account with password; the specific requirements vary from publisher to publisher. The individual user will have to login either with the institution's username, or access is provided inside the university's network.

Below there is only a small number of offers, which already may be accessible through your institution or which your institution could make use of in future. If you want to read more about experiences with access to e-resources in Africa, especially to JSTOR, I refer you to Masinde, Okoh & Rajan's 2011 paper on this issue (see list of references).

Africa. Journal of the International African Institute

Published by Cambridge University Press, this is one of the most prestigious journals of African Studies. It has also an African countries initiative for libraries and non-profit institutions, with information available under journal@cambridge.org.

More information:

<http://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/journal.html>

eGranary Digital Library

This library is a document storage designed to boost access to educational material independent of maybe limited internet infrastructure. It does not concentrate on academic journals, but rather

gives a wide range of digital documents. However, it has to be purchased at a price obtained during the ordering process. It also comes with software solutions for digitization at the institution that bought the library.

More information:

<http://www.widernet.org/eGranary/>

JSTOR's African Access Initiative

JSTOR, a part of the not-for-profit organization ITHAKA, is one of the major academic journal databases with more than 750 online journals from a wide range of disciplines. Its initiative has been started in 2007 and aims at providing free access to its contents for non-for-profit African organizations, including universities. Although it limits this access for publications from the last three years, it is one of most active and innovative platforms. JSTOR Mobile allows also access by smartphone.

More information:

<http://about.jstor.org/libraries/african-access-initiative>

ALUKA

This is a digital library in collaboration with JSTOR with a focus on cultural heritage. Access to it is made via the JSTOR account.

More information:

<http://www.aluka.org/>

Oxford Journals Developing Countries Offer

Among the journals published from Oxford are such major names as African Affairs and the Journal of Islamic Studies. Access to these journals is granted to not-for-profit educational institutions for free or strongly reduced, but is connected to an Institutional Site License, which has to be acquired by the institution's library.

More information:

http://www.oxfordjournals.org/access_purchase/developing_countries.html

SRKS – Strengthening Research and Knowledge Systems

Until 2013, the international development charity INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, <http://www.inasp.info/en/>) had a Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI, <http://www.inasp.info/en/work/what-we-do/programmes/peri/>), which continues now as Strengthening Research and Knowledge Systems (SRKS).

The specific access modalities change from country to country, according to existing agreements. In Sudan, the Lead Coordinator is Abdelmoniem Sahal Elmardi (General Manager, Medical Informatics Centre, Alhurriyya Towers, Alhurriyya Street, Near Farooq Mosque, Khartoum; also Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Science & Technology, P.O. Box 30, Omdurman, Sudan, +249-912156313, muneim.sahal@stc-sd.net / elmardi@gmail.com).

More information:

<http://www.inasp.info/en/network/country/SD/>

TEEAL – The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library

Agricultural and related scientists have here a regularly updated collection of articles that can be acquired by institutions in low-income countries. Although the basic fee runs into several thousand US-Dollars, this offers still a by far cheaper way to get access to up-to-date research than regular licences.

More information:

<http://www.teeal.org/>

4. How do you find the right articles for your topic?

To know where to look for journal articles is of course only the first of a long series of steps, until you find the journal articles you need for your research.

Since much depends on your specific disciplinary frame and topic, it is not possible to give a step-by-step guide for such a search. But there are some recurrent elements that I want to highlight here (cf. Harle 2011).

The first thing you have to clarify is what exactly you need, what questions you want to answer or for what topic you want to get an overview. Although you can start by a search in the broadest database available, you can easily get lost, if you don't narrow down both the number of journals you search in and your search terms.

To narrow down the journals worth looking for, you have to make yourself aware of the main journals for your topic. Although a search into the blue, for instance on Google, may sometimes lead to useful discoveries, this does not substitute the necessity to get familiar with central publication platforms of your research field. The academic staff at your institution can help you to develop such a familiarity.

But even when you use some of the databases listed in this guide, you still have to recognize first what kind of search engine you are using. Does it provide a meta-search, where you can search across whole journals or even several databases? Does it concentrate on specific topics, disciplines or journals? What kind of results will you get, full texts, abstracts, or even just titles? This is even more important, if you search for a specific journal or even article you want to get hold of.

Concerning the search terms, you have to be aware how efficient your query is in frame of the database you use. If you take an agricultural database and search for "agriculture", you will get about every entry the database has, and in a database of several thousand entries, this is of no value to you. If your terms are too special, say you just copy a whole sentence from a text, you may end up finding nothing at all.

Then you have to evaluate the quality of the results. The search engine gives you only titles corresponding with your search, although advanced searches can help you to optimize the process. But you still have to look at each single result and find out, what kind of publication it is, if it contains more or less than promised by the title etc.

Let me highlight these issues through an example:

Women's participation in peace initiatives in Sudan (2000-2013)

Let us say, you want to write a research paper on this subject. You did your search for literature at the libraries at your and close institutions. You also asked your supervisor, other academic staff and your colleagues for further suggestions. Now you want to round up your search with literature from online sources.

We take two of the many possible platforms for such a search. To get an impression, in how far this issue is represented in African journals, you open African Journals Online (<http://www.ajol.info>). You scroll down to arrive at the box "Use AJOL To" and click on "Search for an article". Since you have a specific topic rather than a research field, this will lead faster to results than 'browsing' through alphabetical lists.

On the search site, you will find a number of search tips. This includes the difference between AND and OR between search terms – AND means that all of the terms have to be present in the items you want (this option is here implied, so you don't have to write AND); OR means that only one of the search terms has to be present in the article.

To have exact phrases, you use quotation marks ("..."); if you want articles not using a specific term, you put minus (-) or NOT in front of it. Another important tool is *, by which you can search for main terms without specifying, for example, it being used as adjective or verb or noun – econom* will give you results with economic, economize, economy, etc.

Since you are not using a specific article or author, you start with a general search in the box "Search for". If you put the whole research subject, as it is, there are no results. If you write only "women" and "peace", you get – in this case – 2 results, one of them OD Onabanjo's article on "The centrality of women in moral teachings in Yoruba family system" in the journal *Gender and Behaviour* Vol. 9, No. 1 of 2011. This is not what you need.

The other result, however, fits your topic perfectly: AA Mohamed's "From instigating violence to building peace: the changing role of women in Darfur Region of Western Sudan", published in the *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* Vol. 4, No. 1 in 2004. If you add "Sudan" to the previous search terms, you get only this one useful result.

In this way, you have to find the right middle ground between being too specific or being too general. The term "women" would have given you many results you are not interested in. In this case here, when you click on the link to the specific 2004 issue of the *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, you will find that the complete article of AA Mohamed is available for download.

A second possible platform is the digital library of UN Women (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital/library/publications>). It is an institutional platform, so you will find mostly publications by UN Women.

Its primary search engine provides only a box for keywords, giving the options to search for all words (AND), any words (OR), or the exact phrase ("..."). Under the link "Advanced Search" you will find a search similar to the one just discussed for AJOL. Be aware that you can also search for videos and photos on this website.

We start again with the full research topic. Once again, there are no results. "Women" and "peace" gives you only fifteen results, but among them are such different kinds of documents as posters, thematic briefs, world reports, journal articles and sourcebooks. Only a differentiated reading of these sources can tell, if they can help your research or not.

Adding "Sudan" brings two publications, the "UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security" of 2012 and the book "Women, War, Peace" by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of 2002. Both show no Sudan focus in their title, so only scanning through the contents can give you a hint, if there is material important to you, or not. Still, they are probably important for the general context of your specific topic. Here, the chapters of these publications are available for download, while a printed version has to be bought.

In this manner, you can find additions to your literature review. To do this in an efficient way requires experience, though, so experiment with search terms, different databases, searching and browsing, etc. You will find this a rewarding exercise, which sometimes leads to surprising discoveries.

5. Final words

There are important challenges concerning the infrastructure and skills necessary to make use of and, even more, to contribute to these open sources of knowledge production and dissemination. There are also many complicated issues and debates connected to open access, not the least the question of copyrights and intellectual ownership. Some projects, such as the African Copyright & Access to Knowledge Project (<http://www.aca2k.org>), tried to address these issues.

Nevertheless, the institutionalization of open access initiatives seems to continue successfully, represented, for example, by the recent 10th anniversary celebration of the Berlin Declaration at the Berlin Open Access Conference (<http://www.berlin11.org>, 19-20 November 2013).

In Sudan, the University of Khartoum has been running digitization programmes for some years; you will find the Development Studies and Research Centre a useful source. An attempt to establish an institutional repository resulted in a first online platform, the DSpace@ScienceUofK Institutional Repository (<http://oascir.uofk.edu/>), established by the University of Khartoum, the Sudan University for Science and Technology and El Neelain University with technical assistance of GrandIR (<http://www.grandir.com/en/>). The project had some achievements (Baleela 2013), but it still remains to be seen, if this initiative stabilizes into a working system – especially given fluctuations in website accessibility – and if similar initiatives will emerge at other institutions.

A great effort is also the Rift Valley Institute's Sudan Open Archive (<http://www.sudanarchive.net/index.php?view=soahome>), which harbours a great number of Sudan-related books and documents, and also a great part of the Sudan Notes and Records. Further projects of digitization are on-going, for instance in the National Library and in the Sudan Television Archive, maybe leading to better accessibility of their holdings.

Of course, neither structural inequality nor pressing economic and political issues are solved merely by better access to information. Without adequate conditions for academic work, open access initiatives may even be considered as a threat, once they turn into involuntary sharing of one's work.

But to provide and make use of openly accessible research can be not only an issue of reciprocity and practicality, it can also be a surprising thing to do, worthy to be supported amidst so many features of commercialization pushing – not just – into the sector of higher education.

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