Seeing the big picture

Open Learning Exchange Rwanda strategy in promoting, monitoring and evaluating e-resources in Rwanda

By Jacques Murinda, 2011

Monitoring and evaluation (M+E) of e-resources is a key aspect of improving usage. It helps to understand user needs, whether that means areas of high usage or resources that require promotion to increase awareness. OLE Rwanda, in partnership with the Rwandan Ministry of Education and INASP, organised a series of workshops to promote a strong M+E framework and strategy.

The Open Learning Exchange Rwanda (OLE Rwanda), is an independent non-governmental organisation based in Kigali, Rwanda. In partnership the Ministry of Education and INASP, OLE Rwanda organised a series of workshops aimed at boosting research and education through promoting, monitoring and evaluating (M&E) access and use of e-resources. Through these workshops, OLE Rwanda found there were two areas that needed to be addressed: cohesion among institutions; and strategy to promote and encourage use of e-resources.

Encountered Problems

One of the big problems was lack of communication — all efforts to access and use e-resources were scattered. Higher learning institutions and research centres were not learning from each other and there was no synergy in the promotion of e-resources in Rwanda. Even though the problems being encountered were similar (lack of IT infrastructure, librarians, information exchange, resources, networking and sufficient training), a lack of communication meant a lack of shared experience. Secondly, few colleges and universities had an e-resources promotion strategy in place to address access and use of e-resources for research and education.

Because of these issues, workshops were being organised without proper consultation and had little long term impact. To address the issue, OLE Rwanda led an initiative aimed at introducing a fresh perspective by bringing partners together to reflect on a strategy that would identify key pillars of e-resources promotion process.

Participants attending biomedical e-resources workshop at KHI (Kigali).

PERii Rwanda	2009	2010
Registered institutions	31	35
Full text journals, books and reports	14,580	20.028
Downloads	12,451	22,471
M+E Workshops	4	4
M+E Workshop participants	94	101
Institutions/Ministries represented in M+E Workshops	26	21

This process involved:

- identification of major gaps in promoting, monitoring and evaluating e-resources in Rwanda (using a survey, recommendations and evaluation forms from past workshops)
- Consideration and agreement on how to address the identified issues
- Fostering appreciation of the impact of different areas involved and encouraging buy-in of relevant stakeholder groups and individuals

The six pillars identified as an essential base for librarians, information professionals and researchers were:

- Access points
- Policy and guidelines
- Management (M&E)
- Networking and building library consortia
- Selection and acquisition of resources
- Training users

Considering the different aspects and identified in the framework of the local context, we decided our best response to meet these needs and craft e-resources promotion efforts, activities and workshops to suit local realities was to develop a strategic planning template. Each and every institution in Rwanda could then adapt and use this template as the benchmark in promoting, monitoring and evaluating e-resources .

For the strategic plan to be successfully implemented, an understanding of different aspects such as IT infrastructure, skills development, planning and leadership was essential. Advocating for stakeholders to get involved in the process was equally important.

OLE Rwanda's e-resources promotion approach

The process proved to be a success — bringing the partners together increased collaboration and provided a better overview of the activities in Rwanda. The following workshops were more focused and were organised by sectors (Biomedical sciences, Education, Social sciences and Polytechnic). They increased interest, participation and awareness for e-resources users and improved the understanding of the needs, platforms and access mechanisms.

OLE's approach is being put to good use and has helped to ensure that we have a more methodological approach and train users to handle both simple and complex searches using different tools.

Although ongoing advocacy is required, especially at such an early stage, the inclusion of decision makers in promoting and harmonising existing policy and frameworks was another important part of the approach adopted. The reason for this is that increasing IT infrastructure and library funding, strengthening e-resources sharing and collaboration mechanisms need the backing of key decision makers within the institution to be effective.

> The knowledge acquired is being put into practice. The management of the university is highly interested; it is talking to Rwanda Development Board (RDB) to ensure fast Internet connectivity to improve the use of e-resources"
>
> **Freddy Habineza**
> **Director,**
> **Library at the Catholic Institute of Kabgayi,** ICK

Output

The key outputs of the electronic promotion process include:

- Developing a template for the promotion of e-resources
- Mainstreaming and aligning the promotion of e-resources to:
  - Increase synergy among users
  - Increase peer support and interaction among stakeholders and policy makers
  - Improve the frameworks for quality research and development innovations
  - Optimise the use of limited ICT infrastructure
  - Improve collaboration between libraries and e-resources users
- Decentralising e-resource promotion
- Increasing the use of different e-resources in Rwanda (e-journals, images, protocols, e-books)
- Raising the level of debate on skills and IT needed, sharing challenges, best practices and lessons learnt in promoting INASP PERii e-resources

Decision makers from the Ministry of Education participating in an e-resources workshop at Kigali.

Conclusion

By developing a strong M&E framework and a strategic planning template, institutions in Rwanda stand to benefit from a better understanding of user needs and potentially a more cost efficient acquisition process, thereby building upon and improving the research culture. Additionally, as part of a strong cohesive policy, the promotion of e-resources makes these available resources more visible and accessible.

Mr. Jacques Murinda
OLE Rwanda Executive Director
jacques.murinda@olerwanda.org

Open Learning Exchange Rwanda (OLE Rwanda), is an independent non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Kigali, Rwanda. It has partnership with the Ministry of Education and is hosted in the ICTs department of the Ministry of Education. It was founded in June 2008 and is permanently registered with the Ministry of Justice.

www.olerwanda.org

OLE Rwanda has worked with the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii) Rwanda, since 2008. For information on other events, visit:

www.inasp.info/rwanda-events

For more information PERii Rwanda resources and activities, visit :

www.inasp.info/rwanda