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The South African Open Access Landscape: Opportunities and Challenges

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SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL
LIBRARY AND iNFORMATION

The South African Open Access Landscape: *Opportunities and Challenges*

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SANLiC Webinar Series 2, Diamond Open Access and Alternative Publishing Models, 29 July 2026

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Presentation Overview and Objectives

THE SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN ACCESS LANDSCAPE

Strategic Roadmap: From Landscape Mapping to Policy Action

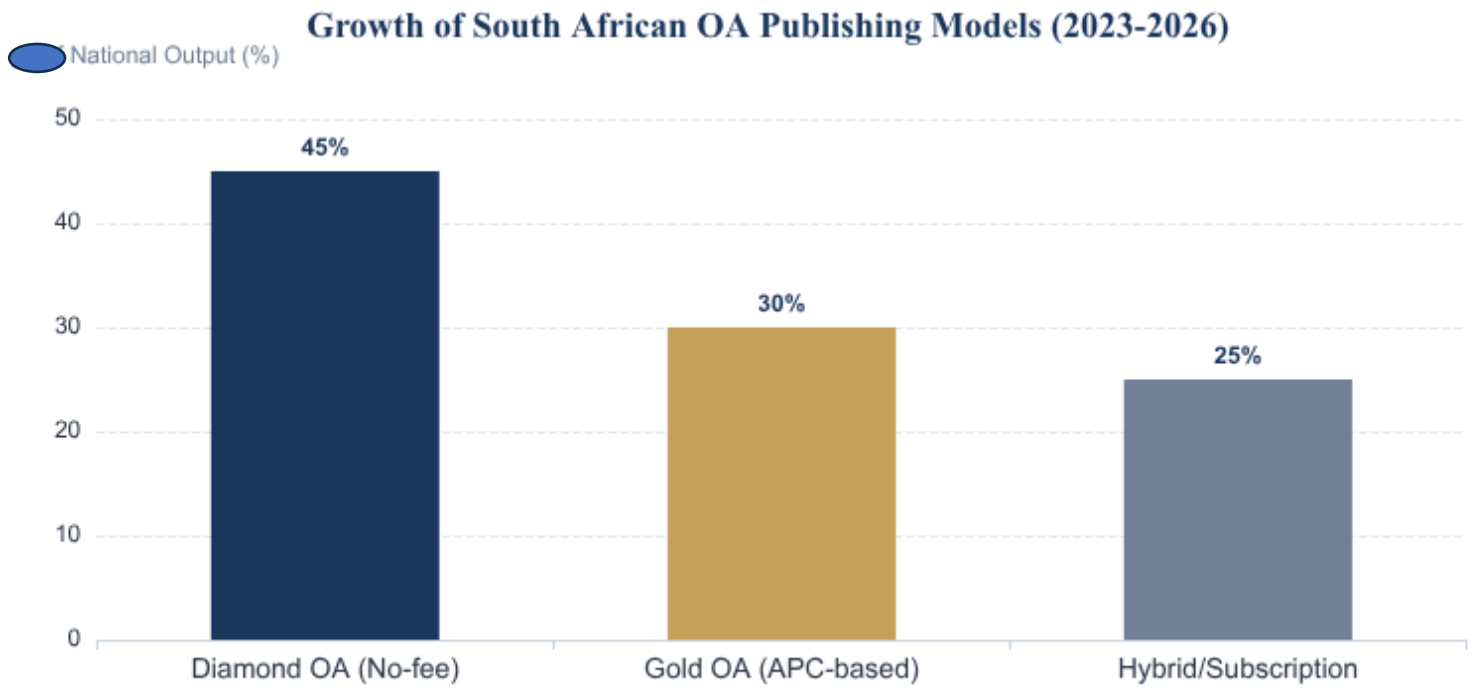
Let us aim to navigate the evolving South African Open Access ecosystem by analysing the critical shift from traditional subscription frameworks to sustainable alternative models. This presentation serves as a strategic discussion for Library Directors to align institutional initiatives with the latest national Open Science policies, ensuring that equity and long-term viability remain at the forefront of our collective negotiations and development strategies.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	KEY FOCUS AREAS
Ecosystem Mapping	Assessing current OA adoption rates and the viability of Diamond OA in the local context.
Model Transition	Evaluating the shift toward alternative publishing and transformative agreements.
Policy Alignment	Integrating institutional efforts with the 2026 National Open Science policies.
Institutional Strategy	Showcasing Wits University's leadership in driving sustainable OA initiatives.

The South African OA Environment: Current State

TRANSITIONING FROM TRADITIONAL MODELS TO INCLUSIVE OPEN SCIENCE

South Africa is undergoing a strategic national shift towards Open Science, moving beyond simple access to a comprehensive transformation of the scholarly communication lifecycle. Recent landscape studies conducted between 2023 and 2026 reveal a significant rise in no-fee publishing and Diamond OA initiatives, which are becoming the cornerstone of the local research ecosystem by removing financial barriers for both readers and authors.



Analysis

The data highlights a critical pivot: Diamond OA now represents the largest share of the national output, signaling that South African institutions are successfully prioritising equity and long-term viability over traditional APC-driven models.

Source: National Landscape Studies (2023-2026)

Exploring Diamond OA and Alternative Models

THE SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN ACCESS LANDSCAPE

Defining Diamond Open Access in the South African Context

Diamond Open Access is a community-driven, no-fee publishing model where neither authors nor readers pay, eliminating financial barriers and Article Processing Charges (APCs) to foster a more equitable scholarly ecosystem.

Strategic Insight

Analysis indicates that transitioning to Diamond OA and alternative subsidy models can significantly alleviate the "pay-to-publish" burden on South African research budgets while enhancing the global visibility of local knowledge.

Strategic Shift: Potential Impact of Non-APC Models on Institutional Costs

Publishing Model	Cost Mechanism	Accessibility for SA Researchers	Sustainability Factor
Traditional Gold OA	High APCs (Author Pays)	Low (Funding barriers)	High financial strain
Diamond OA	Institutional/Grant Funded	**Highest (No-fee)**	**Community-led stability**
Alternative Subsidy	National Consortiums	Medium-High	Collaborative funding

Diamond OA removes the financial gatekeeping inherent in APC models, ensuring that South African institutional budgets are optimized for research support rather than publication fees.

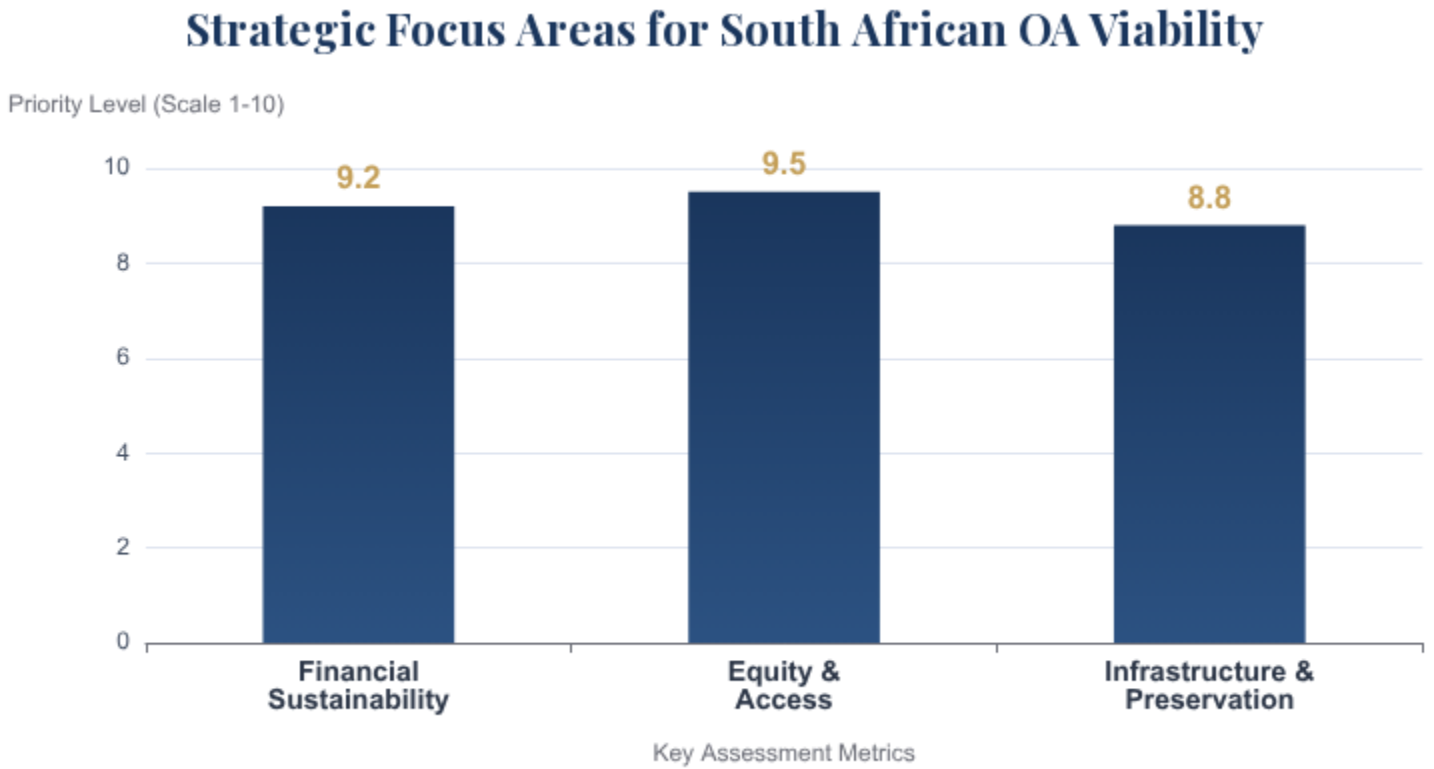
Sustainability, Equity, and Long-Term Viability

CORE PILLARS OF A SUSTAINABLE SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN ACCESS ECOSYSTEM

Analysis & Strategy

To ensure long-term viability, South Africa must transition from APC-heavy models to community-led publishing that removes financial barriers for both authors and readers. This requires integrating robust local infrastructure with national Open Science strategies to ensure the preservation of research outputs and equitable participation in the global scholarly record.

- Addressing the financial sustainability of community-led publishing
- Ensuring equity by removing barriers for authors and readers
- Managing long-term infrastructure and preservation for OA platforms



Source: Projected focus areas for South Africa Open Access strategies through July 2026

Insights for Policy and National Strategy

STRATEGIC ROADMAP FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN SCIENCE ECOSYSTEM

Strategic Focus Area	Actionable Recommendations & Objectives
National Policy Framework	Establish a unified South African Open Access policy to provide a legal and strategic mandate for institutional alignment.
Negotiation Leverage	Utilize localized landscape data to strengthen bargaining power in publisher negotiations and shift toward sustainable transformative agreements.
Mandate Integration	Seamlessly integrate OA mandates into national research funding requirements and institutional performance metrics to ensure compliance.

Key Insight: The 2026 South African Open Science Policy serves as the primary catalyst, transforming fragmented institutional efforts into a cohesive national strategy that prioritizes equity and long-term viability.

Wits University: OA Strategies and Initiatives

THE SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN ACCESS LANDSCAPE

Wits University maintains a strategic leadership position in South Africa's Open Science transition through a multi-pronged approach that integrates infrastructure and policy support. Central to this strategy is the optimization of institutional repositories and the hosting of Diamond OA platforms, which eliminate financial barriers for both authors and readers. These technical foundations are reinforced by a robust roadmap (July 2026) focused on researcher support and the negotiation of transformative agreements to ensure equitable access to global knowledge.

STRATEGIC PILLARS	CORE INITIATIVES	IMPACT AREA
Infrastructure	Institutional Repositories & Diamond OA Hosting	Visibility & Sovereignty
Sustainability	Transformative Agreements	Budgetary Alignment
Advocacy	2026 Roadmap & Researcher Support	Cultural Shift

Future Outlook and Strategic Recommendations

STRATEGIC ROADMAP: FOSTERING A COLLABORATIVE OA ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

ACTION CATEGORY	STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIBRARY DIRECTORS & POLICY MAKERS	EXPECTED IMPACT
National Alignment	Integrate Diamond OA into national Open Science strategies and institutional policy development.	Policy Cohesion
Sustainability	Shift budget from legacy subscriptions to alternative, no-fee publishing models to ensure equity.	Long-term Viability
Collaboration	Leverage Wits University initiatives to lead national collective negotiations and infrastructure sharing.	Scalable Impact
System Reform	Implement actionable steps from landscape studies to transition towards a non-commercial scholarly ecosystem.	Equitable Access

Closing Remark: The future of South African scholarly communication hinges on transitioning from passive consumption to active, collaborative ownership of the publishing landscape, ensuring African research remains globally visible and locally accessible.

Key Papers on Diamond OA and Open Science (Africa)

Source	Focus	Key Finding
Kodua-Ntim & Fombad (2024), *Information Development*	South African OA challenges and strategies	South Africa has significant OA policies at government and institutional levels, including a draft National Open Science Policy from DSI **KODUA-NTIM2024**
Kwanya & Ateka (2026), *Information Development*	Sustaining Diamond OA in Africa	Proposes a four-component framework for Diamond OA sustainability: financial stability, knowledge equity, community involvement, and technology **KWANYA2026**
Onaolapo et al. (2025), *IFLA Journal*	African OA publishing barriers	Over 58% of surveyed African researchers are limited by APCs, despite 78% having published OA articles **ONAOLAPO2025**
Kodua-Ntim (2023), *JASIST*	South African institutional repositories	OA repositories increase visibility and impact of South African research, especially for under-resourced institutions **KODUA-NTIM2023**
Debat et al. (2025), *eLife*	Global South reshaping scholarly communication	Africa's landscape features AOSP and AJOL as community-driven, no-fee platforms advancing knowledge equity **DEBAT2025**





Thank You

OPEN SCIENCE AND METASCIENCE SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

WITS UNIVERSITY

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SANLiC Webinar Series – Webinar 2

Programme: Diamond Open Access and Alternative Publishing Models

Date: Wednesday, 29 July 2026
Time: 15:00–16:30 (SAST)
Format: Virtual Webinar
Host: South African National Library and Information Consortium (SANLiC)

1. Theme

Diamond Open Access and Alternative Publishing Models: Building a Sustainable and Equitable Scholarly Communication Future

2. Purpose

This webinar will explore the evolving global scholarly communication landscape, examine Diamond Open Access and other alternative publishing models, and consider how SANLiC and its member institutions can support a more sustainable, affordable, and locally governed scholarly publishing ecosystem.

3. Programme

Time	Session	Presenter
15:00 - 15:05	**Welcome and Opening Remarks** • Welcome and introductions • Webinar objectives • Context: The future of scholarly communication and SANLiC's evolving strategic role	**Shirlene Neerputh** SOPAT member and SANLiC Board member Director: University of the Western Cape
15:05 - 15:25	**Presentation 1** **Diamond Open Access and Community-Governed Scholarly Publishing Models** **Key Focus Areas:** • Diamond Open Access and community-led publishing models. • Lessons from Lyrasis initiatives and international practice. • Building sustainable scholarly communication ecosystems.	**Sharla Lair** Lead Strategist for Open Scholarship Lyrasis (USA)

SANLiC Directors
Chair: Ms L Soyizwapi, **Deputy Chair**: Dr S Neerputh, Ms S Gcukumana, Dr Tiyani Mabunda, Mr M Mahlangu, Ms Z Mathe, Dr N Ngcobo, Mr L Reid, Mr G Truran.

	• The role of library consortia in publishing support and collaboration. • Governance, policy, infrastructure, and funding for Diamond OA. • Balancing commercial subscriptions with scholar-led publishing. • Resource and capacity considerations for alternative publishing models.	
15:25 - 15:45	**Presentation 2** **African Perspectives on Diamond Open Access and Sustainable Scholarly Publishing** **Key Focus Areas:** • Explore the African Open access Environment: Diamond Open Access and alternative publishing models. • Assess issues relating to sustainability, equity, and long-term viability. • Share African perspectives and experiences. • Provide insights to inform policy development, negotiations, and national Open Science strategies.	**Dr Felicia Nkrumah Kuagbedzi** Acting Head: Communications, ICT and Knowledge Management Association of African Universities (AAU)
15:45 - 16:05	**Presentation 3** **The South African Open Access Landscape: Opportunities and Challenges** **Key Focus Areas:** • Explore the South African Open Access Environment: Diamond Open Access and alternative publishing models. • Assess issues relating to sustainability, equity, and long-term viability. • Share South African perspectives and experiences. • Provide insights to inform policy development, negotiations, and national Open Science strategies.	**Lazarus Matizirofa** Associate Director: Research, Scholarly Communication, Digital Systems and Services University of the Witwatersrand
16:05 - 16:25	**Moderated Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A**	All Speakers
16:25 - 16:30	**Closing Remarks and Next Steps** • Key takeaways • Emerging priorities for SANLiC and member institutions • Appreciation to speakers and participants	**Shirlene Neerputh** SOPAT member and SANLiC Board member Director: University of the Western Cape

	• Information on recording and follow-up activities	

Presenter Biographies

Sharla Lair
Lead Strategist for Open Scholarship
Lyrasis

Sharla Lair is the Lead Strategist for Open Scholarship at Lyrasis, a library consortium based in the United States, where she leads initiatives that advance sustainable, community-governed models for open scholarship. She created and leads the Lyrasis Open Access Community Investment Program (OACIP), an international community investment model that supports the long-term sustainability of diamond open access publishing. Through this work, she collaborates with libraries, publishers, funders, and research organizations to develop equitable and resilient approaches to sustaining open scholarship.

Sharla's leadership in the field extends through her international service and advisory roles. She chairs the Coalition Publica International Advisory Board, a partnership between Érudit and the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) that is building Canada's national infrastructure for sustainable diamond open access publishing. She also serves on the International Advisory Board of ALMASI, a Horizon Europe initiative advancing diamond open access publishing across Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

Through her engagement across the open access community, Sharla contributes to broader conversations about the future of scholarly communication. This work is supporting her role as lead principal investigator for an ongoing national study of diamond open access publishing in the United States, a collaboration among Lyrasis, the Big Ten Academic Alliance, and the California Digital Library, with support from the Gates Foundation.

Dr. Felicia Nkrumah Kuagbedzi
Acting Head: Communications, ICT and Knowledge Management
Association of African Universities (AAU)

Dr. Felicia Nkrumah Kuagbedzi serves as the Coordinator for ICT, Communications and Knowledge Management at the Association of African Universities, a continental body representing close to 500 member universities across Africa. Currently, she is a Board member of the Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS), an international initiative dedicated to securing long-term, community-governed funding for essential open science infrastructure. Felicia also serves as Deputy Chair of the Steering Committee for the African Coalition of Library Consortia, playing a leadership role in efforts to overcome financial barriers to knowledge access for African institutions.

Her expertise lies at the intersection of ICT, digital transformation, communications, knowledge management, and project management - ensuring that research and learning translate into action across complex partnerships. She leads communications strategy, knowledge systems, and project management for multi-country initiatives, including the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) spanning 17 African countries.

She also served as a Co-Principal Investigator on a British Council-funded Gender Equality Partnerships project addressing the underrepresentation of female STEM lecturers in leadership at technical universities.

Lazarus Matizirofa
Associate Director: Research, Scholarly Communication, Digital Systems & Service
University of Witwatersrand

Mr Lazarus Gallant Matizirofa serves as the Associate Director: Research, Scholarly Communication, Digital Systems and Services at the University of the Witwatersrand Libraries.

Lazarus's professional focus lies in the domain of Open Science, encompassing metascience, open scholarship, digital scholarship, research data management, and the digital transformation and innovation in higher education libraries. He is a strong advocate for Open Science and Digital Humanities in South Africa, Africa, and globally. He served as a member of the Technical Advisory Board for the African Open Science Platform (AOSP) and contributed to the South Africa–European Union's Open Science Dialogue. Currently, he is a member of the Global Open Repositories steering committee, a board member of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD), and an advisory board member of Digital Humanities Now.

Lazarus holds a Master of Information Science from the University of Cape Town. He is presently pursuing a PhD Media Studies (Open Science & Metascience) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.