TropMed Central Antwerp: moving towards ‘access for all’

Since late 2007 the library has been working on TropMed Central Antwerp (TMCA), a digital archive in which we collect, preserve and disseminate the ITM research output. As part of the global movement towards Open Access (OA), the TMCA project aims to:

• improve the visibility of the Institute’s scholarly publications
• centralise its content and metadata
• self-archive research output and provide open access to it
• preserve digital grey literature

Reduced accessibility of scientific information

For several reasons journal subscription prices have been increasing at an prohibitive rate for the last decades. In fact, they have been growing so much faster than the annual inflation one can speak of a ‘serials crisis’. Libraries have trouble keeping pace with the yearly increase of serials prices and risk having to cancel subscriptions and online access. This may leave them with a collection that does not entirely fit the needs of scientists anymore.

With the accessibility of scientific literature at stake, the principle of OA is one of the possible solutions to this dilemma. OA means basically the worldwide electronic dissemination of peer-reviewed, scientific literature without cost or copyright limitations. There are two ways to comply with this: publishing in OA journals or self-archiving in a digital archive or ‘institutional repository’.

Conference declarations in Budapest (2002), Berlin (2003) and Bethesda (2003) made statements in favour of OA. The main idea behind OA is that research, funded by public means, is a public good and the results should therefore be freely accessible to the public. Over the last 6 years OA mandates have been endorsed by more than 260 universities, research and government institutes and resulted in about 1300 repositories in 77 countries.

TropMed Central Antwerp

TMCA stores every department’s research output published since 2000, as well as all ITGPress items, using the open-source software DSpace.

The digital archive is divided in communities (departments, ITGPress) and collections (articles published in international peer-reviewed journals, books, chapters and other non-journal literature). TMCA currently holds 2,366 items and is maintained by the library staff.

The repository uses a qualified Dublin Core Schema as the standard to organise and retrieve metadata records. Whenever available, extra metadata (DOI, URL, Pubmed ID) is added. A unique and permanent link, the uniform resource identifier or URI, identifies each record.

TMCA, as well as over a thousand other repositories, contributes to ‘service providers’ such as DRIVER, OAISTER and BASE (see table) by having the full text and metadata ‘harvested’. These portals aim to become universal single access points for retrieval of full-text scientific information.

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