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## **Collaboration in Research and Education in the Digital Space: The Case for Library Consortia Licensing to Scientific Information in the African Region**

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### Abstract

It is globally accepted that scientific literature is critical to efficiency in both education and research. Access to quality scientific information is a prerequisite to quality learning and teaching in higher education and the basis for research activities that address the current problems that face the society. At the same time overwhelming evidence indicates that students, faculty members, and researchers in higher education and research institutions in many parts of the African region have limited access to up-to-date, peer reviewed global research knowledge to inform their teaching, learning and research activities. This situation is occasioned by many factors among them spiraling prices of scientific literature contrasted with shrinking budget allocations to institutional libraries that are tasked with acquiring and providing information access to the scientific communities. This paper examines the increasingly global trend towards licensing and providing access to digital scientific literature through library consortia models. Principally the paper argues that the library consortia models of collaboration provides improved opportunities for access to large quantities of current and quality scholarly literature to support educational and research enterprise in the African region especially in the digital space. By joining, establishing and supporting library consortia initiatives across the continent, research and HEI institutions in the African region will benefit their members by enhancing resource base of their individual institutions, can increase their buying power through enhanced cost-benefit in licensing and continuous access to global knowledge in form of e-books, e-journals and research data. The paper will examine first, the current challenges in access to scientific literature in the African region and secondly demonstrate how library consortia model can help address some of these challenges. Thirdly it will examine the fundamentals of establishing and managing a sustainable library model among even sometimes competing institutions. The paper recommends among others greater collaboration and pulling of resources together among research institutions through library consortia, the need for continuous capacity building among consortia stakeholders leaders of institutions, faculty members, researchers, librarians, and end users of consortia services. Above more there is need for transition to digital libraries and greater advocacy efforts for library consortia models.

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