

**ADDRESS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORKSHOP
ON INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES AND OPEN ACCESS
Ahmadu Bello University, Monday, 28th April 2008**

Prof. Doris O. Bozimo
Chairman, NULIB Consults Nig. Ltd.

The Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULIB) is happy to join the organizers of this workshop in welcoming eIFL.net, once again, to Nigeria.

NULIB wishes to express its profound gratitude to eIFL.net for creating awareness among Nigerian librarians of electronic resources as the way forward in the new information age. We extend a special welcome to our international visitors and especially to eIFL.net's Iryna Kuchman who deals with matters relating to Institutional Repositories and Open Access.

This workshop could not have come at a more propitious time. For more than two decades, starting in the early 1980s, the Nigerian university system went through a harrowing period of acute information resource deficiency. Starved of needed funds, the libraries and their users found themselves in a situation in which academic journals, and even up-to-date textbooks, were unavailable for research or even effective teaching.

Although all stakeholders—teachers, researchers, administrators and students—accepted the formal logic of enhanced access to information through cooperative sharing of the relatively limited book and journal resources, the reality of implementing shared resources through inter-library

loans left much to be desired. The reason was obvious. Since more than 95 percent of the materials in Nigerian university and research libraries were imported with scarce foreign exchange, every item became too precious and expensive to share.

Survey after survey revealed the deep-seated suspicion among university librarians to resource sharing through inter-library loan schemes. Photocopy services proved largely ineffectual for resource sharing on grounds of cost, unavailability or non-maintenance of needed photocopy facilities, or unreliability of postal services.

It was refreshing therefore to observe the attitudinal change that occurred among university librarians, early in the 21st century, when developments in the publishing world provided information resources in electronic format. Since these could be accessed simultaneously and non-destructively through the Internet, Nigerian university librarians became largely supportive of cooperative acquisition and sharing of information resources among the university libraries.

With the help of international organizations such as INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications) and, especially, eIFL.net, the university libraries formed a consortium, NULIB Consults Nigeria Limited, whose initial primary mandate is the joint acquisition of scholarly information resources in electronic format. By taxing themselves,

and soliciting for additional funds from ETF (Education Tax Fund) through the National Universities Commission, the Consortium has been able to pay for more than 8,000 full-text scholarly journals in the EBSCOHost database up to February 2011. Thanks to eIFL.net and other philanthropic organizations, the Consortium has also acquired several other databases for joint use by the universities.

NULIB is justifiably proud and happy over this achievement. But we are also fully conscious of the fact that it applies mainly to externally generated information resources. Internally, research activities within Nigerian universities and research institutes still suffer from the isolation and fragmentation that result from the inability or unwillingness to share physical resources such as theses, dissertations, journals and printed reports.

NULIB's mandate is only half fulfilled if we cannot also provide seamless access to Nigerian scholarly output. That is why we are so excited about this workshop, which, through its advocacy and training, will encourage and enable Nigerian universities and research institutes to organize their scholarly output into **institutional repositories** that, through **open access**, will be available to many both within and outside the country.

We take this opportunity to appeal to the Vice-Chancellors, institute directors and other decision makers to give the needed support to the effort to build institutional repositories in the universities and research institutes. We also

plead with Nigerian scholars not only to submit their scholarly works for inclusion in the repositories, but also to grant the necessary permission for them to be openly accessed. Finally, we thank and congratulate the organizers and their sponsors for recognizing the urgent need for this workshop, and wish the participants a pleasant and fruitful learning experience.