

African Open Science Platform Panel Discussion

Science Forum South Africa

Conversations around Openness in African Research: Open Access, Open Data, Open Science

The Science International Accord on 'Open Data in a Big Data World' presents an inclusive vision of the need for and the benefits of Open Data for science internationally, and in particular for Lower and Middle Income Countries. A major outcome is the African Open Science Platform initiative, supported by the South African Department of Science and Technology, directed by CODATA and implemented by ASSAf. This session will seek to incite conversations on the core themes of the platform initiative: data policies, data training and data infrastructure.

The development of an open science and innovation platform depends not only on the physical infrastructure for acquiring, curating and disseminating data and information, but also on protocols, policies and procedures in the science system that provide the structure and support to ensure that science objectives are achieved.

Several open science activities are underway across Africa, but a great deal will be gained if, in the context of developing inter-regional links, mechanisms for collaboration, exchange of good practice and coordination can be established.

Questions to be addressed by panelists from the African region include:

- What could be achieved through coordination and through a national data forum?
- Why do we need national and institutional data policies and what should they look like?
- What are the data skills requirements and how can initiatives be scaled to meet the need?
- What would a national or regional data infrastructure roadmap address?

Session Chair:

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Date: **Thursday 8 December 2016**

Time: **13:30 – 15:00**

Venue: **Emerald Room, CSIR International Convention Centre, CSIR Campus, Meiring Naudé Road, Brummeria**

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Brief profiles

Magdalena Eriksson is the director of academic development for AIMS. She also assists AIMS' Global Secretariat with academic development and coordination, and assists advancement initiatives in the Nordic countries. Magdalena served as the first Centre Director of AIMS Ghana. Prior to joining AIMS, Magdalena was the founding head of the Department of Medical Biochemistry at the School of Medical Sciences of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. She spent many years as an academic research scientist and has extensive experience in partnership building and public engagement programs. Magdalena holds a Doctorate Degree in biophysical chemistry from Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden, and a Master's Degree from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City. She is on the board of Molecular Frontiers Foundation, an organisation she helped launch in 2006, and is a queen mother in a traditional village in Ghana.

Patrick D. Molutsi is an educationist-sociologist in History and Sociology with concurrent Diploma in Education. He was trained as a High School Teacher but before he could go to teach he was recruited to join the University of Botswana's Department of Sociology as a Staff Development Fellow (SDF). There he was sent for his postgraduate diploma in Population Studies, in University of Ghana, Legon. He proceeded to do M.Phil and D.Phil in Sociology at Oxford University. He also holds a post-graduate Diploma in Public International Law from Holborn College of the University of Wolverhampton, UK. Upon completion of his studies abroad, he returned to UB where he taught for close to 20 years. He left UB when he was Dean of Social Science in 1999 to Head a Research Section of the International Institute for Democracy (IDEA) in Stockholm, Sweden. This international assignment involved supervising a global university research project involving universities in Bangladesh, South Korea, Kenya, Malawi, Peru, Costa Rica and United Kingdom on the subject Research Methodology for Measuring Democracy in countries around the world. After five years in Sweden, Dr Molutsi returned to Botswana in 2003 to start and lead the State Enterprise Agency called Tertiary Education Council (TEC). He headed TEC for eleven years and later helped to transform it into the now Botswana Human Resource Development Council (HRDC). A researcher and scholar of repute in his own right, Dr Molutsi retired from the CEO position of HRDC in May 2016. He now heads the Country Office of Joint Minds Consult (JMC). JMC is an independent research institution that is working on issues of open science and unrestricted research data. JMC is leading the initiative to mobilise government, universities and high education colleges as well as the private sector to embrace the ideas of opening up research data and promoting international partnerships on this subject.

Susan Veldsman was appointed to the position of Director: Scholarly Publication Unit at the Academy of Sciences in South Africa, in January 2009. She is responsible for raising the visibility, discoverability and accessibility of South African scholarly journals through Open Access and online journal content management; improve the quality of SA scholarly journal, books & conference proceedings through expert peer review panels in the field; find ways and solutions to further support the development of policy frameworks in order to facilitate optimal use and access to publicly funded research. She received the Electronic Publishing Trust (EPT) award for her outstanding contribution to the promotion of Open Access in Developing Countries. Early in her career she started off as an Information Librarian, at various Higher Education Libraries in South Africa where she eventually was promoted to Assistant Director: Client Services, Library

Services at the University of Johannesburg. During 2002 she moved to a national project, South African National Library and Information Consortium (SANLiC) where she was responsible for negotiating access to commercial databases and was actively involved in promoting Open Access and setting up Institutional Repositories. She continued this work, in 2006, in an international consortium, eFL.net.

Joseph Muliaro Wafula is a member of the CODATA executive committee. And the Chair of CODATA Kenya. A member of the editorial board of the Data Science Journal; committee of the AFRICA-ai-JAPAN Project Taskforce Project sponsored by JICA and the committee of the United Nations SDGs on Agriculture and Climate Change Pillars of Kenya. He holds a BSc. Science (Hons) (Kenyatta University), MSc. Physics (University of Nairobi), M.Phil. Microelectronic Engineering and Semiconductor Physics (University of Cambridge –UK), Summer Doctoral Program (Berkman Centre for Internet & Society/Oxford Internet Institute's –Harvard University Law School), and PhD Information Technology (JKUAT). He is a recipient of two IBM awards namely: the 2016 IBM Shared University Research Award on Open Data Cloud Project for JKUAT for building an open data platform for researchers in Africa, and the 2014 IBM MEA Award, for capacity building in Mobile Application development. He is a fellow of the Computer Society of Kenya and the Cambridge Commonwealth Society and has published book chapters, a book and research papers in peer reviewed international journals. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Computing at JKUAT and the founder Director of the ICT Centre of Excellence and Open Data (iCEOD).

Colin Wright pursued an academic career in Computational Mathematics—including his PhD, research, teaching and PhD graduate supervisions. On retiring as full professor of Computational Mathematics at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg he was granted the rank of Emeritus Research Professor. His senior academic management career included Head of School(s), Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Member of the University Council and its Executive and Finance Committees. He did a stint at Wits as executive responsible for Libraries and IT. He led University and ICT Strategy formulation groups. At retirement he was appointed as Research Manager of the Centre for High Performance Computing (CHPC) and then subsequently to manage the SA National Research Network (SANReN). In 2008, he successfully motivated for the establishment of the national Very Large Database facility (VLDB) which was initially co-located with CHPC and is now being matured into the Data Intensive Research Initiative for South Africa (DIRISA). As a consequence of the 2012/13 international review, the current individual SA Cyberinfrastructure entities plus a new e-Infrastructure Skills and Training unit are presently being merged into the SA National Cyber Infrastructure System (NICIS). Early beginning of 2014 he was appointed by the Department of Science and Technology to advise on and lead the NICIS implementation. Since its inception, he has been a member of the G8+O5 Research Data Infrastructure Working Group which has advised internationally on data strategy. During the last few years he has advised the European Commission in different capacities on e-Infrastructure matters, including the EC H2020 Research Infrastructures and e-Infrastructures Advisory Group.



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