Scholarly Publishing in Africa: Opportunities and impediments
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In May 2009 we attended the Scholarly Publishing in Africa conference on behalf of *New Voices*. The conference brought together publishers and academics from across Africa, including some of the larger academic publishing centres such as Egypt, Kenya, Cameroon and South Africa.

The conference aimed to find ways of further expanding Africa’s burgeoning academic publishing industry, which is currently dominated by education publishing, but which increasingly also seeks to bring scholarly works to a more general readership. Given that there were some senior civil service, NGO and academic figures present, the deliberations and recommendations that emerged are sure to influence the development of policy as far as scholarly publishing in Africa is concerned.

The Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) has been in existence for more than 40 years and is a statutory body on a par with science councils such as the HSRC and CSIR, and as such enjoys the full support of the Department of Science and Technology. It was therefore perfectly placed to convene this important event. The conference organiser, Solani Ngobeni, is the director of publications at AISA and is a prominent figure in the South African academic publishing industry.

Our own contribution to the conference was a presentation on the role of students in the scholarly publishing process. We presented a model of how to optimally include students...
in the process of generating, evaluating and publishing academic texts. While there is a considerable literature on how to facilitate students in generating academic texts, less attention has been given to involving them in peer review and actual publication. Drawing on our experience in editing the *South African Journal of Psychology* (SAJP) and *New Voices in Psychology*, we outlined a novel publication structure that is built around active student involvement. We described a three-pronged strategy to enhance student participation. First, *New Voices* provides training opportunities for student editors, which involve extensive hands-on experiential learning and co-development of the journal’s peer review system. Second, the peer review system combines traditional, in-depth review by a few experts with rapid review by a larger number of entry-level reviewers using highly structured rating mechanisms. Third, both the review system and the publication structure of the journal involve fine-grained reputation management mechanisms, which allow for differential weightings and prominence to be accorded to contributions of varying quality.

Our claim was that this approach not only encourages wider participation in academic knowledge production, but it is also more effective in ensuring that high-quality contributions are valued and appropriately disseminated.

Our presentation has been accepted as a chapter in the conference proceedings: *Scholarly publishing in Africa: Opportunities & impediments* (2009) edited by Solani Ngobeni.

We learnt a great deal (from other presentations and from informal discussions during tea breaks) about the complex and inspiring world of academic publishing. The importance of thinking about academic publishing holistically, focussing not only on the generation of academic texts but also on the processes that sustain and feed off academic writing, again became apparent from these discussions. Knowledge production is very much a team sport and functions within a diverse network that extends beyond the university. This was also a theme touched upon by the keynote speaker, Cheryl de la Rey, who is the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Pretoria.

Scholarly publishing in Africa is clearly on the move! We were pleased to know that *New Voices* could be a part of these exciting developments.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

**Eduard Fourie** is a lecturer in the department of psychology at Unisa. His research interests include institutional identity, well-being of employees, and community psychology. He is passionate about knowledge production in academia and is editor of *New Voices in Psychology*.

**Martin Terre Blanche** lectures in the department of psychology at Unisa. He has contributed to a variety of books, book chapters and journal articles on the politics of knowledge-making in psychology. He is interested in a variety of aesthetic pursuits.