

Report of the LIBSENSE III Workshop



On April 24-26, 2019 the 3rd LIBSENSE workshop took place in Tunis, Tunisia. The workshop was organized by ASREN (Arabic States Research and Education Network), in conjunction with WACREN, COAR and EIFL.

The [LIBSENSE initiative](#) is a collaboration between the three African Regional Research and Education Networks (RRENs) and the AfricaConnect2 project. It aims to build a community of practice for repositories in Africa and define a collaborative agenda for libraries and RRENs in Africa related open science, repositories and value-added services. COAR, EIFL, and OpenAIRE have also been providing support and expertise to the LIBSENSE project.

The workshop in Tunisia was attended by representatives from the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and library/university communities from several Arab countries: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia, with other participants from Nigeria and Senegal. As with the previous two workshops, the aim was to identify opportunities and activities to collaborate across the two communities to support open science in the region.

This highly interactive workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss their challenges related to open access and share solutions being applied locally. The ASREN countries are very diverse and there is no universal solution for all countries in the region, however, several valuable shared priorities surfaced during the workshop:

1. **A federated discovery system for the region:** A significant amount of research and educational content is produced in the region, but the content is scattered across many

systems and countries. A federated discovery system, similar to LA Referencia in Latin America, would bridge access across repositories and other content providers from the region enabling a one-stop search interface. While there are already several national portals and discovery systems, the region would benefit from federating across countries, given the common language and geographic location of the countries. To support this, content needs to be exposed in a common way, leading to greater alignment and harmonization of standards, technologies and policies at the local level, and ensuring best practices are applied to the organizations that wish to share their content through the portal.

2. **Increasing the value of Arabic content:** Related to the issue above, participants discussed collective strategies to add value to the Arabic language content produced in the region. Improving the visibility and discoverability of Arabic language will require the adoption of standards and best practices by data providers including clear copyright statements, the proper use of DOIs, metadata in English to support discovery, quality control for digitized materials, and so on. ASREN could act as a mechanism for institutions in the region to work together to support the identification and sharing of best practices and even possibly a collective approach to shared curation of metadata and content.
3. **Shared content hosting platform:** Not every institution has the resources and expertise to manage its own repository. At the national level NRENs, or other national institutions can offer repository hosting services to fill in the gaps and ensure that all valuable content produced in the region is made openly available and preserved for the long term. These types of hosting services could also be extended beyond literature repositories to include data repositories and journal platforms, and help advance innovation in scholarly communication by supporting, for example, launching overlay journals on top of the regional content. This would allow cost sharing across institutions, leading significantly lower costs for participating in open science activities.
4. **Advocacy, training, and communities of practice:** A cluster of activities related to the social/cultural aspects of open access and open science can also be supported through collaborative activities. As with many regions, the traditional paradigms related to promotion and prestige of the researcher are strong in these countries, leading researchers to prefer publishing in traditional, established publishing venues. The narrative that incorrectly equates open access with low-quality journals acts as a strong disincentive for researchers to publish in open access and these misunderstandings need to be addressed through advocacy with researchers and administrators. In addition, regional collaboration provides an opportunity to support communities of practice, beyond just “one-off” training events for a variety of activities such as federated identity management for libraries, open source software management (DSpace and OJS), as well as sharing and adopting good practices and standards across a range of other services.

The workshop programme and presentations are available [here](#), and the workshop photo gallery [here](#)

The next step for LIBSENSE project will be for countries and regions to develop more concrete plans for addressing and advancing the priorities areas identified through the workshops.

If you are interested in participating in these activities, please get in touch with the LIBSENSE program managers by email to libsense@ren.africa