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Make today matter

Utilising Institutional Repositories to Preserve and Promote Children's Literature

Publishing Studies Conference 2024

Nonsikelelo Mkwananzi - MIS (Publishing)

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Research Purpose & Focus

Purpose

Explore how institutional repositories (IRs) contribute to preserving and promoting children's literature within South Africa's educational sector

Focus

Case study of South African IRs and related initiatives supporting children's literature

AI-generated image - Collage of imaginary South African children's book covers showcasing the rich cultural and linguistic heritage preserved and promoted through educational resources.

Children's Literature in South African Education

Image sourced from https://bookdash.org/

Shaped by complex socio-political history, multilingual society and diverse cultural contexts.
South Africa's unique socio-political landscape influences the majority of the themes and language choices in children's literature.

Educational value: Books in indigenous languages and reflecting local cultures are essential. These resources serve as vital tools in connecting young readers to their cultural heritage.

Children's Literature in South African Education

Importance in early childhood:
Vital for literacy development and fostering a sense of identity. Engaging with culturally relevant literature supports identity formation and literacy among young children.

Promotes Inclusivity and Multilingualism: Encourages appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity. Children's literature in multiple languages fosters inclusivity, enabling children from diverse backgrounds to see their language and culture represented.

Image sourced from https://bookdash.org/

Role of Children's Literature

"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty and a building block of development. It is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. It is, along with education in general, a basic human right"
Kofi Annan

Enhances Literacy

Institutional repositories (IRs) make children's literature widely accessible to students, educators and parents. By providing free or low-cost access to reading materials, IRs help break down socio-economic barriers that limit access to books and educational resources.

Accessible children's literature fosters a love for reading, improves comprehension and builds vocabulary especially for young readers in underserved communities.

Role of Children's Literature

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
Dr. Seuss

Fosters Creativity

Children's literature within IRs often includes stories, illustrations and activities that inspire children's imaginations. Exposure to diverse narratives and creative content encourages children to think outside the box, explore new ideas and even try their hand at storytelling or illustrating.

Encouraging creativity through literature leads to cognitive development, problem-solving skills and emotional expression, essential skills for children's academic and personal growth.

Role of Children's Literature

*"Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent,
literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill."*
Barbara Tuchman

Preserves Cultural Heritage

By housing culturally significant stories and folklore, IRs play a crucial role in preserving and promoting South African heritage. Many children's books available through IRs reflect local languages, traditions and values, making them vital tools for cultural continuity.
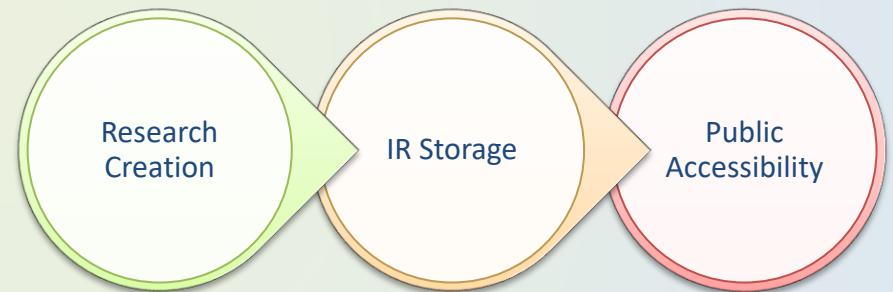
The preservation of cultural narratives ensures that children grow up with an understanding of their heritage, fostering pride in their identity and a sense of belonging within their communities. This cultural knowledge also promotes intercultural awareness and respect.

Institutional Repositories

Institutional Repositories (IRs) are digital platforms that house and manage academic resources including research papers, educational materials and scholarly publications. IRs capture and organise an institution's intellectual output, providing a centralised, accessible source for knowledge sharing and preservation (Crow, 2002; Bangani, 2018).

IRs support academic transparency and knowledge dissemination by making research accessible to a wider audience, fostering collaboration and facilitating educational advancement across disciplines.

From Research Creation to Public Access – This flowchart highlights the journey of academic resources through Institutional Repositories, underscoring their role in preserving knowledge and enhancing accessibility

Research Creation

IR Storage

Public Accessibility

Research Methodology: Comparative Case Study

Comparative case study of selected South African Institutional Repositories (IRs) with a specific focus on children's literature.

Six repositories will be chosen based on:

- ❖ Relevance to educational and public-access research
- ❖ Potential interest in preserving and promoting children's literature

Selected IRs:

1. University of Pretoria - UPSPACE
2. University of the Western Cape Research Repository
3. University of Stellenbosch IR
4. University of the Witwatersrand - WIReDSPACE
5. HSRC Research Outputs
6. SCIELO SA

Research Methodology: Case Studies

University of Pretoria - UPSPACE

UPSPACE offers extensive educational resources and focuses on academic publishing, making it a good fit for initiatives promoting children's literature as a literacy tool.

University of the Western Cape Research Repository

UWC is known for its outreach programs and could enhance education accessibility for younger age groups through its digital collection of children's literature, especially for under-represented communities.

University of Stellenbosch IR

Stellenbosch engages in publishing and educational research initiatives and supports South African cultural heritage aligning with goals to preserve children's literature.

Research Methodology: Case Studies

University of the Witwatersrand - WIReDSPACE
WITS emphasises arts, culture and heritage aligning with the preservation of children's books that reflect South African narratives and educational content.

HSRC Research Outputs (Human Sciences Research Council)
The HSRC focuses on human sciences and can provide insights into the impact of children's literature on social development enhancing comparative research.
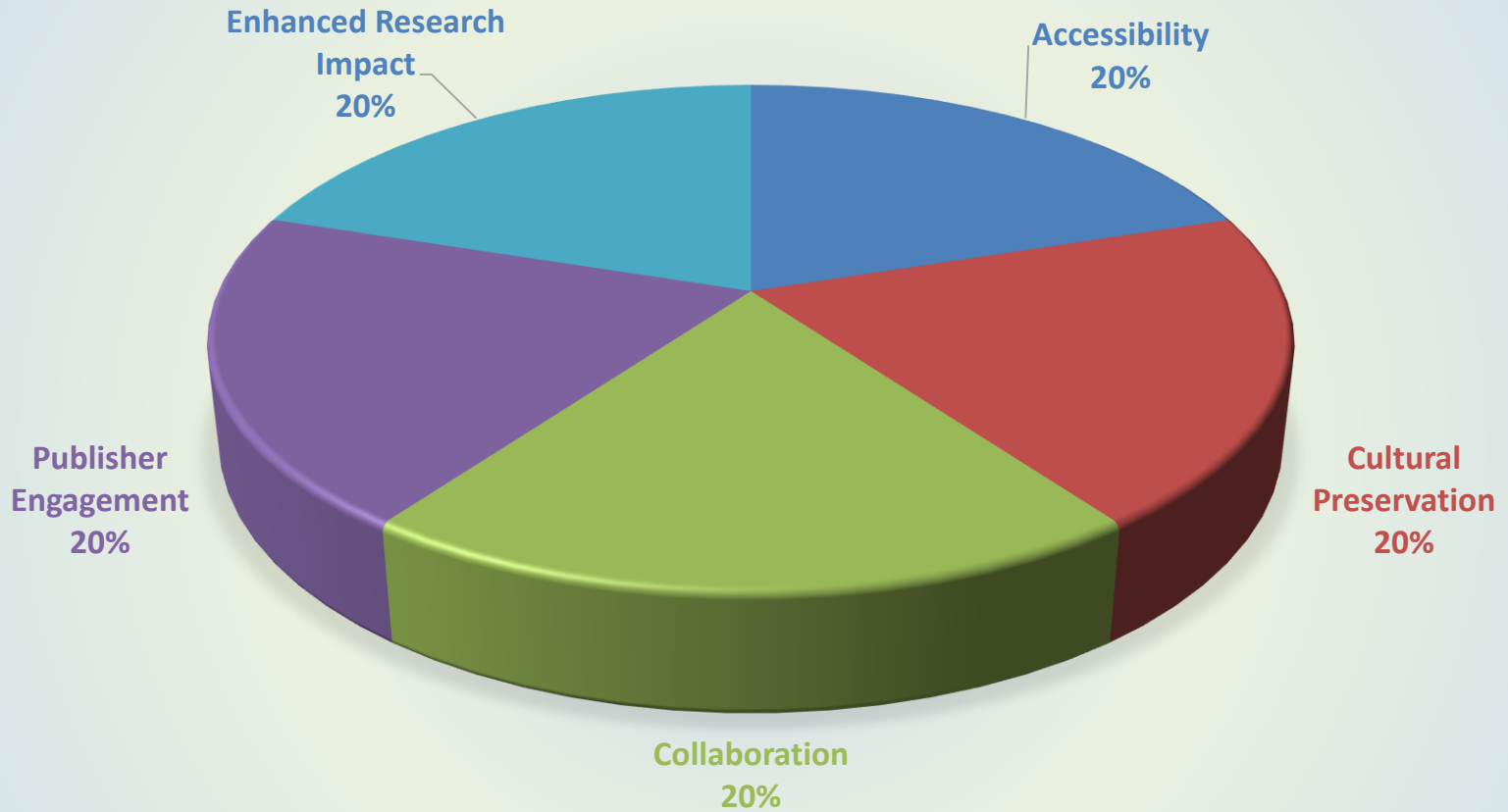
SCIELO SA
SCIELO SA is an open-access platform aimed at making South African research accessible, serving as a benchmark for the educational potential of children's literature across socio-economic backgrounds.

- ❖ **Book Dash** - Volunteers create free African storybooks that anyone can translate, print and share.

- ❖ **UNISA Children's Literature Awards** - Recognises children's authors and illustrators to inspire new talent in the genre.

- ❖ **Family Literacy Project** - Supports children's literacy by empowering parents as their children's first educators.

- ❖ **Help2Read** - A non-profit focusing on literacy and community-building through youth education initiatives.

- ❖ **Nal'ibali** - Aims to instill a reading culture in South Africa through storytelling and mobile libraries.

- ❖ **Puku Foundation** - Promotes reading by ensuring access to quality literature in all South African languages.

- ❖ **Room to Read** - Partners with schools to provide local language education and establish well-equipped libraries.

South African-based Initiatives Promoting Children's Literature

This pie chart highlights the equal benefits of institutional repositories (IRs) in enhancing children's literature through digital initiatives

Enhanced Research Impact 20%

Accessibility 20%

Cultural Preservation 20%

Publisher Engagement 20%

Collaboration 20%

Benefits of Institutional Repositories

1. **Accessibility** - Increases access to children's books in urban and remote areas.

2. **Cultural Preservation** - Digitises children's books in indigenous languages.

3. **Collaboration** - Encourages partnerships among libraries, educational institutions and cultural organisations.

4. **Publisher Engagement** - Provides publishers with a sustainable platform to archive and promote their work reaching new audiences and supporting long-term access.

5. **Enhanced Research Impact** - Increases the IRs' visibility and usage by hosting diverse, culturally relevant materials, attracting more researchers, educators and stakeholders to the repository.

Benefits of Institutional Repositories

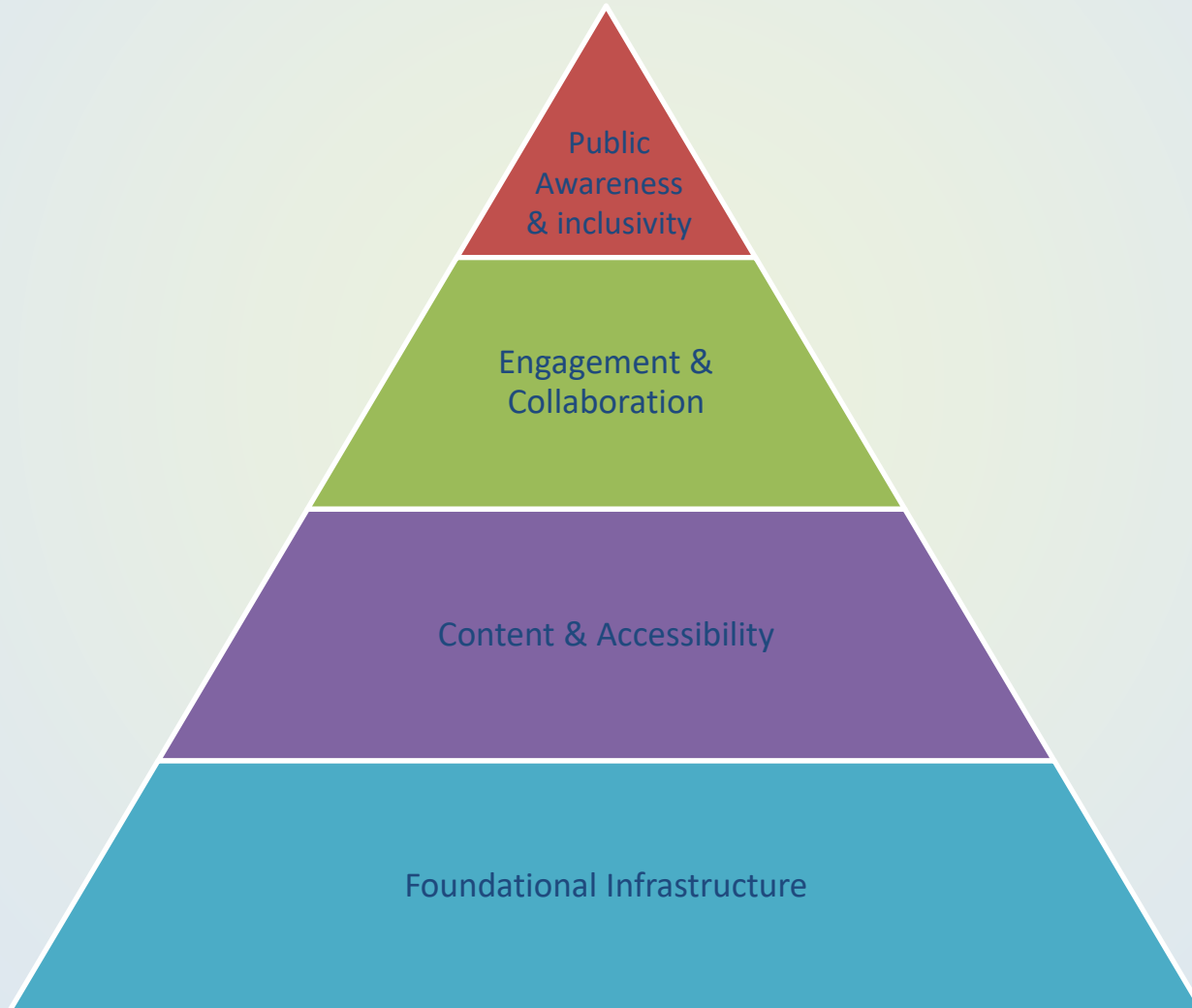# Challenges of Preserving Children's Literature in Institutional Repositories

1. **Digital Infrastructure** - Limited resources in under-resourced areas.

2. **Resource Allocation** - Need for funding to support preservation efforts.

3. **Lack of Awareness** – Lack of or low awareness of IRs among educators and the public.

4. **Copyright and Licensing** - Securing copyright permissions can be complex limiting accessible content.

5. **Language and Translation** - Translating and digitising in indigenous languages requires specialised resources.

6. **Content Quality Standards** - Maintaining high-quality, standardised digital formats requires technical expertise.

Challenges of Preserving Children's Literature in Institutional Repositories

7. **Digital Literacy** - Limited digital skills may hinder user engagement with IR resources.

8. **Privacy and Security** - Ensuring secure access and protecting user data, especially for young audiences is challenging.

9. **Repository Sustainability** - Ongoing costs for storage and upgrades strain resources especially for smaller IRs.

10. **Cultural Sensitivity** - Curating diverse, culturally representative content requires careful selection to avoid bias.

Recommendations

This pyramid structure visually emphasizes that strong infrastructure and dedicated resources are foundational, enabling effective content access, collaboration, and ultimately public awareness and inclusivity.

Recommendations

Foundational Infrastructure

❖ Investment in digital infrastructure to strengthen technology and resources especially in under-resourced areas.

❖ Dedicated IRs for children's literature to create repositories specifically focused on children's content for targeted preservation.

Content and Accessibility

❖ Multilingual digitisation projects to ensure access in multiple languages to cater to diverse audiences.

❖ Flexible licensing and copyright models to advocate for adaptable permissions to expand accessible content.

Engagement and Collaboration

❖ Collaborative initiatives among stakeholders to partner with schools, libraries and cultural institutions for resource sharing and support.

❖ Digital literacy programs to train educators and users to enhance engagement and digital competence.

Public Awareness and Inclusivity

❖ Public awareness campaigns to raise public and educator awareness of IRs for broader reach and usage.

❖ Cultural representation guidelines to curate content with inclusivity standards to ensure diverse cultural representation.

Conclusion - Summary

Vital Role in Preservation and Access

❖ IRs preserve culturally significant children's literature, especially in indigenous languages ensuring these stories are accessible to future generations.

Supports Literacy and Lifelong Learning

❖ By providing easy access to diverse high-quality resources, IRs empower educators, parents and community members to foster literacy from an early age.

Promotes Equity and Inclusivity

❖ IRs break down socio-economic barriers making children's literature available in both urban and remote areas creating equal opportunities for learning.

Encourages Cultural Continuity and Collaboration

❖ IRs allow cultural organisations, educational institutions and libraries to work together, promoting a reading culture and preserving heritage across South Africa's diverse linguistic landscape.

Conclusion – Future Outlook

Enhancing Digital Infrastructure

❖   Invest in technology to make IRs more accessible and sustainable.

Securing Funding

❖   Increase financial support for preservation and accessibility initiatives.

Expanding Multilingual Access

❖   Prioritise resources in indigenous languages to reach diverse audiences.

Fostering Collaboration and Literacy

❖   Strengthen partnerships among institutions to preserve cultural heritage and promote literacy, creating a more inclusive educational landscape.

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