JAMAICA CONTRIBUTION
OPEN ACCESS (OA) IN JAMAICA

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Hawthorne Watson, Manager, Information Services, Scientific Research Council, Jamaica
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Louis Pasteur (1822) stated that “Science knows no country because knowledge belongs to humanity and it is the torch which illuminates the world”1.

From this statement it could be inferred that people all over the world are entitled to access to information; though this should not be interpreted to mean freedom to access information.

The term Open Access (OA) as defined by the Open Institute Society in 2002 is “Melding of Tradition and Technology” where tradition has to do with publishing reports for the sake of inquiry and knowledge, while technology relates to the Internet and other publishing, distributing, indexing and retrieval tools.

In short it is “Anytime, Anywhere Access to research information”; labelled as Open Access.

According to the Budapest Open Access Initiative 2002, Open Access gives users and publishers the undermentioned rights, among others:

- To read, download, copy, distribute, search & print
- To link to the full texts of articles
- To crawl them for indexing
- To pass them as data to software
- To use them for any other lawful purpose
- Copyright obligations are met by acknowledgement & citation
- Authors control the integrity of their work (author owns copyright)
- The Primary target for OA is material published in peer-reviewed journals that ensure the quality of information1

In the context of this article, Open Access (OA) is taken to mean unrestricted access to and unrestricted reuse of original information or articles published in peer reviewed journals, books, monograms and other such formats over the Internet.

The term OA will also be expanded to include E-learning which in this paper means teaching and learning supported by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); the usual means of delivery being the Internet, intranet, TV, satellite, audio tapes, video tapes and CD-ROM.
Sources of Open Access in Jamaica

It is important to note that Jamaica is one of several Caribbean islands and it is neither unusual nor uncommon for institutions within the region, to form strategic alliances. In fact some entities such as the University of the West Indies and the West Indies Cricket Team are regional.

Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)

The Digital Library of the Caribbean was established on the basis that strategic alliances with peer libraries to share, preserve and provide online access to unique resources are important in establishing a modern day library service. dLOC is therefore a regionally integrated digital library that houses resources from and about the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean. It provides access to digitized versions of cultural, historical and research materials currently held in archives, libraries and private collections. Partners include the Calvin McKain Library of the University of Technology (UTech), the Belize National Library Service and Information System, and the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ). The reasonably vast Caribbean collections include newspapers, official documents, ecological and economic data, maps, histories, travel accounts, literature, poetry, musical expressions and artefacts.2

National Library of Jamaica (NLJ)

The National Library of Jamaica is mandated to be the repository of all information pertaining to Jamaica. The customary library software, CDS/ISIS is used to facilitate access to its catalogue as well as the databases of its other resources including manuscripts, posters, maps microfilms and audio-visual materials. In addition an innovative software the National Library of Jamaica Digital 2 (NLJD2) has been developed and is being used successfully to access digitized materials in-house through CDS/ISIS. This new software is intended for extramural and wider application.

University of the West Indies, (UWI) Mona Campus

The University of the West Indies at Mona offers the following.

“DSpace” at the university provides free access to the output from the institution mainly in the form of theses and articles; both of a multidisciplinary nature. The system allows users to establish RSS feeds to alert them of new postings.
The “Mona Online Research Database” provides access to the outputs of the university in the form of conferences, unpublished works, various articles and books. Some offerings are made in full-text.

“Open Journal System” (OJS) at UWI, Mona

The Open Journal System is a freely available journal management and publishing system which allows for local installation and control. Additionally it offers assistance from the submission of an article through to publishing and indexing.


E-Learning

Pioneering E-Learning in Jamaica perhaps dates back to the late 1950s. During that period Mr. Arthur Williams and his wife in their capacity as teachers, and as philanthropists, typed, and circulated information on all eight subjects taken in the Third Jamaica Local Examination, which was the final and major examination in elementary or government primary schools at the time. Carbon copy was the technology of the day.

Since then there have been significant advances in E-Learning in schools and universities in the Island.

E-Learning Project in schools

Acting on the recommendation of a 2004 Taskforce on Education which considered education a national priority, the then Ministry of Commerce and Technology and the Ministry of Education in 2005 decided to collaborate in using ICT to support Education. This decision gave birth to an E-Learning Project with a focus on Grades 7-11 students in high schools. Eleven subject areas were targeted.

Some accomplishments to date are:

- Development and distribution of the School Management Software, JSAS
- Over 95% of schools equipped with the requisite hardware and software
- Over 12,000 test items distributed on DVD and made available on the e-LJam website
- Just about 1400 educators and instructors certified in the integration of ICT

Results of the real impact can only be determined by surveys but at this point in time some benefits are obvious. Included are:
Heightened interest in learning
Greater interaction between teacher and student

Universities

Universities in Jamaica have a vested interest in E-Learning as many students are dispersed over wide geographical areas and in some cases islands located at considerable distances away. Such clientele because of various constraints including but not limited to geographical and financial as well as work and family related issues, might not otherwise be able to access the resources of the universities.

To some extent E-Learning is not only convenient; it is competition and survival driven.

This paper will reference only two of a few institutions offering distance education.

University of Technology (UTech)

Continuing Education Open and Distance Learning (CEODL)

The Continuing Education Open and Distance Learning Unit was developed to facilitate the expansion of learning opportunities through flexible access and delivery modes, including offerings by distance and continuing education. CEODL programmes and services are designed to respond primarily to non-traditional clientele throughout Jamaica, as well as in the wider Caribbean and indeed internationally. Programmes are developed and implemented in partnership with academic, business and professional communities.3,4,5

GDLN (Global Development Learning Network)

This network is multi-channelled, ICT based and interactive linking some learning centres and having the remit to facilitate dialogue and discussion among specialists in particular areas. Some such areas are Growth and Competiveness, HIV/AIDS, and persons with Disabilities, among others.

University of the West Indies (UWI)

CUPIDE (Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education)

CUPIDE was designed to enhance the institutional capacity of five Caribbean universities in regard to distance education. The institutions are University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Technology, Jamaica, University of Guyana, University of Suriname and the University of Quisqueya in Haiti.
Funds are provided by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust and managed by UNESCO and UWI.

**UWIDEC**

The founders of UWI could be considered visionaries as they envisaged that extra mural education was absolutely necessary if the institution was to reach potential clientele in some fourteen countries stretching from Belize in the north to Trinidad and Tobago in the south as well as Guyana on mainland South America. The establishment of the Extramural Department, now the School of Continuing Studies, from the inception was no accident or afterthought. One initiative; the Challenge Examination Scheme (1977-1984), allowed students in non-campus territories to sit Part I of degree courses without being on a campus.

In 1983 UWI initiated UWIDITE (UWI Distance Teaching Experiment—later Enterprise) a distance education course utilizing an audio teleconferencing system, supported by supplementary printed materials. Through this medium, education and training were provided to the Eastern Caribbean; much to the relief of persons who otherwise would be challenged to access tertiary education. Courses offered included Certificate in Business Administration and in Education as well as a number of outreach and related programmes in health, agriculture and education. Administrative meetings of the university were also facilitated.

An amalgamation of the Distance Education Unit, UWIDITE and the Challenge Scheme in 1996 gave rise to the entity UWIDEC or UWI Distance Education Centre.

In 2008 all outreach, teaching and public service areas were unified under one umbrella: the “Open Campus” - out of the Cave Hill Campus in Barbados.\(^6,7,8\)

Perhaps this article would be incomplete if mention was not made of two of several initiatives in the Caribbean which will impact Jamaica in terms of E-Learning.

**Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN)**

In November 2002 Prime Ministers of seven Eastern Caribbean states agreed with the World Bank that there was a pressing need to enhance regional competitiveness through upgrading and diversifying the skills and knowledge sets of the human resources at the tertiary level in the region through greater regional cooperation and connectivity. The programme got off the ground in 2004 with support from CIDA, EU, ICA, OAS, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank.
Some nine tertiary institutions have been assessed in regard to ICT infrastructure and competences.

**Open Access Repository for Scientific Information**

This is being established by the Caribbean Academy of Sciences (CAS) in collaboration with Caribbean and Latin American countries including Cuba, and Guatemala. It is supported by UNESCO.

The aim is to establish a virtual environment with open access to scientific and technical information, already available on the Internet but of special relevance and significance to the region.

Some disciplines identified initially are, Agriculture, Alternative Energy and Health Sciences to include Sickle Cell and lifestyle diseases such as Diabetes and Obesity.

It is hoped that the information will among other things, inform policy decisions for improved standards of living.

References

6. [http://www.dec.uwi.edu/about/history.php](http://www.dec.uwi.edu/about/history.php)
7. [http://www.open.uwi.edu/about/history](http://www.open.uwi.edu/about/history)
8. [http://www.open.uwi.edu](http://www.open.uwi.edu)

(STIN: Scientific and Technical Information Network comprising some thirty-five local S&T libraries)