

**ABSTRACT
PARALLEL WORKING SESSION**

UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & INNOVATION

Buhle Mbambo-Thata
Executive Director
University of South Africa

Information technology for 21st century African libraries: bringing the learning and research community into digital learning spaces

African Libraries have embraced technology to enhance the quality of their services and deliver modern services to support research, teaching and learning. They have “leap- frogged” their adoption of technology enabling them to utilise technology to harvest, harness and disseminate African content in digital spaces on one hand, and use wireless technology to deliver service on the other. Through use of open source technology African Libraries, have created digital repositories, commonly referred to as Institutional Repositories that contain intellectual outputs of African Universities. These not only enhance the availability of African scholarship in digital format, but they create opportunity for indigenous knowledge availability in digital format. Through wireless technology African libraries have increased reach and transfer information for learning in countries like Malawi, Nigeria and South Africa. This paper examines how libraries in higher learning adopt technology not only to modernise their libraries but to manage local content and use wireless technology to reach learners, teachers and researchers. The papers will examine the socio-economic aspects of information technology usage in African University Libraries and show how despite these economic challenges, African libraries have brought digital information to learners, teachers and researchers. The bulk of the paper will be based on a recent survey of the extent to which libraries in higher education institutions utilise technology. The survey sort to establish the prevalence of institutional repositories as research communication mechanisms, and to establish the extent of the adoption of mobile technology services in libraries in Africa. The conclusion of paper is that African libraries are utilizing technology to increase access local content and to enhance access to learning resources in Africa in diverse ways, thus bringing the African learning and research community into the 21st century into the knowledge society.