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Emmanuel Omeiza Momoh and Akinade Adebawale Adewojo

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The results indicate that institutional repositories are widely recognized and used across SUP member institutions, with a predominant focus on facilitating compliance with open access mandates, increasing research visibility, and managing diverse scholarly content. Survey data reveals high levels of daily repository engagement and confirms that repositories are considered effective tools for research dissemination, with most respondents noting improvements in institutional compliance and research visibility.

However, notable challenges persist, including limited integration of SUP-published outputs into institutional repositories, technical and usability barriers, concerns regarding copyright and intellectual property, and a general lack of researcher incentives or recognition.

The study recommended investments in training and outreach, improvements to repository usability, streamlined integration of SUP content, and the introduction of recognition or incentive schemes for researchers as strategies to mitigate the challenges.

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An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Institutional Repositories in Promoting Open Access: A Case Study of Scottish Universities Press Member Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of institutional repositories in promoting open access within the Scottish Universities Press (SUP) consortium, which operates a Diamond Open Access publishing model across twenty member institutions. The study aims to understand how repositories facilitate the visibility, accessibility, and preservation of scholarly outputs while supporting SUP's mandate for cost-free open access to research. Using a survey method, data was collected from fifteen respondents representing librarians, repository managers, research support staff, and members of the SUP management board, covering fourteen of the twenty member universities.

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However, notable challenges persist, including limited integration of SUP-published outputs into institutional repositories, technical and usability barriers, concerns regarding copyright and intellectual property, and a general lack of researcher incentives or recognition.

The study recommended investments in training and outreach, improvements to repository usability, streamlined integration of SUP content, and the introduction of recognition or incentive schemes for researchers as strategies to mitigate the challenges.

Keywords: institutional repositories, open access, Scottish Universities Press, Diamond Open Access, Scholarly communication, academic publishing

INTRODUCTION

In many academic institutions, faculty members conduct publicly funded studies aimed at addressing pressing social issues. These studies are often published under open access licenses and made freely available online. However, their ability to reach wider audiences depends on the systems used to store and share them. If placed in institutional repositories with limited visibility or poor metadata, their impact may be reduced.

Over the past two decades, the global scholarly communication landscape has undergone transformative change. The reasons for this transformation include, but are not limited to, rapid technological advancements and a growing demand for equitable access to knowledge (De Silva and Vance, 2017). These changes have exposed the limitations of traditional publishing systems, particularly their role in restricting access to research outputs. Consequently, there have been debates about who can access, publish, and benefit from academic knowledge, especially in light of the increasing commercialisation of scholarly publishing.

The traditional scholarly publishing system, historically controlled by commercial publishers, has functioned primarily through a pay-to-read model. Academic journals were generally accessed through institutional subscriptions, whereas academic monographs were sold on a per-title basis rather than by subscription. Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon (2015) highlight the high market concentration in scholarly publishing, where a few major publishers account for the majority of journal output globally. While this model remains profitable for commercial stakeholders, it has consistently restricted access to knowledge for individuals and institutions unable to afford rising subscription fees. Researchers in low- and middle-income countries, independent scholars, and even resource-constrained academic institutions in developed nations are often left at a significant disadvantage since they lack the financial capacity to purchase access to these essential resources (Willinsky, 2006; Suber, 2012; Larivière, Haustein & Mongeon, 2015).

In response to these limitations, the open access concept evolved, intending to make scholarly research freely and immediately available without legal or financial barriers. The open access concept is based on the principle that scholarly research, particularly that funded by public or charitable funds, should be made available freely and immediately to the public without financial, legal, or technical barriers. This is to promote transparency, accelerate innovation, and support access to scientific and academic knowledge. The Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI, 2002), one of the foundational and most influential declarations on open access, clearly articulated that publicly funded research should be freely accessible to all. This initiative has significantly shaped global policies and practices in scholarly publishing. Thus, open access aims not only to remove barriers to the accessibility of research but also to enhance the visibility, usage, and impact of scholarly outputs, thereby promoting innovation, facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration, and strengthening public engagement within the sciences and humanities (Piwowar et al., 2018).

OA manifests through several models, the most prominent being Gold Open Access, Green Open Access, and Diamond Open Access. Gold Open Access refers to publications made freely available immediately by the publisher, often requiring authors or their institutions to pay Article Processing Charges (APCs). Green Open Access, by contrast, involves self-archiving of author

manuscripts in digital repositories, typically institutional or subject-specific, either before or after peer review. The Diamond Open Access model, increasingly embraced by university presses and academic consortia, allows for free access to scholarly works without any charges to authors or readers and is often supported through institutional funding or consortia collaboration (Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013).

Institutional repositories occupy a central position among the infrastructural mechanisms supporting open access as they have become a foundational structure supporting Green Open Access and, increasingly, Diamond Open Access models. Various academic scholars have defined the concept of institutional repositories. In the opinion of Foster and Gibbons (2005), an institutional repository is a system that assists the process of capturing, managing, and providing access to digital products created by members of an academic community. Additionally, Adeoye, Adeoye, and Awojuola (2025), IRs serve as “*digital platforms for archiving and disseminating research outputs in universities*”. These materials are usually made available and accessible to users who are located within and outside the academic institutions. Materials in the repository may include peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, dissertations, datasets, and monographs.

Generally, the role of institutional repositories is multifaceted. Firstly, they serve as preservation tools, ensuring the long-term accessibility of scholarly work. Secondly, they act as dissemination channels, expanding the visibility and reach of academic outputs beyond the confines of paywalled journals and books. Thirdly, they contribute to institutional prestige by showcasing the research productivity of an institution’s faculty members and students (Ashikuzzaman, 2018). Specifically, institutional repositories are essential in supporting compliance with funder and government mandates regarding open access publication. For example, the United Kingdom’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) policy requires that, to be eligible for assessment, research outputs should be deposited in an open repository to be considered for assessment. These outputs are currently limited to journal articles and conference proceedings, but exclude monographs and book chapters. Nonetheless, the policy reinforces the strategic role of institutional repositories in advancing open access practices within academic institutions (REF, 2024).

The effectiveness of IRs depends on several interrelated factors. These include the quality of metadata, technological infrastructure, and interoperability protocols such as OAI-PMH and emerging linked data frameworks, which determine how effectively repositories connect with global OA networks and institutional workflows (Santos-Hermos, 2023, Pinfield Salter and Bath, 2017). It is then important to note that without active participation, well-designed repositories may struggle to fulfil their open access potential.

Across Europe, the importance of ensuring that academic books are as accessible as journal articles is increasingly recognized by funders and policymakers. Reports such as Geoffrey Crossick’s Monographs and Open Access (2015) have emphasized the need for inclusive open access strategies that encompass long-form scholarly works. This has been reinforced by initiatives like Plan S, which emphasize the importance of open access and provide a mandate that all publicly funded research be made available through open access platforms (European Science Foundation, 2025). Another initiative is the JISC Open Access Community Framework, which also advocates for a scalable and sustainable open access model for books and other monographs (JISC, 2025).

Monographs are essential in disciplines such as the humanities and social sciences, where they serve as the primary mode of scholarly communication. They nonetheless pose unique challenges for open access due to their length, high cost of production, and the lack of sustainable open access publishing models.

In response to these challenges, collaborative models have emerged to facilitate open access monograph publishing. One of such models is the Scottish Universities Press (SUP), a collaborative Open Access academic press established in the year 2022 by a consortium of nineteen Scottish HEIs libraries, including the University of Stirling, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of Dundee, and University of St Andrews. Recently, the University of Aberdeen joined the consortium, bringing the total number of member institutions to twenty (Walker, 2025). The press publishes peer-reviewed academic monographs across disciplines and ensures that all its outputs are made available online free of charge under Creative Commons licenses. SUP operates under a Diamond Open Access model, whereby scholarly books are made freely accessible without requiring publication fees from authors or their institutions (SUP, 2025). This model aims to remove financial and structural barriers to publishing, making high-quality academic monographs widely available to the global scholarly community. SUP's mission closely aligns with the principles of open scholarship, and it represents an innovative effort to democratize scholarly publishing through inter-institutional cooperation.

Complementing SUP's publishing activities are the institutional repositories hosted by member universities, such as the Edinburgh Research Archive at the University of Edinburgh (University of Edinburgh, 2025) and Enlighten at the University of Glasgow (University of Glasgow, 2025). These repositories function as important digital infrastructures that support open access by hosting journal articles, datasets, monographs, and grey literature. By archiving SUP-published books and making them discoverable via repositories and aggregators like CORE (CORE, 2025), OpenAIRE (OpenAIRE, 2025), and OAIster (OAIster, 2025), these institutional repositories enhance the reach, discoverability, and impact of scholarly outputs globally. However, the degree to which these institutional repositories effectively support SUP's open access mission remains underexplored in current literature. While policy frameworks and technical standards for repository operations exist, factors such as low awareness, unclear deposit policies, lack of incentives, and the absence of user-centered repository design have been cited as barriers to widespread adoption (Wheeler et al. 2022, Swan et al., 2015). In some cases, institutional repositories are underutilized by academic staff due to a lack of awareness, training, or incentive structures. In some others, the disjointed nature of repository software and metadata consistency limits their effectiveness and discoverability across institutions and platforms.

The connection between institutional repositories and new collaborative open access publishing initiatives, such as Scottish Universities Press, offers an important area for study. The Scottish higher education system is well known for its strong support of Open Access and its investment in digital infrastructure, as outlined in the Scottish Funding Council's strategic priorities (Scottish Funding Council, 2022). This makes it a useful setting for studying how institutional repositories work with collaborative open access publishing models. As SUP works to grow its reach and reputation as a publisher of open access monographs, it is important to understand how its member institutions use their repositories to support and promote open access. This understanding can help improve strategies for increasing the visibility and impact of open

access publications. Moreover, as a relatively recent initiative, SUP is still in the early stages of establishing its workflows, branding, and impact metrics, making it a timely and rich subject for academic inquiry. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the role and effectiveness of institutional repositories in advancing open access within the context of a collaborative academic publishing initiative: the Scottish Universities Press.

STUDY SETTING

The setting for this study is the SUP, a fully open access publishing initiative coordinated by the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries (SCURL). SUP is collaboratively managed by twenty academic libraries across Scotland and operates on a not-for-profit basis. It provides a fair, sustainable, and cost-effective publishing infrastructure that supports researchers in making their work openly accessible to a global audience, thereby enhancing the visibility and impact of academic research while meeting funder requirements (SUP, 2025).

The publishing process is designed to be transparent, timely, and supportive, with a typical timeline of 12–14 weeks from submission to decision. Authors retain copyright under a Creative Commons license, and the press supports multiple digital and print formats (SUP, 2025). This is part of SCURL's broader mission to support collaborative service development across Scotland's academic and research libraries. This includes shared infrastructure for institutional repositories.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Institutional repositories (IRs) are widely recognized as essential tools for promoting access to scholarly outputs within academic institutions. Their primary role is to increase the visibility, accessibility, and long-term preservation of research. In the context of the SUP, a collaborative publishing initiative committed to advancing open access, the influence of institutional repositories in promoting open access has not been sufficiently examined. Although the collaborative model is intended to promote shared resources and collective impact, it is unclear how effectively it supports repository adoption, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with institutional policies. This lack of clarity presents a significant gap in the existing literature. This study will explore how effective these repositories are in promoting open access, what challenges they face, and how institutional and collaborative structures help or limit their success.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How effective are institutional repositories at Scottish Universities Press (SUP) member institutions in promoting open access?
2. In what ways does the collaborative model of the SUP support or enhance the effectiveness of these repositories?
3. What are the key benefits of using institutional repositories for managing and disseminating research outputs at SUP member institutions?
4. What challenges do SUP member institutions face in promoting open access through their institutional repositories?

5. What strategies can be proposed to address the challenges faced by SUP member institutions in promoting open access?

REVIEW OF RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Gargouri et al. (2010) found that articles deposited in institutional repositories received more citations, especially when deposits were mandated. However, their study did not consider how institutional policies or collaborative structures influence repository outcomes, which is central to the focus of this research.

Eysenbach (2006) used a matched-pair design to compare open access and non-open access articles within the same journal. The results confirmed that open access articles were cited more frequently and earlier. Antelman (2004) also found consistent citation advantages across four disciplines. These studies helped justify the focus on repository effectiveness, but they did not investigate the institutional or policy-level mechanisms that support repository use. Their narrow scope left questions about how coordinated strategies, such as those used by SUP, might amplify these benefits.

Palmer, Tefreau and Newton (2008) examined how institutional repositories develop and operate at three U.S. research universities. They found that faculty engagement, librarian outreach and practical needs such as visibility and preservation strongly influence repository success, while low awareness, usability issues, and inconsistent policies limit adoption. Although their study highlights the importance of aligning repository services with researcher needs, it focuses on single institutions and does not address cross-institution collaboration.

Bankier and Perciali (2008) examined the role of institutional repositories in advancing Open Access and argued that traditional repository models have not fully met the needs of academic communities, largely due to low faculty participation and limited engagement strategies. Their study highlighted that many repositories are perceived primarily as passive archiving platforms rather than as active tools for scholarly visibility and communication. The authors proposed a reimagining of repositories to function not only as storage mechanisms but also as dynamic platforms that support academic profiling and the publication of open-access journals.

Pinfield, Cox, and Smith (2014) used document analysis and interviews to study UK consortia. They found that collaboration helped institutions share infrastructure and expertise, which improved repository services. Their findings supported the idea that shared governance can enhance repository effectiveness. However, they did not examine how collaboration affects researcher engagement within member institutions. Cond, Bhopalwala, and Guagnini (2023) added to this by showing that flexible frameworks and shared principles promote equity and knowledge sharing.

Lazarenko et al. (2022) surveyed Eastern European universities and found that institutional repositories play a critical role in long-term preservation and copyright compliance. Their study was relevant for understanding how repositories support legal and archival functions, especially in systems like SUP that must meet national assessment requirements. Darragh et al. (2024), in a report involving 17 U.S. universities, found that repositories reduce the administrative burden on researchers by providing technical infrastructure and curatorial support. Ma, Buggle, and O'Neill (2023) focused on library-led publishing initiatives and argued that institutional repositories

support biblio-diversity by enabling the dissemination of monographs, grey literature, and outputs from underrepresented disciplines.

Narayan and Luca (2017) used interviews and document analysis to explore researcher engagement with a university repository in Australia. They found that low awareness, copyright confusion, and poor usability were major barriers. Lovett et al. (2017) surveyed faculty at the University of Rhode Island and found that many researchers preferred commercial platforms like ResearchGate due to their ease of use and visibility. These studies highlighted the importance of technical design and institutional communication. Demetres et al. (2020) added further nuance through a mixed-methods study involving medical faculty. Their research revealed that “time constraints, copyright uncertainty, and lack of incentives remain widespread,” suggesting that technical improvements alone are insufficient. Instead, they argued for stronger institutional support and clearer policy frameworks. These conclusions reinforce the need for coordinated outreach and policy alignment, strategies that are central to the SUP model and are explored in this study through stakeholder feedback and institutional analysis.

Cullen and Chawner (2011), based on a survey of New Zealand academics, recommended integrating OA education into research training and linking repository use to academic incentives. They argued that linking repository deposit requirements to academic promotion can serve as a strong incentive. Welhouse and Boock (2023), in a faculty survey at Oregon State University, found that while faculty value OA, many lack detailed awareness of institutional policies. Pinfield, Salter, and Bath (2017), analysing UK university policies, demonstrated that institutions with clear mandates and strong library support achieved higher deposit rates. Further evidence of these challenges is found in Jamali and Nabavi (2015), who analysed full-text availability in Google Scholar across disciplines. They found that access varied significantly due to disciplinary norms, copyright restrictions, and platform credibility. Their study highlighted fragmentation in the open access infrastructure and uneven engagement across fields.

Previous studies on open access and institutional repositories (IRs) have largely focused on single-institution contexts, emphasising benefits such as increased visibility, preservation and compliance with funder mandates. However, the literature pays limited attention to collaborative, consortia-based models like Scottish Universities Press (SUP) or how shared governance shapes repository performance. Research has also overlooked the role of IRs in supporting monographs, despite their importance in disciplines where long-form scholarship dominates. Similarly, little is known about how repositories are coordinated across institutions to align policies, enhance visibility and support shared publishing goals. These gaps informed the direction of this study by highlighting the need to examine how SUP’s collaborative structure, stakeholder engagement and shared infrastructure influence open access practices and repository effectiveness across member institutions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a quantitative research design using structured questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of institutional repositories in promoting open access within Scottish Universities Press (SUP) member institutions. The target population includes Management and Editorial Board Members of SUP, Librarians, Repository Managers, and Research Support Staff across participating institutions. These groups were selected because they are directly involved in the creation, management, and use of institutional repositories, making their perspectives essential to

the study's objectives. A census approach was employed to ensure that all eligible participants within this population were included, allowing for comprehensive and representative data collection.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study followed strict ethical standards. Participants gave informed consent and were free to withdraw at any point. Their identities were protected through full anonymisation, and all data was securely stored and handled to maintain confidentiality.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data for this study was obtained using a structured online questionnaire. Different types of Likert scales were used depending on the nature of each question. The instrument covered areas such as respondent background, use of institutional repositories, collaborative publishing practices, and open access strategies.

A total of 15 responses were received, representing 14 out of the 20 SUP member institutions, resulting in an institutional participation rate of 70%. The response rate was calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Response Rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of Responding Institutions}}{\text{Total Number of Institutions Surveyed}} \times 100$$

Where:

Number of Responding Institutions = 14

Total Number of Institutions Surveyed = 20

The data collected was analysed using Microsoft Excel software application.

Table 1: Institutional Affiliation of Respondents

SERIAL NUMBER	INSTITUTION NAME	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1	Robert Gordon University	1
2	University of Aberdeen	1
3	University of the West of Scotland	1
4	University of St Andrews	1
5	Edinburgh Napier University	1
6	University of Glasgow	1

7	University of the Highlands & Islands	1
8	SRUC (Scotland's Rural College)	1
9	The Open University	1
10	Glasgow School of Art	1
11	University of Stirling	1
12	Glasgow Caledonian University	1
13	University of Edinburgh	1
14	Queen Margaret University	2
15	Queens University Belfast	0
16	Heriot-Watt University	0
17	University of Dundee	0
18	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	0
19	University of Strathclyde	0
20	Abertay University	0

Table 2: Respondents' Professional Roles

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Librarian/Repository Manager/Research Support Staff	8	53
SUP Management Board Member	6	40
Others (repository developer)	1	7

Table 3: Distribution of Repository Deposit

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	3	20
Daily	12	80

Table 4: Repository Usage Data Collection Approaches

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, both internal and external	9	60
Only external	4	27
No data collected	3	20

Table 5: Interval for Recording Repository Usage Data

Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	8	53
Monthly	4	27
Never	2	13
Yearly	1	7

Table 6: Routine Access Patterns for Repository Materials

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	9	60
Weekly	4	27
Monthly	1	7
Rarely	1	7

Table 7: Main Categories of Content Deposited in Repositories

Content Type	Frequency	Percentage
Peer-reviewed journal articles	15	22
Conference Proceedings	12	18
Theses/Dissertations	11	16
Research Datasets	5	7
Monographs/Books	8	12
Technical Reports	10	15
Multimedia Content	3	4
Others (Creative Practice Research Websites)	1	4

Table 8: Primary Motivators for Work Deposited in the Repository

Motivator	Frequency	Percentage
Compliance with OA policies	15	30
Increased Visibility	14	28
Institutional Requirements	14	28
Long-term preservation	6	12
Others (personal development review and promotion)	1	2

Table 9: Effectiveness of the Repository in Promoting Open Access

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	47
Agree	7	47
Disagree	1	7

Table 10: Level of Success in Managing and Disseminating Research Outputs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	7	47
Effective	5	33
Moderately Effective	3	20

Table 11: Reported Changes in Research Visibility and Citation Rates

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Somewhat increased	8	53
No change	5	33
Significantly increased	2	13

Table 12: Effect on Institutional Compliance with Open Access Mandates

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes significantly	12	80
Yes somewhat	3	20

Table 13: SUP Collaboration's Influence on Institutional Open Access

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Cost-effective OA publishing	7	23
Encouraged policy alignment on open access	5	17
Increased visibility of research outputs	2	7
Supported cost-effective OA publishing (Diamond OA)	7	23
Enhanced repository usage and integration	1	3
Strengthened compliance with funder mandates	3	10
Promoted shared infrastructure for digital preservation	4	13
Others	1	3

Table 14: Integration of SUP-Published Outputs with Repository Systems

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not integrated	9	60
Fully integrated	4	27
Partially integrated	2	13

Table 15: Top Challenges Experienced in Open Access Promotion

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of awareness among researchers	8	21
Platform usability or technical issues	4	11
Copyright/Intellectual Property Concerns	7	18
Time Constraints for researchers	12	32
Lack of incentives	3	18
Others	4	11

Table 16: Reported Reasons for Reluctance to Deposit Research

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Concerns about copyright/intellectual property	7	24
Lack of understanding of repository benefits	8	28
Preference for traditional publishing routes	3	10
Perceived low prestige of open access	2	7
Technical difficulties	3	10
Others	6	21

Table 17: Strategies Selected to Enhance Repository Use and Engagement

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Training and Workshops	8	20
Streamlined submission process	5	13
Recognition or incentives	7	18
Improved technical support	4	10
Clearer policies on copyright/intellectual property	5	13
Sharing evidence of open access impact	8	20
Others	3	8

Table 18: Institutional Support Needs for SUP Alignment

Type of Support	Frequency	Percentage
Training for researchers and staff on repository use and open access	7	23
Improved technical infrastructure for repository integration	5	16
Clearer guidelines and policies from SUP	2	6
Financial support for repository development and management	7	23
Greater communication and engagement from SUP leadership	1	3
Enhanced metadata standards and discoverability tools	1	3
Dedicated staff for repository management	5	16

Table 19: User-Friendliness of Institutional Repository Platforms

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	2	13
Good	6	40
Fair	7	47

Table 20: Support Needed to Boost Alignment with SUP Open Access Goals

Type of Support	Frequency	Percentage
More training on how to use the institutional repository	3	10
Better technical support for uploading and managing research	5	16

Clearer guidelines on copyright and publishing rights	3	10
Help with understanding and managing publisher waiting periods before making work openly available (previously called “embargoes”)	3	10
Incentives or recognition for researchers who share their work openly	11	35
Stronger institutional policies that encourage open access	4	13
Others (regular review of policies and procedures to ensure compliance)	2	6

Table 21: Policies on IR Usage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, policies that encourage and support repository use	14	93
Yes, policies that make it difficult or limit repository use	0	0
No, there are no specific policies related to repository use	0	0
I am not sure / I don't know	1	7

Table 22: Best Practice to Enhance Repository Effectiveness

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Offering incentives or recognition for repository contributions	1	4
Having clear, easy-to-follow policies on open access	7	27
Using user-friendly repository software or platforms	3	12
Running awareness campaigns about the benefits of open access	5	19
Collaborating with other institutions on shared repository goals	5	19
Others	5	19

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

RQ 1: How Effective Are Institutional Repositories At SUP Member Institutions In Promoting Open Access?

Institutional repositories at SUP member institutions effectively promote open access, as evidenced by Table 9 where 14 out of 15 respondents agree or strongly agree with this assessment. This aligns with the findings of Gargouri et al. (2010), Eysenbach (2006), and Antelman (2004) who demonstrate a correlation between mandated deposits and increased citation rates. Additionally, Palmer et al. (2008) highlighted factors such as usability and active engagement as critical to repository success, while Lynch (2003) and Ma et al. (2023) describe repositories as dynamic platforms advancing transparency, preservation, and research diversity. Furthermore, Table 12 shows that 80% of respondents note significant improvements in compliance with open access mandates due to repository use, aligning with the Diamond OA model embraced by SUP. This implies that SUP's institutional repositories do more than store content, they are strategic tools that drive open access and compliance through coordinated governance, effective policies, and shared infrastructure.

RQ 2: In What Ways Does The Collaborative Model Of The SUP Support Or Enhance The Effectiveness Of These Repositories?

The collaborative model of the Scottish Universities Press (SUP) significantly supports and enhances the effectiveness of institutional repositories at its member institutions. As shown in Table 13, 23% of respondents highlight SUP's role in promoting cost-effective OA publishing, 23% note support for Diamond OA publishing, 17% mention encouragement of policy alignment on open access, and 13% emphasize promotion of shared infrastructure for digital preservation. This collaborative approach helps optimize resources and streamline repository management across institutions, strengthening collective capabilities beyond what single entities could achieve. This aligns with the findings of Pinfield, Cox, and Smith (2014), who emphasize that consortium collaboration enables institutions to share expertise, infrastructure, and governance, which directly improves repository services and sustainability. Similarly, Cond, Bhopalwala, and Guagnini indicate that “*regular knowledge-sharing among UK university presses has taken place over many decades*”. As such, flexible frameworks and shared principles within consortia promote equity, knowledge sharing, and consistency. Moreover, the SUP model aligns with emerging community-led infrastructures that prioritize transparency and non-commercial dissemination, as noted by Shearer et al. (2020). According to them:

Many library consortia and universities are advancing a strategy to transition to full open access, which involves negotiating so-called “transformational agreements” with publishers that repurposes their subscription expenditures to cover the costs of open access publishing.

Table 14 reveals that while integration of SUP outputs into local repositories is limited, with 60% reporting no integration, this collaborative structure provides a foundation for improved interoperability. Additionally, the model facilitates compliance with funder mandates (Table 12), supporting institutional strategies to meet open access requirements efficiently.

These findings imply that collaborative consortia models like SUP play a vital role in advancing equitable and sustainable open access publishing, promoting more inclusive scholarly communication and potentially reshaping academic publishing practices more broadly.

RQ 3: What Are The Key Benefits Of Using Institutional Repositories For Managing And Disseminating Research Outputs At SUP Member Institutions?

IRs at SUP member institutions offer key benefits in managing and disseminating research outputs, reflected by the diverse and significant types of content deposited. According to Table 7, these repositories house a variety of scholarly materials, including peer-reviewed journal articles (22%), conference proceedings (18%), and theses/dissertations (16%), along with monographs, datasets, and multimedia. Through this, IRs contribute to long-term preservation and infrastructural sustainability, employing FAIR principles (Wilkinson et al., 2016) that ensure research outputs remain findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable.

IRs also play a crucial role in helping institutions comply with open access policies, which motivate 30% of deposits according to Table 8, while 80% of respondents report improved mandate compliance due to IR use (Table 12). Furthermore, more than half note increases in research visibility and citations linked to repository deposits (Table 11), confirming findings from prior studies (Gargouri et al., 2010; Eysenbach, 2006).

These results show that SUP's IR network helps institutions work together to make research openly available and easy to find. By sharing resources and policies, SUP helps universities save costs and better manage research outputs in ways that support open access principles. This collective effort aligns with global movements aiming to make academic publishing more open, fair, and sustainable.

RQ 4: What Challenges Do SUP Member Institutions Face In Promoting Open Access Through Their Institutional Repositories?

SUP member institutions face several key challenges in promoting open access through institutional repositories. The most reported barrier is time constraints, with 80% of researchers citing limited capacity to deposit and manage outputs (Table 15). Lack of awareness (21%) and understanding (28%) of repository benefits also reduces engagement. Nearly a quarter of respondents raised concerns about copyright and intellectual property, while technical issues and poor platform usability continue to hinder smooth operation. The absence of incentives and recognition further discourages regular use (Tables 15 & 16).

These aligns with the findings of Narayan and Luca (2017) who noted that insufficient understanding of repository advantages undermines deposit rates. Dawson and Yang (2016) discuss how ambiguous copyright policies create apprehension. Palmer et al. (2008) underscore how complex, non-intuitive repository platforms hinder usability, pushing researchers toward more user-friendly but less policy-aligned alternatives like ResearchGate (Lovett et al., 2017).

RQ 5: What Strategies Can Be Proposed To Address The Challenges Faced By SUP Member Institutions In Promoting Open Access?

Based on the findings, 20% of respondents emphasize training and workshops, 23% request financial support alongside training for repository use, and 35% prioritize incentives or recognition

for researchers sharing work openly (Tables 17, 18 and 20). Additionally, 13% highlight the need for clearer copyright policies, which responds to the 18-24% citing copyright and intellectual property concerns as barriers (Tables 15, 16 and 20). Usability remains a concern, with 47% rating repository platforms only as fair and 32% recognizing time constraints as a major challenge, underscoring the need for streamlined technical support (Tables 15 and 19). The presence of supportive institutional policies (Table 21) provides a strong foundation for these interventions, while collaboration and shared infrastructure, valued by 19% of respondents, further enable consistent practices across SUP (Table 22). These findings align with studies by Demetres et al. (2020), who emphasize the critical role of institutional support and incentives, Pinfield, Cox, & Smith (2014), who highlight how shared governance improves repository effectiveness; and Gargouri et al. (2010), who demonstrate how mandated repositories increase research visibility and impact.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the effectiveness of institutional repositories in promoting open access across Scottish Universities Press (SUP) member institutions. The findings show that repositories are widely used to share peer-reviewed articles, increase research visibility, and meet open access requirements, with journals and conference papers being the most common deposits. Despite regular daily use, challenges remain, including platform usability issues, limited integration of SUP-published outputs, unclear policies, and low incentives for researchers. Consequently, the study recommends the following:

- Regular and structured training programmes are essential to strengthen researchers understanding of open access, copyright, and repository deposit procedures across disciplines.
- Targeted outreach strategies should be adopted to improve awareness of repository benefits and address discipline-specific concerns and practices.
- Stronger integration of SUP-published outputs is required, supported by coordinated workflows and the use of consistent metadata standards across institutions.
- Incentive mechanisms should be embedded within institutional systems, including formal recognition, awards, or links to performance and research assessment processes, to motivate researcher participation.
- Collaboration among SUP member institutions should be strengthened through shared technical expertise, aligned open access policies, and joint support structures.
- Sustainable funding and adequate staffing must be prioritised to ensure the long-term management, maintenance, and development of institutional repositories.
- Institutional open access policies should be clearly articulated and effectively communicated to simplify submission processes and support researcher compliance.
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of repository usage should be implemented to inform continuous improvement, demonstrate impact, and support REF-related reporting.

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