

INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

LOS REPOSITARIOS INSTITUCIONALES EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES NIGERIANAS: DESAFÍOS Y OPORTUNIDADES

REPOSITÓRIOS INSTITUCIONAIS EM UNIVERSIDADES NIGERIANAS: DESAFIOS E OPORTUNIDADES

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ABSTRACT: This article presents an overview of the current state of Institutional Repositories (IRs) in Nigerian universities, based on a comprehensive, evidence-based review of the history of IR usage in Nigeria, the key factors contributing to their underutilization, and the various opportunities available to promote their use—aiming to enhance academic output, improve university rankings, and strengthen the country's national knowledge infrastructure. Some of the original data used to produce this article includes recent activities by Nigerian academic librarians at the 114th Biannual Conference of the Association of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (AULNU), held in Abuja in May 2026. The text concludes that progress has been made in structuring Institutional Repositories in Nigeria, although further advancement is still required.

Keywords: institutional repositories; open access; Nigerian universities; scholarly communication; digital preservation.

RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta una visión general del estado actual de los Repositorios Institucionales (RI) en las universidades nigerianas, basada en una revisión exhaustiva y fundamentada en la evidencia sobre la historia del uso de los RI en Nigeria, los principales factores que conducen a su subutilización y las diversas oportunidades disponibles para promover su uso en el país, con el objetivo de mejorar la producción académica en las universidades nigerianas, elevar los rankings universitarios y fortalecer la infraestructura nacional del conocimiento. Algunos de los datos originales utilizados para generar este artículo incluyen la actividad más reciente de los bibliotecarios académicos nigerianos en la 114.^a Conferencia Bienal de la Asociación de Bibliotecarios Universitarios de las Universidades Nigerianas (AULNU), celebrada en Abuja en mayo de 2026. El texto concluye que se han logrado avances en la estructuración de los Repositorios Institucionales en Nigeria, aunque aún es necesario seguir progresando.

Palabras clave: repositorios institucionales; acceso abierto; universidades nigerianas; comunicación académica; preservación digital.

RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta um panorama do estado atual dos Repositórios Institucionais (RI) nas universidades nigerianas, com base em uma revisão abrangente e fundamentada em evidências sobre o histórico de uso de RI na Nigéria, os principais fatores que levam à sua subutilização e as diversas oportunidades disponíveis para promover o uso de RI na Nigéria, visando aprimorar a produção acadêmica nas universidades nigerianas, melhorar o ranking universitário e fortalecer a infraestrutura nacional de conhecimento do país. Alguns dos dados originais utilizados para gerar este artigo incluem a atividade mais recente de bibliotecários acadêmicos nigerianos na 114ª Conferência Bianual da Associação de Bibliotecários Universitários das Universidades Nigerianas (AULNU), realizada em Abuja, em maio de 2026. O texto permite concluir que tem ocorrido avanços na estruturação do Repositórios Institucionais na Nigéria, embora ainda haja a necessidade de continuar avançando.

Palavras-chave: repositórios institucionais; acesso aberto; universidades nigerianas; comunicação acadêmica; preservação digital.

Introdução

The concept of the institutional repository emerged at the intersection of two powerful forces that have reshaped global academia in the twenty-first century: the digital revolution in information storage and transmission, and the open access movement that challenged the model of restricting scholarly knowledge behind commercial paywalls. An institutional repository (IR) is a digital archive maintained by a university or research institution to capture, organize, preserve, and disseminate the intellectual output generated by its members, including postgraduate theses and dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, technical reports, working papers, and datasets. The defining feature of the IR is that all content is made freely accessible to any person anywhere in the world with an internet connection, without subscription fees or access barriers.

The philosophical foundation of the institutional repository rests on the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) of February 2002, which called upon scholars, institutions, and governments worldwide to support the unrestricted online availability of peer-reviewed research through two complementary strategies: the “gold” route of open access journal publication, and the “green” route of self-archiving in institutional repositories. When the Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR)—maintained by the SHERPA service at the University of Nottingham and funded by Jisc—launched in 2005, it listed just 89 repositories worldwide. By August 2023, that number had grown to approximately 5,982

(OpenDOAR, 2023), a remarkable expansion reflecting the global transformation of scholarly communication.

Nigeria operates the largest university system in sub-Saharan Africa, with over 270 universities accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC) as of 2026, enrolling millions of students and employing tens of thousands of academic staff across every discipline. Yet the country generates enormous volumes of research output that remain largely invisible to the global scholarly community—physically confined to university library shelves, uncatalogued in international databases, and inaccessible to researchers outside the specific institutions where they were produced. As of June 2026, only 39 Nigerian repositories appear in OpenDOAR (OpenDOAR, 2026), meaning that more than 85 per cent of Nigerian universities operate without any registered open access repository. This article provides a comprehensive, evidence-based review of this situation, examining historical development, technical landscape, challenges, and opportunities.

Current status: Nigeria’s repositories

A direct query of the OpenDOAR database on 6 June 2026 returns 39 repositories registered for Nigeria (OpenDOAR, 2026), representing an increase of 8 repositories from the 31 recorded in November 2023 (Ezema & Eze, 2024). The registered repositories include university-based institutional repositories, specialized repositories such as the African Digital Health Library at the University of Ibadan and the UDUS Open Educational Resources at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, and governmental repositories including the Repository of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the National Repository of Nigeria. Table 1 contains a summary of the institutions with registered repositories.

Table 1 - Institutions with registered repositories

#	Repository Name · Institution	Type	Platform	Geo-Zone	OpenDOAR Reference
► SECTION A: UNIVERSITY-BASED REPOSITORIES (36 entries)					
1	ACU Repository <i>Ajayi Crowther University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	repository.acu.edu.ng
2	AUST Institutional Repository <i>African University of Science and Technology</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	repository.aust.edu.ng/xmlui
3	Afe Babalola University Repository <i>Afe Babalola University</i>	Institutional	EPrints	South-West	eprints.abuad.edu.ng
4	African Digital Health Library <i>University of Ibadan</i>	Specialised	DSpace	South-West	adhui.com.ui.edu.ng

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Ibrahim Oladimeji Lateef • Claudio Pinto Nunes

#	Repository Name · Institution	Type	Platform	Geo-Zone	OpenDOAR Reference
5	African Digital Health Library (College of Medicine) <i>University of Ibadan</i>	Specialised	DSpace	South-West	sherpa.ac.uk/id/repository/4700
6	Ambrose Alli University Institutional Repository <i>Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-South	154.68.224.61:8080
7	American University of Nigeria Digital Repository <i>American University of Nigeria</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-East	digitallibrary.aun.edu.ng:8080/xmlui
8	Bells University of Technology Repository <i>Bells University of Technology</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	ir.bellsuniversity.edu.ng
9	Benue State University Institutional Repository <i>Benue State University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	bsuir.bsum.edu.ng
10	Bingham University Digital Repository <i>Bingham University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	34.29.95.55:8080/xmlui
11	Covenant University Repository <i>Covenant University</i>	Institutional	EPrints	South-West	eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng
12	Covenant University ETD Repository <i>Covenant University</i>	Theses & Dissertations	EPrints	South-West	sherpa.ac.uk/id/repository/2631
13	Theses & Dissertations <i>Covenant University</i>	Theses & Dissertations	DSpace	South-West	theses.covenantuniversity.edu.ng
14	Ebonyi State University Digital Repository <i>Ebonyi State University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-East	ebsu-ir.dspace.org
15	EUSpace <i>Elizade University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	repository.elizadeuniversity.edu.ng
16	FUNAI Repository Archive <i>Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-East	dspace.funai.edu.ng/xmlui
17	dspace.funai.edu.ng <i>Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-East	dspace.funai.edu.ng
18	FUTOSpace Repository <i>Federal University of Technology, Owerri</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-East	repository.futo.edu.ng
19	Federal University Dutsin-ma Institutional Repository <i>Federal University Dutsin-Ma</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-West	dspace.fudutsinma.edu.ng/jspui
20	Federal University Lokoja Institutional Repository <i>Federal University Lokoja</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	repository.fulokoja.edu.ng
21	Federal University Oye-Ekiti Institutional Repository <i>Federal University Oye-Ekiti</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	repository.fuoye.edu.ng
22	Federal University of Technology, Minna IR <i>Federal University of Technology, Minna</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	dspace.futminna.edu.ng/jspui
23	Fountain University Institutional Repository <i>Fountain University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	repository.fuo.edu.ng
24	Futaspace <i>Federal University of Technology, Akure</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	futaspace.futa.edu.ng:8080/xmlui
25	Landmark University Repository <i>Landmark University</i>	Institutional	EPrints	South-West	eprints.lmu.edu.ng

#	Repository Name · Institution	Type	Platform	Geo-Zone	OpenDOAR Reference
26	Nasarawa State University Keffi Repository <i>Nasarawa State University, Keffi</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	keffi.nsuk.edu.ng/home
27	Open Access IR at Ahmadu Bello University <i>Ahmadu Bello University</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-West	kubanni.abu.edu.ng/home
28	Open Resources <i>University of Nigeria, Nsukka</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-East	unn.edu.ng/chart/repo
29	University of Nigeria Nsukka IR <i>University of Nigeria, Nsukka</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-East	www.repository.unn.edu.ng
30	UDUSpace Repository <i>Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-West	repository.udusok.edu.ng
31	UILSPACE <i>University of Ilorin</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	uilspace.unilorin.edu.ng/home
32	University of Abuja Institutional Repository <i>University of Abuja</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	repository.uniabuja.edu.ng
33	University of Ibadan Repository <i>University of Ibadan</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	ir.library.ui.edu.ng
34	University of Ilorin Institutional Repository <i>University of Ilorin</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	uilspace.unilorin.edu.ng:8081/jspui
35	University of Jos Institutional Repository <i>University of Jos</i>	Institutional	DSpace	North-Central	irepos.unijos.edu.ng/jspui
36	University of Lagos Institutional Repository <i>University of Lagos</i>	Institutional	DSpace	South-West	ir.unilag.edu.ng
► SECTION B: NON-UNIVERSITY REPOSITORIES · Governmental & Aggregating (3 entries)					
37	Repository of the Central Bank of Nigeria <i>Central Bank of Nigeria</i>	Governmental	DSpace	National	library.cbn.gov.ng:8092/jspui
38	National Repository of Nigeria <i>Federal Government of Nigeria</i>	Governmental	DSpace	National	nigeriareposit.nln.gov.ng
39	NIRIS — Nigerian Research & Education Network <i>NIREN</i>	Aggregating	N/A	National	niris.ngren.edu.ng

Source: The authors.

The breadth of these non-university repositories is itself noteworthy: the existence of a National Repository of Nigeria signals an ambition for national-level open access aggregation that, if properly resourced and mandated, could serve as a critical piece of the country's knowledge infrastructure.

However, with over 270 accredited universities in Nigeria and only 36 university based institutional registered repositories, more than 85 percent of Nigerian universities still operate without any publicly accessible, standards-compliant IR. The geographic distribution of repositories remains skewed: the South-West zone continues to host the largest share, anchored by institutions in Lagos, Ibadan, and Ogun states, while the North-East and South-South zones remain severely underrepresented. A 2024 study of South-East Nigerian universities confirmed

this pattern, finding that institutions with functional repositories achieved measurably better ranking positions than those without, and that the majority of libraries in the zone lacked both the ICT infrastructure and skilled personnel necessary for functional repository adoption (Ezema & Eze, 2024).

Historical development

To fully understand the status of the institutional repository at universities in Nigeria, it is necessary to have a historical perspective on the development of these repositories—one that recognizes both the incredible dedication and commitment to making such repositories available in Nigeria and the difficulties associated with developing them. Compared to those institutions in the Global North, Nigerian universities did not begin developing institutional repositories until many years later than institutions in several other African countries that received more substantial early investments in open access infrastructure.

Nigeria's engagement with the open access movement began in earnest in 2008, when the country's first open access sensitization workshop was organized (Ejikeme & Ezema, 2019). In the same year, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) initiated a landmark digitization project aimed at preserving decades of undergraduate and postgraduate research output and staff publications, establishing the country's first significant institutional repository on the DSpace platform (Ezeani & Ezema, 2011).

The years following 2008 saw gradual but real growth. By 2009, Nigeria had its first registered repository in OpenDOAR. Progress during these years was driven primarily by the enthusiastic advocacy of university librarians and information science academics, without the benefit of formal institutional mandates, NUC requirements, or dedicated government funding. Each repository that came into existence during this period did so largely through the personal initiative of committed librarians working with limited resources.

Growth between 2008 and 2019 was gradual. Ejikeme and Ezema (2019), examining data from the Registry of Open Access Repositories and OpenDOAR, found that Nigeria had approximately 20 repositories from 14 out of about 153 universities, with the majority (70%) using DSpace as archiving software and dominant content being journal articles, theses, and dissertations. A 2020 study by Anene, Ozor, and Baro, published in the Niger Delta Journal of Library and Information Science, found that 25 universities—approximately 14.7 per cent of the then-170 accredited institutions—had successfully developed IRs and registered with

OpenDOAR. The cyber security study by Njoku et al. (2023), published in the African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science, confirmed that of 198 federal, state, and private universities, only 29 (14.6%) had established institutional repositories, with 2019 recording the highest single-year establishment rate, and total items uploaded across all repositories standing at 22,828.

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka consistently leads in content volume across Nigerian repositories. The November 2023 count reached 31 registered repositories (Ezema & Eze, 2024), rising to the current 39 as of June 2026 (OpenDOAR, 2026), representing continued but slow expansion of Nigeria's open access infrastructure.

The period from 2020 to 2023 saw continued modest growth, with the OpenDOAR count for Nigeria reaching 31 by November 2023 (Ezema & Eze, 2024). The 2024 Journal of Academic Librarianship study, examining South-East Nigerian universities specifically, confirmed that geographic inequality in repository development had remained largely unchanged, with the South-West and North-Central zones continuing to dominate the national landscape. By June 2026, the count had reached 39 (OpenDOAR, 2026)—representing 8 new registrations over approximately two and a half years, a pace of growth that, while welcome, remains far short of what is needed to bridge the enormous gap between the number of universities with repositories and the total number of accredited institutions.

The historical trajectory also reveals an important structural insight: the universities that developed repositories earliest and most successfully are, without exception, institutions that had stronger baseline ICT infrastructure, better-resourced libraries, stronger institutional leadership with appreciation for research visibility, and—in many cases—some form of external support or inspiration, whether from visiting scholars, participation in international conferences, or exposure to global open access advocacy networks. The pattern strongly suggests that the primary barrier to repository adoption has never been ignorance of the technology or skepticism about its value, but rather the absence of the structural conditions—infrastructure, funding, policy, and skilled staff—that would make adoption feasible for the great majority of Nigerian institutions.

Software architecture and technical landscape

The choice of repository platform is not merely a technical decision; it has far-reaching consequences for a repository's functionality, interoperability, discoverability, and long-term

sustainability. The platforms underlying Nigerian institutional repositories reflect both the global dominance of particular open-source tools and the specific resource constraints of the Nigerian university context.

DSpace, developed jointly by MIT Libraries and Hewlett-Packard Laboratories and first publicly released in 2002, accounts for the overwhelming majority of Nigerian repositories. Ejikeme and Ezema (2019) found that 70 percent of Nigerian repositories used DSpace, while the cybersecurity study by Njoku et al. (2023) placed DSpace usage at 79.3 percent of institutions. This dominance reflects DSpace's global standing as the most widely deployed institutional repository platform, used by thousands of universities across more than 130 countries. DSpace organises content in a three-tier hierarchical model (Communities → Collections → Items) that maps naturally onto university structures, and supports the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH), enabling external search engines such as Google Scholar and BASE to automatically harvest and index repository content.

EPrints, developed at the University of Southampton and released under the GNU General Public Licence, is used by a smaller proportion of Nigerian institutions, including Afe Babalola University, Covenant University, and Landmark University. Both DSpace and EPrints are free, open-source platforms, which is critical in the Nigerian context where commercial software licensing costs would constitute a prohibitive barrier. However, the availability of free software does not eliminate the substantial costs of server hardware, storage, internet bandwidth, backup power infrastructure, and the skilled technical and library staff required to deploy and maintain a functional repository.

The dominance of these two free, open-source platforms is not coincidental. In a university system where resources are chronically constrained and licensing costs for commercial software represent a prohibitive barrier, the availability of mature, well-documented, and genuinely cost-free platforms has been a critical enabler of whatever IR development has occurred. It is important to understand, however, that “free software” does not mean “free implementation.” The costs of server hardware, storage capacity, stable internet connectivity, backup power infrastructure, database management, and—crucially—the time and expertise of qualified technical and library staff to install, configure, customize, populate, and maintain a DSpace or EPrints installation are all real, significant, and ongoing. For many Nigerian universities, particularly state and private institutions with limited resources, these implementation costs have proven to be as insurmountable as commercial licensing fees would have been. The gap between having access to free repository software and having the

infrastructure and capacity to deploy it successfully is one that the Nigerian higher education system has not yet found a systematic way to close.

Challenges facing institutional repository development

The challenges confronting institutional repository development in Nigerian universities are numerous, interlocking, and mutually reinforcing. They cannot be addressed in isolation: inadequate funding limits the infrastructure that can be built; inadequate infrastructure limits the repositories that can be run; the absence of running repositories limits the evidence of value that could justify increased funding. Understanding each challenge in its full depth and in relation to the others is essential for designing interventions that can break these cycles.

Inadequate ICT Infrastructure

The most pervasive challenge is the absence of reliable ICT infrastructure. An institutional repository requires dedicated server hardware, stable high-bandwidth internet connectivity, and reliable electricity—none of which can be taken for granted across Nigerian universities. Nigeria’s national electricity grid is chronically under-capacity, with outages lasting many hours per day common across large parts of the country, creating significant risks of server downtime and data corruption. The 2024 study by Njoku et al., confirmed in the cybersecurity analysis, identified hardware and software threats as leading causes of sub-optimal repository performance. At AULNU’s 114th Bi-Annual Conference in Abuja in May 2026, delegates formally identified poor ICT infrastructure and unstable power supply as major barriers to open access repository development, and specifically urged TETFund and government agencies to strengthen support for digital repositories, broadband connectivity, and open access infrastructure (AULNU Communiqué, 2026).

Funding Deficits

IR implementation is capital-intensive, requiring investment in server hardware, software configuration, content digitisation, metadata creation, staff training, and ongoing maintenance. The Biblios study by Esse et al. (2024), which surveyed 230 librarians from Nigerian public university libraries, identified inadequate funding as the single leading sustainability challenge, with insufficient budgetary allocations making it impossible to populate content adequately, retain skilled staff, or invest in hardware upgrades. The 2026

AULNU conference echoed this, specifically calling on TETFund and government agencies to increase support for digital repository infrastructure (AULNU Communiqué, 2026). Federal universities, which receive more consistent government funding, generally outperform state and private counterparts in repository development.

Absence of Institutional Policy Frameworks

Without formal deposit mandate policies, content accumulation depends entirely on voluntary participation, which is consistently insufficient to build a comprehensive archive. The study by Mommoh et al. (2022), cited in Ezema and Eze (2024), found that of 19 Nigerian repositories then registered with OpenDOAR, only 4 were supported by any form of formal institutional policy framework, meaning more than 78 percent operated without governing policy on content submission, copyright, preservation, or access. The study by Posigha and Idjai (2022) similarly documented the near-universal absence of mandatory self-archiving policies, challenge of collecting contents from contributors, and lack of interest from contributors as core challenges facing Nigerian repositories. In May 2026, AULNU formally recommended that open access publications and institutional repositories be recognised within NUC accreditation exercises and research assessments (AULNU Communiqué, 2026).

Lack of Skilled and Qualified Staff

Managing an IR requires hybrid skills combining library science with IT proficiency—a combination scarce in many Nigerian universities. Njoku et al. (2023) found that poor synergy between library staff and IT department's leads to coordination failures, with technical problems going unresolved and metadata quality declining over time. The AULNU 2026 conference resolved to oppose the appointment of non-qualified persons as university librarians, advocating that only librarians registered with the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) be eligible for such appointments (AULNU Communiqué, 2026).

Low Faculty Awareness and Copyright Uncertainty

Omeluzor (2014), in a study published in the Open Access Library Journal, found that a significant proportion of faculty staff in Nigerian public and private universities lacked awareness of their institutional repository. Key concerns among faculty who were aware included the risk of plagiarism and uncertainty about whether depositing published articles would breach journal publishing agreements. In the absence of institutional copyright guidance

or access to tools such as the SHERPA/RoMEO database of publisher self-archiving policies, Nigerian academic staff face genuine uncertainty that creates a chilling effect on deposit behaviour. Ezema and Eze (2024) confirmed that copyright management, including difficulty reaching original authors of heritage materials and researcher apprehension about infringing publisher copyright, remains a significant operational challenge for Nigerian repositories.

Content Population and OAI-PMH Non-Compliance

Even technically operational repositories often remain sparsely populated. The Biblios study (Esse et al., 2024) listed content population as a principal sustainability challenge, alongside poor synergy between IT and library staff and lack of qualified staff. A separate and technically significant challenge is non-compliance with OAI-PMH, the protocol enabling external services to harvest and index repository metadata. Njoku et al. (2023) found that hardware and software threats were prominent causes of sub-optimal repository performance, and that cybersecurity vulnerabilities including malware and malicious code (30.6% of identified risks), password attacks (28%), and IP theft (27.8%) directly undermined repository availability and data integrity. Non-compliance with OAI-PMH means that content deposited in non-compliant repositories is invisible to Google Scholar, BASE, and other major academic search engines, negating the primary purpose of open access deposit.

Regional Geographic Inequality

The distribution of Nigeria's 39 registered repositories reflects entrenched regional inequalities. The South-West zone continues to host a disproportionately large share of repositories, while the North-East zone—home to several federal universities—remains severely underrepresented. Security challenges that have affected parts of North-East Nigeria since 2009 have compounded the region's structural disadvantages in university infrastructure development. Ezema and Eze (2024) confirmed that this geographic skew means research produced in some of Nigeria's most academically productive zones is systematically excluded from the global open access ecosystem.

Opportunities for institutional repository development

Despite the challenges documented above, substantial opportunities exist for expanding Nigeria's IR ecosystem. The challenges documented in the preceding section are real, serious,

and persistent. But they exist alongside a set of substantial and in many cases unprecedented opportunities for institutional repository development in Nigerian universities—opportunities created by the convergence of growing policy momentum, demonstrable benefits in ranking and research impact, emerging funding mechanisms, technological advances, and a global open access movement that increasingly makes open access not merely an aspiration but a condition of international research participation.

University Ranking and Research Visibility

Ezema and Eze (2024) found a direct and measurable relationship between the existence of functional repositories and university ranking in the South-East Nigerian context: institutions with functional repositories achieved better ranking positions than comparably resourced institutions without them. This finding is consistent with broader African evidence: a positive correlation between open access presence and university ranking has been documented across African universities registered in OpenDOAR (Ezema & Ugwuanyi, 2021). As ranking methodologies increasingly weight research visibility metrics, the strategic value of a populated, standards-compliant IR is substantial.

Preservation of Indigenous Scholarship

Nigeria's universities generate research on topics of unique local relevance—indigenous governance, Nigerian languages, local disease burden, agricultural practices, and cultural heritage—much of which exists only in fragile physical formats. IRs offer a systematic mechanism for digitising and preserving this scholarship. The UNN digitisation initiative of 2008, documented by Ezeani and Ezema (2011), demonstrated the feasibility of this preservation mandate at institutional level; scaling it nationally would safeguard a corpus of indigenous knowledge currently invisible to global scholarship.

NUC Accreditation Integration and TETFund Support

The most powerful lever for driving universal IR adoption is the NUC accreditation framework. Embedding IR development as an accreditation criterion would transform it from a voluntary aspiration into a mandatory requirement across all Nigerian universities. The AULNU formally recommended this at its May 2026 conference (AULNU Communiqué, 2026). TETFund, which already funds library development projects at Nigerian universities (NAN, 2026), could be directed to establish dedicated IR infrastructure intervention streams.

The AULNU conference explicitly urged TETFund to strengthen support for digital repositories, broadband connectivity, and open access infrastructure (AULNU Communiqué, 2026).

Open Educational Resources and AI-Assisted Management

Beyond research output, IRs can host open educational resources (OERs), as demonstrated by the UDUS Open Educational Resources repository at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. Sharing teaching materials freely reduces student cost burdens and supports curriculum development. Simultaneously, emerging AI tools for automated metadata generation, content harvesting, and duplicate detection offer opportunities to reduce the human resource costs of repository management—a development recognised by AULNU delegates at the 2026 conference, who emphasised that modern university libraries must embrace AI-enabled service delivery to remain relevant in the knowledge economy (AULNU Communiqué, 2026).

National Repository of Nigeria

The National Repository of Nigeria, listed in OpenDOAR as a governmental DSpace repository, represents an emerging national aggregation infrastructure. If properly resourced and mandated to harvest from all university repositories, it could provide a single authoritative discovery gateway for Nigerian research to global search engines and aggregators, multiplying the global impact of all other IR investment across the system.

Recommendations

Drawing on the evidence reviewed throughout this article and the professional consensus forged at the May 2026 AULNU conference in Abuja, these recommendations are not offered as abstract policy suggestions — they are offered as an urgent call to action for every stakeholder who believes that Nigerian scholarship deserves to be seen, preserved, and celebrated by the world.

Nigerian universities and the NUC must establish mandatory deposit policies that require all researchers and postgraduate students to submit their work to institutional repositories as a condition of promotion and degree conferral. Voluntary deposit has never worked, and it never will. Research that sits in a filing cabinet helps no one. Alongside this, the

NUC must embed IRs into its accreditation framework — because a university that can achieve full accreditation without any open access infrastructure is receiving a clear message that research visibility does not matter. It does, and accreditation standards must say so.

TETFund must invest directly in IR infrastructure — servers, broadband, backup power, staff training, and digitization — with dedicated allocations for the North-East, South-South, and other underserved zones, because where a Nigerian university happens to be located should never determine whether its research reaches the world. At the same time, library leadership must be professionalized: only LRCN-registered librarians should manage university libraries, as AULNU resolved in May 2026, because appointing unqualified personnel to run complex digital systems is not economy — it is a guarantee of failure.

AULNU's commitment to open access consortia must move from pledge to practice, enabling smaller institutions to share infrastructure and costs rather than being left behind entirely. Every institution must also develop clear copyright guidance so that researchers stop being paralyzed by uncertainty about what they can legally deposit — because that uncertainty is costing Nigerian academia enormous visibility every single year.

Finally, the National Repository of Nigeria must be properly resourced to become the national knowledge gateway it was always meant to be, AI-assisted tools must be adopted to ease the burden of metadata creation and content management, and targeted programs must urgently address the geographic inequality that leaves entire geopolitical zones almost absent from Nigeria's open access landscape.

Nigeria has the universities, the scholars, and the research. What it needs now is the infrastructure, the policy, and the institutional courage to share that knowledge with the world. The tools are ready. The moment is now.

Conclusion

As of June 2026, Nigeria has 39 institutional repositories registered with OpenDOAR— a modest improvement from 31 in November 2023, and from a single repository in 2008, but still representing coverage of less than 15 percent of the country's over 270 accredited universities (OpenDOAR, 2026). More than 85 percent of Nigerian universities operate without any registered, publicly accessible, standards-compliant institutional repository. The challenges that have produced this situation are well-documented and persistent: ICT infrastructure deficits, unreliable electricity, inadequate and inconsistent funding, the near-universal absence

of deposit mandate policies, scarcity of trained repository staff, low faculty awareness, copyright uncertainty, content population difficulties, non-compliance with OAI-PMH standards, and stark regional inequalities.

The tools for transformation are available: DSpace and EPrints are free, mature, and widely supported; the OAI-PMH standard is freely implementable; the global open access ecosystem is ready to index Nigerian research the moment it is deposited in standards-compliant repositories. The most encouraging development of 2026 is the formal and public position adopted by AULNU at its May 2026 conference, calling for IRs to be embedded in NUC accreditation frameworks, for TETFund to increase infrastructure investment, and for professional library standards to be enforced across Nigerian universities (AULNU Communiqué, 2026). The window for action is open. Nigerian universities that build functional, well-populated, standards-compliant repositories now will find themselves positioned to participate in global scholarship on genuinely equal terms.

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