



## **THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF KENYA**

Haile Selassie Avenue, P. O. Box 52428, Nairobi, 00200, Tel: +254 (020) 343672, 2249974, 2251300, 341639,  
Fax: 2219689, E-mail: [vc@kenpoly.ac.ke](mailto:vc@kenpoly.ac.ke), Website: [www.tukenya.ac.ke](http://www.tukenya.ac.ke)

### **KEYNOTE SPEECH BY**

**PROF. JOSEPH KIPLANG'AT  
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR – ADMINISTRATION,  
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF KENYA**

**DELIVERED DURING THE LIBRARY OPEN WEEK AT  
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

**26 OCTOBER 2016**

**VENUE:**

**POSTMODERN LIBRARY  
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY MAIN CAMPUS**

The Acting Vice Chancellor,

Deputy Vice Chancellor (~~Academic Affairs~~),

The Acting Registrar (~~Academics~~); *present*  
*Director's*  
*beam*

Chief University Librarian,

Deputy University Librarian,

~~Other~~ Members of Staff,

Distinguished guests,

Exhibitors,

Students,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you on this auspicious occasion as you celebrate this year's Library Open Week. Indeed, this occasion underscores the great value you attach to your library as an academic facility. I commend you for this because the library is the centre of the knowledge in any university. The central position of the library in an academic setting is permanent even in this "Google generation"; because while Google can give you hundreds of answers, the library will give you

the right answer. In fact, the library is the place you can expect smart answers even for the most difficult questions. As Libba Bray, a renowned American writer, said:

**“The library card is a passport to wonders and miracles, glimpses into other lives, religions, experiences, the hopes and dreams and strivings of ALL human beings, and it is this passport that opens our eyes and hearts to the world beyond our front doors, that is one of our best hopes against tyranny, xenophobia, hopelessness, despair, anarchy, and ignorance.”**

The library is the workshop of imagination. In the words of Sidney Sheldon:

**“Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life.”**

I am certain that all the distinguished guests in this celebration can attest to the helpfulness of librarians. They turn fresh men and women to distinguished scholars or professionals in diverse fields of study.

In this regard, I wish to commend you, the Kenyatta University library team, for the good work that you are doing in this institution. I have witnessed your spirit of creativity and innovation firsthand from the exhibitions that you have displayed this week. As Willard Scott, American media personality, says:

**“Librarians have always been among the most thoughtful and helpful people. They are teachers without a classroom.”**

Having been a librarian in an academic institution myself, I know what you go through. I know your joys especially from the gratification you experience when your users excel. I also understand your challenges. Please, maintain your patience, resilience, innovativeness and continue to help in spite of the challenges you face.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

There is no better way to celebrate the treasure that the library is than to focus our thoughts on open access. This is the framework for increasing the reach and impact of scholarly work through free, ready and convenient access. Open access is the needed modern update for the communication of research that fully utilises the Internet for what it was originally built to do. It enhances research by increasing access to research output. This is because open access is anchored on the understanding that even the best ideas remain just that until they are shared and until they can be utilised by others. The more people that can access and build upon the latest research, the more valuable that research becomes and the more likely that humanity can benefit from it as a society.

Open access expands the number of potential contributors to research from those in institutions which are wealthy enough to afford journal subscriptions to just anyone with an Internet connection. Open access means more readers, more potential collaborators, more citations for their work, and ultimately more recognition. Actually, latest research published in the journal *Scientometrics* found that articles published through open access received higher citations than non-open access content. It was also found that open access papers not only have higher total downloads, but experience a more sustained number of downloads over a longer period. Non-open access articles, on the other hand, have a shorter period of attention. Open access multiplies the return on research investment exponentially by ensuring that research products are accessed, read and built on by others.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The promise of open access to enhance the impact and visibility of research has now been recognised by many research sponsors. Increasingly, institutions funding scholarly research are requiring their grant holders to make articles related to their research available to the public, free and without restrictions on re-use. This implies that more researchers are now required to explain their

results dissemination strategies before they can obtain research funding. Many of them are increasingly being encouraged to consider open access as the preferred channel for scholarly communication. In fact, it is just a matter of time before open access becomes the default and not the exception in the communication of research.

These are exciting times for scholarly publishing but in spite of the many obvious benefits, open access movement has also had adverse impact on research. These challenges largely revolve around the credibility of the research output published through open access channels. With the emergence of predatory journals which give less attention to the quality of articles in favour of the manuscript handling fees they charge, researchers are therefore often confused about where to publish or which open access sources to cite. Remarkable efforts have been made to identify such outlets which give open access a bad name. One such initiative is the Beall's list of predatory publishers (<https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers>) which gives a list of open access publishers with questionable reputation. This list is released every year to guide scholars away from open access channels which have no scholarly value. I advise you to check the list from time to time to avoid disappointments.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

This week marks an important milestone in the open access movement. We must all work to create a suitable ecosystem for open access to thrive. To do so, we must publish on it. We must read and cite articles which are readily available on it. We must promote it, for instance, by including open access materials on our reading lists. Essentially, we must make it sustainable by maintaining symmetry between demand and supply of open access materials.

I must commend the Kenyatta University leadership for being part of this great scholarly movement. This week and, indeed, this meeting are testimonies to your commitment to open access. I urge you not just to maintain this tempo but also to escalate your efforts in mainstreaming open access in your lexicon. Perhaps you may now consider including participation on open access as one of the requirements for promotion of academic staff. You may also consider establishing open access journals or books in your academic units.

I am aware that Kenyatta University has one of the most advanced institutional repositories. I am certain that this facility has contributed to your sterling performance on webometrics ranking. I commend the library and the university management for making this possible. I urge you to continue committing more

human, financial, technological and physical resources to maintain and improve this facility. I also encourage you to develop and enforce policies which ensure that all scholarly work produced by university staff and students is deposited in the repository for ease of access and use. You may also include training on institutional repository as one of the areas of induction of new academic staff.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I can assure you that your best friends in this institution should be the librarians.

After all, as Shelby Foote said, a university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library. They say that when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

However, my advice to you is that when the going gets tough, get hold of a librarian.

God bless you all.

**Prof. Joseph Kiplang'at**

**Deputy Vice Chancellor – Administration, Planning and Infrastructure and**

**Professor of Library and Information Science**

**The Technical University of Kenya**

[www.tukenya.ac.ke](http://www.tukenya.ac.ke)