

Myanmar to be first country in ASEAN Region to launch free and open national research portal

Press Release

21 February 2020, Yangon - Access to research in Myanmar will increase thanks to a new collaboration agreement between national and international partners, signed in Yangon today, and paving the way for a new national open access portal.

The Myanmar Education, Research and Learning (MERAL) portal, to be launched in March, represents the first such national portal in the ASEAN Region that will collect, disseminate and preserve journal articles, theses and dissertations, conference proceedings and other research output from Myanmar universities, bringing greater accountability, transparency and participation to research, teaching and learning processes.

Today's agreement was signed by The Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Director General, Professor Dr. Thein Win; Rectors' Committee of the National Education Policy Commission, Ministry of Education, Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Chair, Professor Dr Zaw Wai Soe; EIFL, Director, Rima Kupryte; and National Institute of Informatics of Japan, Director General, Dr. Masaru Kitsuregawa, Tokyo, Japan.

"The Rectors' Committee was formed under the National Education Policy Commission by the National Education Law Amendment 2015 on 4th April, 2018 with 164 rectors from 164 universities. The Rectors' committee coordinates, cooperates and negotiates to help to develop the higher education institute without infringing on their independent administration and autonomy. One of the missions of Rectors' Committee is to develop a world-class higher education system, with a strong focus on research and innovation, to meet the country's social and economic development needs. Open Access is inevitable in research and MERAL serves as a means for the dissemination of the intellectual output of the universities and institutions in Myanmar. MERAL aims to provide online access to increase the impact of its research and foster a rich research culture.

It is remarkable initiative in the history of the open access movement in Myanmar and we are proud to say that MERAL is the first National repository in Southeast Asia. MERAL makes research and academic conversation available to anyone who would like to engage in intellectual environment. The portal will make Myanmar research more visible and showcase Myanmar's intellectual and research capacity, fostering collaboration with institutions in other countries and helping Myanmar researchers develop professional networks internationally," said Dr. Zaw Wai Soe, President, Rectors' Committee, Department of Higher Education

“For the last four years EIFL has been committed to supporting free and open access to research in Myanmar, establishing five university institutional repositories, which provide open access to more than 2,000 research publications. MERAL portal will extend our work and will host research outputs from all institutions in Myanmar. Partnerships are key to ensuring that knowledge can be shared without boundaries and the formalization of today’s agreement demonstrates an inspiring example of what is possible when we work together,” said Rima Kupryte, Director, EIFL

MERAL will host the Myanmar institutional open access repositories, which will have an interface for searching and browsing content across all repositories, built using a repository platform repository software named WEKO3, developed by National Institute of Informatics in Japan.

“National Institute of Informatics (NII) has been developing a new repository software named WEKO3 in Research Center for Open Science and Data Platform (RCOS). It is based on the open repository toolkit named Invenio, which has originally been developed by the European Organization for Nuclear Research. More than 500 institutions in Japan are now using current WEKO2 system through the cloud service provided by NII. It will be upgraded to WEKO3 in 2020 as one of the core component of the NII Research Data Cloud. The agreement covers to deploy of the WEKO3 system to MERAL platform, share operation skill and support training course to repository manager in Myanmar team. Under this collaboration, Myanmar can provide next generation scholarly communication environment which is strongly expected from the view point of the global open science trends,” said RCOS, Director, Digital Content and Media Sciences Research Division, NII, Professor Dr. Kazutsuna Yamaji

It is expected that MERAL will also strengthen the capacity of universities and research institutes to manage and coordinate research. Improved management will open opportunities for collaboration among researchers from different institutions in Myanmar, and decrease duplication and fragmentation of research. By providing statistics and analytics about research that has been published, the portal will serve as a research monitoring tool.

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From left, Dr. Nay Win Oo, Deputy Director General of Department of Higher Education, Dr. Zaw Wai Soe, Chair of the Myanmar Rectors' Committee, RIMA KUPRYTE, Director of EIFL and Dr. Kazutsuna Yamaji of NII at MERAL signing ceremony on 21 FEB 2020, Yangon.

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