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# THE WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE OF ARCHIVAL AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN THE ESARBICA REGION, 1969–2018

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## Abstract

This study aims to employ informetric research techniques to investigate the research production in archives and records management in the East and Central African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ECARBICA) since its inception in 1969 until 2018. A search query “archive\*” or “record\*management”, limited to ESARBICA member states between 1969 and 2018, was conducted on Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and AJOL databases. The results suggested that there has been a significant increase in the production of research in archives and a few authors produce research in records management in the region over the past ten years, but the bulk of this knowledge, and not all countries in the region produce knowledge. The key producers of knowledge published their work in journals indexed by databases that may require subscriptions, which may limit access to many in the region. It is recommended that archives and records management scholars in Africa consider publishing their work in open access journals to ensure that the research is accessible to all in the region. The importance of research in archives and records management cannot be overemphasised, because public records have a direct impact on individuals’ lives. Research suggests that the most obvious way for archivists and records managers to enhance their resourcefulness is through education and research. Furthermore, research in archives and records management can help to inform education and solve societal challenges. That said, the ESARBICA region is experiencing challenges when it comes to human resource development and capacity building, among other things.

**Keywords:** Africa, Archival research, archives, records management, records management research

## Introduction and background

In 2015, the International Council on Archives (ICA) developed a strategy for Africa (2015–2020). One of the key elements of the strategy involves training and education at institutions of higher learning across Africa. African educators and archivists have repeatedly identified the need for support in redeveloping university curricula so that they reflect international good practice as well as recent developments in the field (Ngoepe 2017). Research will play a significant role in driving this strategy forward. Research, by its very nature, aims to inform action and is central to any strategic decision-making. In the field of archives and records management (ARM), specifically in Africa, research can add value to the ailing or collapsing national archival and records systems (Nengomasha 2013:2). Maluleka, Nkwe and Ngoepe (2018) are of the view that the most obvious way for archivists and records managers to enhance their resourcefulness is through education and research. In addition, Ngoepe, Maluleka and Onyanha (2014) state that research can help to propel the image of archival institutions in Africa to new heights and catapult it into uncharted territories. This will allow archivists and records managers to deal with the challenges of governance in an electronic environment, and to formulate research agenda, which address grand societal

challenges such as a lack of accountability, poor audit results and poor service delivery, which emanate from a breakdown in records systems (Ngoepe et al. 2014). Nengomasha (2013) concurs that research in ARM can empower archivists and records managers to deal with the challenges of governance and formulate research agendas that address the grand societal challenges experienced in many African countries.

The International Council on Archives (ICA 2019) believes that effective records and archives management is an essential precondition for good governance, the rule of law, administrative transparency, the preservation of humankind's collective memory, and citizens' access to information. For those reasons, the ICA established regional branches that will take its aims and objectives forward at that level. In 1969, the ICA established the East and Central African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ECARBICA), because at the time, its membership extended to countries in the central African region (ESARBICA 2019). ECARBICA has since changed to the Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA).

This professional body brings together national archives, information institutions and individuals in the region, to discuss matters related to archives, the preservation of documentary heritage, as well as records and information management. This professional body draws on the objectives of its mother body, which include establishing, maintaining and strengthening cooperation between archivists; promoting the preservation of archival heritage; facilitating the use of archival materials; sponsoring professional training for archivists in the region; and coordinating the collection and preservation of oral traditions/history.

Despite all the strategies and plans that have been put in place, the region still experiences challenges when it comes to human resource development and capacity building; the collection and preservation of oral traditions; the repatriation of migrated archives; the lack of records management policies and procedures; raising awareness; and marketing strategies for national archives.

A major indicator that has been used to measure how much knowledge is produced is research output. This measure reflects the production of scientifically founded, research-based work in a subject field, continent or country (Blom, Lan & Adil 2016). According to Onyancha (2010), publications count and analysis are increasingly becoming recognised worldwide as a measurement indicator of research output. The outcome of tracing publication patterns within a particular field can indicate the importance scholars attach to that field. Furthermore, publishing patterns reflect scholarly communication, trends and the evolution of knowledge about a topic or an area. Such studies may feed into scientific policy and research management, as they give an education of how much research is being done in a particular field (Maluleka & Ngulube 2019). Therefore, the aim of the study was to investigate how much knowledge was produced in the ESARBICA region, from its inception until 2018.

## **Contextual setting**

ECARBICA is a regional branch of the International Council on Archives. Currently, ESARBICA's 13 active member states as reflected in Figure 1 are: Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Zanzibar (ESARBICA 2019). ESARBICA aims to carry out the objectives of its parent body (the ICA) which include:

- advancing archives through regional cooperation
- providing a forum for the exchange of professional ideals and expertise

- facilitating continuing education through professional attachments, study visits, seminars and workshops.



Figure 1: ESARBICA member states (ESARBICA 2019)

## Purpose and research questions

This study aims to investigate the research production in ARM within the ESARBICA region for the period 1969–2018, and will focus mainly on answering the following questions:

- What are the trends and patterns of ARM publications in the ESARBICA region?
- Who were the main producers of ARM research in the ESARBICA region?
- Which were the main contributing countries and institutions of ARM research in the ESARBICA region?
- Where do ARM scholars publish their work?

## Problem statement

Research aims to inform action and is central to any strategic decisions that may be taken. Nengomasha (2013:2) argues that records are the cornerstones of a government's ability to provide basic services to its citizens. That means that public records have a direct impact on the lives of people on the ground. Furthermore, in Africa, research in the field of ARM, can add value to the ailing and collapsing national archival and records systems (Nengomasha 2013:2). Maluleka et al. (2018) are of the view that the most obvious way for archivists and records managers to enhance their resourcefulness is through education and research. Ngoepe et al. (2014) further state that research can help to propel the image of archival institutions in Africa to new heights and catapult it into uncharted territories. The ICA established the ESARBICA regional branch to be a centre of excellence in ARM-related developments, both in the region and internationally. This branch was expected to establish, maintain and strengthen cooperation between archivists; promote the preservation of archival heritage; facilitate the use of archival materials; and sponsor the professional training of archivists in the region. ESARBICA has been one of the best-performing regional branches of ICA, but there are concerns when it comes to human resource development and capacity building, the collection and preservation of oral traditions, the repatriation of migrated archives, the lack of records management policies and procedures, and raising awareness and marketing strategies for national archives. Maluleka et al. (2018) are of the view that research and education are

the best ways to enhance the resourcefulness of archivists and records managers. It is therefore the aim of this study to investigate how much knowledge was produced in the ESARBICA region from its inception until 2018.

## **Related studies**

A number of studies investigating ARM research in the ESARBICA region and beyond were carried out over the years, providing researchers with an opportunity to explore the field. At a global level, Nam and Lee (2009) investigated research trends regarding ARM in Korea by analysing the distribution of the theses of ARM journals published in that country, according to subject, issue period, journal and researcher. That study suggested that the core subjects broached by ARM research in Korea include law, establishment/policy, preservation and electronic records management.

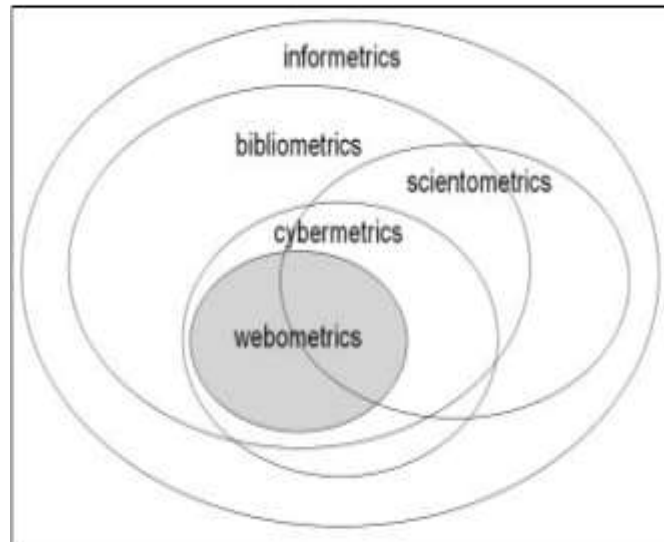
An, Sun and Zhang (2011) investigated trends and future directions of electronic records management (ERM), including electronic records management systems (ERMs) in e-government with more focus on comprehensive approaches internationally. Their findings suggested that trends of ERM research in e-government are towards multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to ERM managing records as information resources and business assets. Their findings further indicated that the future directions of ERM in e-government would be towards meta-synthesis management at both organizational and national level.

In the ESARBICA region, on the management of public records in the public sector, Kemoni (2008) investigated the problems and prospects experienced in the management of archives and records in Kenya. That study highlighted that, despite the Kenyan archives and Documentation Service Department making strides in developing records services in the country, the management of public records remains chaotic, with the focus mainly falling on the preservation thereof. The Kemoni (2008) study recommended that greater effort should go into different levels of a record's life cycle. Similarly, Ngulube and Tafor, (2006) looked at the extent to which archival institutions within the ESARBICA region managed public records and archives, revealing that, among other things, national archives within the region had limited resources for their records management functions.

When it comes to archival education and training in the region, Kemoni (2008) studied which models and theories postgraduate students can adopt to develop conceptual frameworks for their master's and doctoral research in records management, by highlighting some of those theories and models and their suitability. Recently, Maluleka et al. (2018) investigated the ARM curricula of South African public universities, with an aim of investigating the extent to which academic departments embrace records stored in networked environments. Their study suggested that, in South Africa, the curricula at public universities do not fully embrace the management of digital records. Furthermore, they also found that the education and training available for archivists consist of only a few programmes offered by three institutions of higher learning, out of the 26 universities in the country.

## **Scope and research methodology**

This study employed informetric research techniques, which De Bellis (2009:3) defines informetrics, as the study of quantitative aspects of information in any form and in any social group. Egghe and Rousseau (1990:3) explain that informetrics borrow tools (techniques, models, analogies) from mathematics, physics, computer science and other '-metrics'. Informetrics is a much broader term that embraces overlapping fields and other metrics such as Scientometrics, Bibliometrics, Webometrics and Cybermetrics (De Bellis 2009). Figure 2 explains the relationship between informetrics and other metrics.

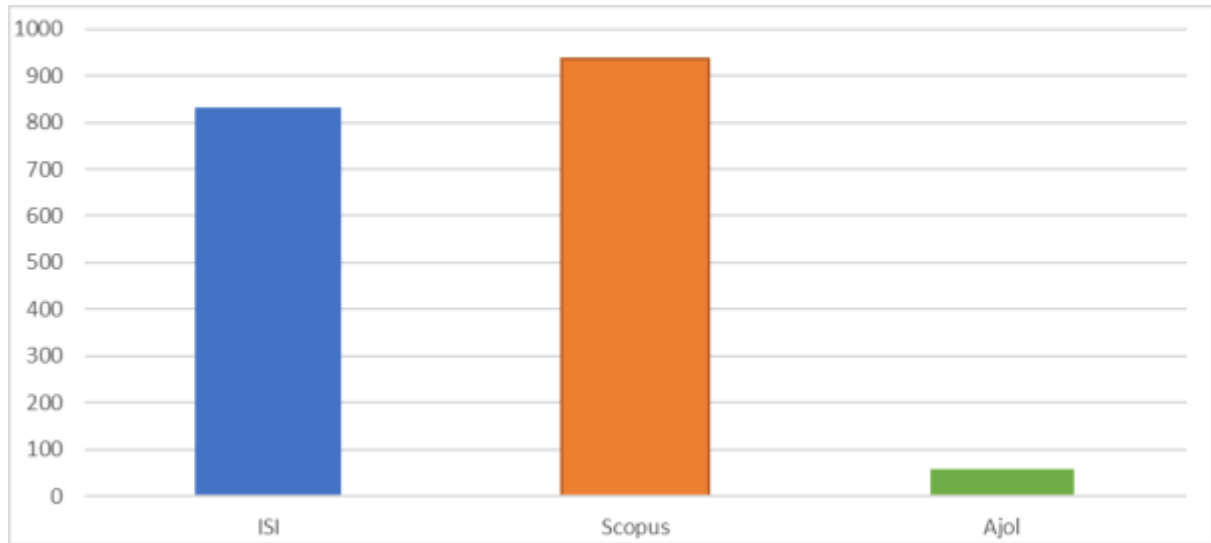


**Figure 2: The relationship between different metrics**

Source: Björneborn and Ingwersen (2004:1217)

Shah and Mahmood (2017) argue that reference and citation-enhanced databases, like Google Scholar, WoS and Scopus, provide informetric and scientometric indicators to help researchers find relevant and useful information and resources. For this study, the WoS, Scopus, and African Journals Online (AJOL) were used. According to Nwagwu (2005), Africa lacks local and regional bibliographic databases, indexing services and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to facilitate the processing and dissemination of domestic scientific literature – that explains Africa’s limited contribution to the global literature on the subject. To capture some of the research produced in local journals, AJOL was added as a third database. The choice of Scopus and WoS was motivated by the fact that both databases are acceptable to informetricians when it comes to seeking relevant and useful information (Shah & Mahmood 2017).

A search query archive\* or record\* management, limited to records produced by scholars affiliated to ESARBICA member states between 1969 and 2018, was conducted in the Scopus, WoS and AJOL databases. Ngoepe et al. (2014) conducted a similar study, which investigated the status of research collaboration in ARM across and beyond African universities. They used subject terms ‘archives’ or ‘records’ in their search to extract records indexed in AJOL between 1990 and 2013. Using the search query mentioned above in the three databases, Scopus produced 935 records, WoS produced 831 and AJOL 63 (see Figure 3). The data were captured in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and presented in tables and graphs.



**Figure 3: Database coverage**

### Limitations to the study

This study relied on citations from Scopus, WoS and AJOL. The databases have quality standards and selection criteria that may disqualify some of the journals from being indexed. As a result, citations published in journals that are not indexed by the cited databases will not form part of the study. Furthermore, ARM published citations that could not be picked up when using the selected search terms during data collection, did not form part of the study. This highlights that the sources of data had limitations. These issues have to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the current study.

### Results and discussions

This section presents and discusses findings under the following subheadings:

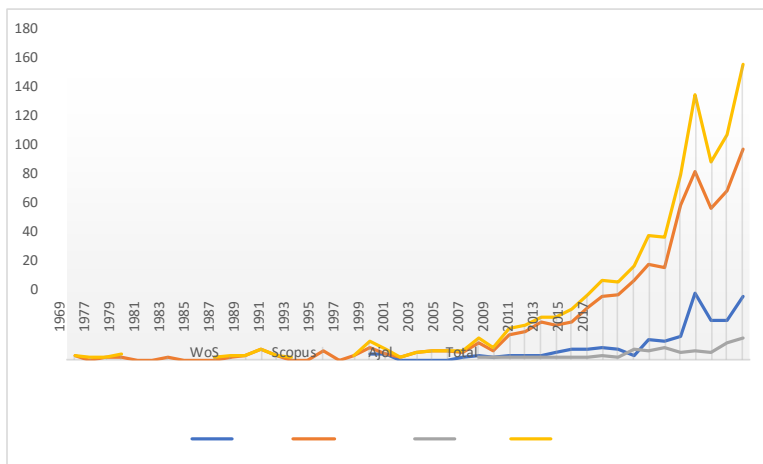
- What are the trends and patterns of ARM publications in the ESARBICA region?
- Who were the main producers of ARM research in the ESARBICA region?
- Which were the main contributing countries and institutions of ARM research in the ESARBICA region?
- Where do ARM scholars publish their work?

### ARM publication trends

This section discusses the trends in respect of publications in the three selected databases from 1969 to 2018. This analysis will help establish ARM research patterns in the region and further assess the status of research when it comes to archives and records management in the ESARBICA region. A closer look at the results obtained from the three databases indicate that Scopus registered the most records over time and covered some of the earliest records. The earliest record in the Scopus database was published in 1969, the same year that ESARBICA was established. Comparatively, the earliest record registered by the WoS was published in 1976, while the earliest publication from AJOL was recorded in 2001.

ARM research was very slow across three databases from the sixties right through to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. ARM research in Scopus started improving in 2003 when the numbers started to increase from single digits to double digits. In 2012, the WoS outputs were also improving and signs of improvement in AJOL journals started around 2012. All three

databases have since recorded constant increases in the number of papers produced, with AJOL registering 12 ARM records at the end of 2018, the WoS recording an impressive 35, and Scopus topping the list with 117 ARM-related studies in 2018 (see Figure 4). The data show that the amount of research produced across databases has increased and, by implication, it suggests that ARM research-producing scholars have increased during the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This suggests that there was a significant growth in ARM as a profession in the ESARBICA region. The establishment of the AJOL database in 1988 also contributed to the increase in the number of recorded papers because African scholars had more platforms to publish their research.



**Figure 4: ARM publication trends**

### Top producers of ARM research

The previous section highlighted a steady increase of ARM-related research in the ESARBICA region since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This section, therefore, determines who the main drivers of this research were. From the WoS, Ngulube leads with 15 citations, followed by Ngoepe (12) and Garaba (8); and in Scopus, Ngulube leads with 17, followed by Katuu with 15 and Ngoepe (14) made the top three; while in AJOL, Keakopa with 5, Ngulube 4 and Ngoepe 4 ranked as the top three (see table 1). The majority of the scholars mentioned in table 1 below are still actively involved, which explains why the numbers have continued to increase in recent years. The majority of the top-ranked researchers are publishing across the three databases.



**Table 1: Top ARM research producers**

WoS			Scopus			AJOL		
Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records
1	Ngulube	15	1	Ngulube	17	1	Keakopa	5
2	Ngoepe	12	2	Katuu	15	2	Ngulube	4
3	Garaba	8	3	Ngoepe	14	3	Ngoepe	4
4	Katuu	8	4	Garaba	12	4	Khumalo	4
5	Law	5	5	Mnjama	11	5	Dewah	3
6	Mnjama	5	6	Wamukoya	7	6	Mnjama	2
7	Nengomasha	5	7	Nengomasha	5	7	Kalusopa	2
8	Mutsagondo	4	8	Aina	4	8	Kemoni	2
9	O'Connels	4	9	Bwalya	4	9	Mosweu	2
10	Stevens	4	10	Harris	4	10	Okelo-Obura	2

### Contributing countries

ESARBICA has 12 active member states and it is important to determine which members were actively involved in the production of research. This section, therefore, presents the findings pertaining to which countries produced most of the ARM research in the region. As reflected in table 2, South Africa had the most records in both Scopus (721) and WoS (641). In WoS, South Africa is followed by Kenya (67), Botswana (37) Tanzania (25) and Zimbabwe (23); while in Scopus Namibia replaces Zimbabwe in the top five with the first four other countries maintaining the same ranking as in WoS. In AJOL, Botswana (19) is ranked first, followed by South Africa (14), Zimbabwe (12), Tanzania (7) and Kenya (4). It is worth mentioning that researchers, who may be from a certain member state but working in another state, will produce research for the state in which they are employed because their affiliation will be with the institution at which they are employed.

**Table 2: Contributing countries**

WoS			Scopus			AJOL		
Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records
1	South Africa	641	1	South Africa	721	1	Botswana	19
2	Kenya	67	2	Kenya	73	2	South Africa	14
3	Botswana	37	3	Botswana	48	3	Zimbabwe	12
4	Tanzania	25	4	Tanzania	28	4	Tanzania	7
5	Zimbabwe	23	5	Namibia	27	5	Kenya	4
6	Namibia	21	6	Zimbabwe	25	6	Uganda	2
7	Zambia	14	7	Zambia	7	7	Mozambique	1
8	Mozambique	2	8	Mozambique	6	8	Namibia	1
9	Angola	1	9			9	Swaziland	1
			10			10	Zambia	1

**Table 3: Top contributing institutions**

WoS			Scopus			AJOL		
Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records
1	UCT <sup>1</sup>	118	1	UCT	141	1	Univ. Botswana	11
2	Wits <sup>2</sup>	106	2	Wits	102	2	NUST <sup>3</sup>	9
3	UP <sup>4</sup>	59	3	UKZN	72	3	UNISA	9
4	UNISA <sup>5</sup>	59	4	Unisa	70	4	MOI Univ.	3
5	UKZN <sup>6</sup>	54	5	UP	55	5	Univ. of Dodoma	1
6	UJ <sup>7</sup>	39	6	Stellenbosch	49	6	University of Fort Hare	1
7	Stellenbosch	36	7	Univ. of Botswana	44	7	Univ. of Namibia	1
8	Univ. of Botswana	27	8	UJ	39	8	Univ. of Zambia	1
9	UWC <sup>8</sup>	27	9	UWC	34	9	Makerere University	1
10	Rhodes	25	10	Moi Univ	23	10	Mozambique National archives	1

**Contributing institutions**

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<sup>1</sup> University of Cape Town

<sup>2</sup> University of the Witwatersrand

<sup>3</sup> National University of Science and Technology

<sup>4</sup> University of Pretoria

<sup>5</sup> University of South Africa

<sup>6</sup> University of KwaZulu-Natal

<sup>7</sup> University of Johannesburg

<sup>8</sup> University of the Western Cape

This section presents the records, showing which institution across the three databases produced most of the ARM research in the region (see table 3). The institutional affiliations of the authors were analysed to determine which institutions produced more ARM-related research in the ESARBICA region. In both Scopus and WoS, South African universities contributed more ARM research than other institutions. The University of Cape Town (UCT), Witwatersrand University, University of Pretoria (UP), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the University of South Africa (Unisa) occupied the top spots, while in AJOL, the University of Botswana was ranked at the top, followed by the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), the Unisa and the University of Dodoma.

### **Top journals**

This section seeks to establish where ARM research was published. As reflected in table 4, this was done by ranking journals according to the number of ARM citations recorded. Table 4 shows that from WoS, *Critical Arts: South–North Cultural and Media Studies* (23) came out on top, followed by *Information Development* (21), *South African Historical Journal* (21), *African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* (19) and *Journal of Southern African Studies* (19) completing the top five. From Scopus, *South African Historical Journal*, *Journal of Southern African Studies* and *African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* made up the top five. From AJOL, ARM research was mainly published in the *SASA Journal* and the *ESARBICA Journal*. The *University of Dar Es Salaam Library Journal*, the *International Journal of Development and Management Review* as well as the *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* also recorded some ARM research outputs. The WoS and Scopus databases had more journals covering ARM research while a search query from AJOL yielded results from five journals only.

**Table 4: Top journals**

WoS			Scopus			AJOL		
Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records	Rank	Name	Records
1	<i>Critical Arts: South–North Cultural and Media Studies</i>	23	1	<i>Information Development</i>	35	1	Journal of South African Society of Archivists (SASA Journal)	33
2	<i>Information Development</i>	21	2	<i>Records management journal</i>	22	2	<i>ESARBICA Journal</i>	23
3	<i>South African Historical Journal</i>	21	3	<i>South African Historical Journal</i>	21	3	<i>University of Dar Es Salaam Library Journal</i>	2
4	<i>AJLIS</i>	19	4	<i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i>	18	4	<i>International Journal of Development and Management Review</i>	1
5	<i>Journal of Southern African studies</i>	19	5	<i>African Journal of Libraries and Information Sciences</i>	11	5	<i>International Journal of Arts and Humanities</i>	1
6	<i>Records Management Journal</i>	15	6	<i>Archival Science</i>	11	6		
7	<i>PlosOne</i>	11	7	<i>Archives and Records</i>	5	7		
8	<i>Journal of African History</i>	10	8	<i>Archives and Manuscripts</i>	4	8		
9	<i>Electronic Library</i>	9	9	<i>Electronic Library</i>	4	9		
10	<i>Social Dynamics: A</i>	9	10	<i>IFLA Journal</i>	4	10		

<i>Journal of African Studies</i>								
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## Conclusion

The growth of ARM research in the ESARBICA region was very slow during the first three decades after the region was established. There was, however, a significant increase in the production of research following the turn of the millennium. This increase has had a positive impact on ARM as a profession, because it meant that researchers were increasingly sharing ideas and empowering each other. However, during the period under study, a few scholars who represent a limited number of countries and institutions produced the bulk of the research cited in these databases. Indicators suggest that African scholars publish most of their work in internationally indexed databases (e.g. Scopus and WoS), which require reader subscription for access. By implication, this means that many Africans may have limited access to research that is addressing African challenges. Research was mainly driven by academic institutions, while practitioners who are the cornerstone of this profession appeared to have taken a back seat. Practitioners should become actively involved in the production of knowledge across the region so that they can benefit from one another's insights and inform curricula across borders. Researchers should be encouraged to publish their work in open access journals, so that the rest of the region can peruse their work. Finally, efforts should be made to make AJOL 100 percent open access, so that it can fulfil its mandate of ensuring that research that is produced by African scholars, is available to Africans and the rest of the world.

## Suggestions for further research

The current study looked at trends and patterns of ARM research in the ESARBICA region from a quantitative point of view. The study therefore brings a number of issues that will require further research. As with any research study, it is not possible to study everything, therefore the following suggestions for further research are made:

A qualitative study should be done which looks at the drivers, priorities and impacts of ARM research in the region, to find out what the barriers to research are in countries that do not currently produce much research, and how researchers decide where to publish their work. This is aimed at gaining a better understanding of ARM research in the ESARBICA region.

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