



eGY-Africa: addressing the digital divide for science in Africa

C Barton (1), M Petitdidier (), L Cottrell (), and P Fox ()

(1) Australian National University, Research School of Earth Sciences, Kingston, Australia (charles.barton@anu.edu.au, +61 2 6257 2737), (2) CETP/CNRS, Vélizy, FRANCE monique.petitdidier@cetp.ipsl.fr, (3) SLAC National Accelerator Lab, Menlo Park, CA, USA. cottrell@slac.stanford.edu, (4) Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY, USA. pfox@cs.rpi.edu

The digital divide is worse in Africa than in the rest of the world, the gap is growing, and in many sub-Saharan African countries the education and research sector suffers some of the worst deficiencies in access to the Internet. By contrast, it is widely acknowledged in policy statements from the African Union, the UN, and others that this very sector provides the key to meeting and sustaining Millenium Development Goals. Developed countries with effective cyber-capabilities wax eloquent about the equal benefits to rich and poor alike arising from the Information Revolution. This is but a dream for many (most?) scientists in African institutions; as the world of science becomes increasingly Internet-dependent, so they become increasingly isolated.

eGY-Africa is a bottom-up initiative by African scientists and their collaborators to try to reduce this digital divide by a campaign of advocacy for better institutional facilities. The present status of Internet services, problems, and plans are being mapped via a combination of a survey questionnaire-based survey and direct measurement of Internet performance (the PingER Project). Information is being gathered on policy statements and initiatives aimed at reducing the Digital Divide. eGY-Africa is establishing National groups of concerned scientists and engaging with those initiatives with related goals. The expectation is that informed opinion from the scientific community at the institutional, national, and international levels can be used to influence the decision makers and donors who are in a position to deliver better capabilities.