

# LAW, DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT

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## Editorial

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### ***LDD* relaunched**

2010 marks the relaunch of Law, Democracy & Development as an online, open access journal. This means that from now on LDD will be freely available to readers and researchers around the world. In doing so it will be joining approximately 400 open access peer-reviewed journals being published in Africa, and almost 4 000 world-wide as at June 2009.

After 13 years of publication in traditional printed format, the Faculty thought long and hard before taking this step. Some of the factors that persuaded us were negatives – in particular, the increasing cost of a printed journal in terms of publication as well as to readers in developing countries. But, the more we thought about it, the more we realised the positive advantages of publishing online.

First, it offers far greater flexibility in terms of the number of articles that can be published as well as the time required for publication. Articles could appear within weeks of being submitted. To authors as well as readers this represents a huge advantage over those irritating delays, sometimes running to many months, associated with the printed medium.

Secondly, distribution is worldwide and instantaneous, and the accessibility (“circulation”) of published articles increases exponentially. Given LDD’s focus on the African continent, the prospect of reaching and involving a far greater number of researchers across the continent is especially persuasive.

Importantly, too, online publication offers a range of user-friendly features which can enormously reduce the time and effort needed for research – for example, electronic

indices and search engines, not to mention links to outside sources, enabling the researcher to access elusive information immediately.

In every other way LDD will remain unchanged. Its existing peer-review system and its accredited status will continue. And, reassuringly for those who don't like reading from a computer screen, there is no need to do so: articles can be printed out at a fraction of the cost of subscribing to a journal.

(For more discussion of the rationale of open access publication, see Samuel Kwaku Smith Esseh *The Open Access (Open Journals System) Paradigm and the Production of Scholarly Journals in Developing Countries: Master of Publishing project*, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, 2006 (available at <http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/retrieve/2875/etd2183.pdf>) and Enrique Mu Open Access *Electronic Journals: Issues and Opportunities for Latin America: Paper delivered at Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Rio de Janeiro, June 2009* (available at <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/members/congress-papers/lasa2009/files/MuEnrique.pdf>)).

For the time being the online LDD represents work in progress. We intend rolling out a series of features – in particular, an easily searchable archive of past issues going back to 1997 – that will make the journal as accessible and user-friendly as any in the world. In creating this archive we must especially thank our previous publishers, LexisNexis Butterworths (1997-2006) and Juta & Co (2007-2009), for making the final electronic versions of past articles available to us. Their assistance, and their willingness to promote the cause of scholarship and research, is much appreciated.

For the rest, the 2010 volume is fully operational; articles can be read, downloaded or uploaded. We look forward to continuing our association with existing readers and past contributors, but also to attracting a growing number of new readers and contributors. Comments, questions, feedback and criticism are welcomed. With your participation, LDD will play a significantly greater role in the enterprise of producing and sharing knowledge among a growing community of scholars in South Africa, Africa and internationally.