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## Science Library and Resource Centre Sri Lanka

By Sunethra Perera



The National Science Library and Resource Centre (NSLRC) of the National Science Foundation is the focal point for disseminating Science and Technology (S&T) information in Sri Lanka. This information service works within the Sri Lanka Science and Technology Information Network comprising national S&T libraries. The current membership is over 100, including research institutes, universities, research and development institutions, plus other libraries and information centres.

NSLRC was founded in 1979 – long before the electronic era – under a UNIDO project, and was originally called the Sri Lanka Scientific and Technical Information Centre (SLSTIC). The centre is mandated to document all S&T and Social Science information resources available in the country to allow easy access. Starting with a manual system, the centre has gradually developed over the years, expanding its scope and

## About INASP

The mission of INASP is to enable worldwide access to information and knowledge with particular emphasis on the needs of developing and transitional countries.

We work with partners around the world to encourage the creation and production of information, to promote sustainable and equitable access to information, to foster collaboration and networking and to strengthen local capacities to manage and use information and knowledge.

Our objectives are to

- Improve access to scientific and scholarly information
- Catalyse and support local publication and information exchange
- Strengthen local capacities to manage and use information and knowledge
- Foster in-country, regional and international cooperation and networking
- Advise local organisations and agencies on ways to utilise information and publishing to achieve development goals.

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introducing the current computerised system to disseminate information more widely, cheaply and quickly, taking advantage of the efficiencies provided by the Internet. The centre uses the Windows version of the UNESCO-developed CDS/ISIS software with an attractive web interface for its information dissemination activities.

Much has been done, but the full potential of electronic information systems has still to be realised. The following gives an overview of some of the primary tasks of the NSLRC.

### **National Repository of S&T literature and the Sri Lanka Science Index**

Since its inception in 1979 as SLSTIC, NSLRC has always been mandated to be the national repository of local S&T literature of Sri Lanka, maintaining a comprehensive and unique collection of locally generated literature, including both published and unpublished material. It covers articles by local authors which are published in both local and international periodicals, conference papers, research reports, technical reports and theses prepared by S&T institutions, professional associations, special committees, etc., in the country. This ensures the capture of items that fulfil a distinct function in research but escape the mainstream of literature that enters the public domain.

The collection is searchable through the *Sri Lanka Science Index database* (SLSI) enriched with flexible searching facilities and a powerful search engine. The current database accommodates only metadata and abstracts of the publications, but access to the full text is not hindered as instant online request for copies of selected items from NSLRC is offered. Although the concept of a fully interactive online delivery service has not yet materialised, work is underway to facilitate online downloading of complete documents in the future.

In common with other repositories around the world, the largest problem is inadequate use of the database. Therefore, spreading awareness of the availability of resources and services and encouraging their use is a prime concern. Promotional materials are being distributed and awareness-raising workshops are planned with a view to ensuring that the full potential of the database is exploited. In addition, contribution of content by the scientific community in the country is not encouraging. Attention is paid towards developing a reliable mechanism to ensure that NSLRC receives a copy of each S&T and Social Science document generated locally.

### **Union List of Periodicals in S&T libraries in Sri Lanka – UNILIST database**

The UNILIST database is the result of cooperation between over 75 libraries and information centres in the country, the majority serving S&T organisations. Complete holdings information on over 7000 periodical titles held in the participating libraries are included, and the database plays a vital role in optimising limited financial resources by preventing unnecessary duplication of serials within the country while at the same time ensuring the availability of the most important journal titles for consultation by the scientific community.

The database further makes *resource sharing* a reality, functioning as an online consortium of printed periodicals. The mechanism applied here is very simple. The database, while functioning as an easy location tool for periodical titles/issues in the country, at the same time offers easy online contact facilities of the relevant library. In addition, each title is linked to its website allowing the user to browse, explore and search the contents online at the publisher's site. Non-availability of links to the full text is not at all a problem in this environment since easy online request facilities for copies of items from the correct location is enabled. The only problem encountered in the system is the time gap between the time of request and the time of receipt of the copy. (Delivery is still handled manually by snail mail.)

### The NSLRC web site

The NSLRC website has been created to function as a gateway to global resources. It is particularly intended to act as a central hub to link other S&T related information sources in the country, ensuring a single access point to local resources. A broad range of institutional and national level databases with powerful and flexible search capabilities are linked to the database. These cover local online library catalogues and subject specific databases maintained by networks, S&T institutions, professional associations and Government bodies, plus many other resources.

However, facilities for searching across all or a selected range of databases has not been realised yet. Introduction of a protocol providing a common platform to search across all local databases (irrespective of the different software and operating systems) is a major challenge to be addressed to bring about a real resource sharing environment.

In conclusion, NSLRC caters satisfactorily to the information needs of the scientists and social scientists in the country. However, there is a long way ahead before the system could fully exploit the technological advances of the current electronic era to be in parallel to online information dissemination systems in the developed world.

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## Fifth Conference of AFITA 2006

The organising committee of AFITA 2006 and the Indian Society of Agricultural Information Technology (INSAIT) cordially invites you to participate in the fifth conference of the Asian Federation of Information Technology in Agriculture (AFITA) to be held November 9–11, 2006, at the National Science Seminar Complex, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India. The main theme of the Conference is "Agricultural Information Technology for Rural Development" thus providing a platform to consider all the issues of vital importance for achieving rural prosperity through use of ICTs in Asia and Africa.

For additional information, go to

<http://www.insait.org/afita2006.php>

## Scholars Without Borders – [www.scholarswithoutborders.in](http://www.scholarswithoutborders.in)

By Ram Ramaswamy

*Scholars without Borders* is a new organisation with a mission to disseminate the best of Indian academic publishing via the Internet to a global scholarly audience. Through this website, it is now possible to acquire information and order a diverse range of scholarly books, monographs, texts, journals, periodicals and conference proceedings published in India.

*Scholars without Borders* has been developed as a response to the long-standing difficulty scholars in India have faced in disseminating their research and scholarship to a wider audience. At its best, Indian academic output is of the highest quality and at the forefront of current knowledge frontiers. It is inexpensive by any standards, but still not easily available. The publications listed on the website are relevant and vital for any student or scholar seeking to keep abreast of the most recent developments.

*Scholars without Borders* features publications of the Archaeological Survey of India (New Delhi), the Indian Academy of Sciences, the International Center for Theoretical Physics, the TRiM (Text and Readings in Mathematics) and TRiPS (Texts and Readings in the Physical Sciences) series of the Hindustan Book Agency, Orient Longmans (India), Oxford University Press (India), Permanent Black (New Delhi), Tulika Press (New Delhi), teri (The Energy and Resources Institute), and Women Unlimited (New Delhi). In the coming months, a number of independent publishers and academies are also planning to include their publications through this site: this will make it easier for readers across the world to see all of what is available in one place.

Currently, books in the disciplines of Physics, Mathematics, Economics, History, General Science, Archaeology, Biology, Political

Science, Gender Studies, Energy, Ecology and Environment, Development Studies, Strategic Affairs, Philosophy and Biographical Studies are available on the website. The list of titles carried by the web site is growing, as is the range of disciplines.

In addition, there are also free digital books for downloading, as well as the possibility of managing subscriptions to periodicals and journals.

Finally, there is a comprehensive list of Open Access journals that are published from India: this list of over 75 journals includes almost 40 titles in medicine alone. This page provides a convenient gateway through which scholars can gain information and directly access the journals.

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# APIN – the Asia-Pacific Information Network

By Praditta Siripan

APIN is a regional sister of UNESCO's Information for All Programme (IFA), and was formed in 2002 by merging the Regional Network for the Exchange of Information and Experiences, the Regional Informatics Network for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and the Regional Informatics Network for South and Central Asia.

APIN member countries met for the first time in December 2002, in Bangkok, Thailand, to agree the network constitution, membership of the Observatory for the Information Society, and a detailed action plan. Twenty-five government representatives and observers from eighteen countries attended the meeting: Bhutan, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, North and South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

Simultaneous with this meeting, the UNESCO Bangkok Office organised a Regional Seminar on the World Summit on the Information Society which involved the APIN National Units (NUs). This meeting submitted its outputs for presentation to the Asian Regional Conference on WSIS in Tokyo, Japan, January 2003.

The responsibility of each APIN member country is related to the structure of UNESCO operations, and under the APIN Constitution each country needs to contribute to the activities of the network (in money and in kind) – although support is available from UNESCO and donor countries for the least developed countries within the network.

The primary objective of APIN is to support the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society. To achieve this, APIN seeks to:

- develop appropriate information policies and promote ICT

applications in the support of national development plans and programmes;

- support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training;
- promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence;
- promote information and knowledge networking;
- develop the technical and organisational infrastructure with a view to promoting the flow and the sharing of information resources; and
- promote ICT literacy and the application of ICT in UNESCO's four areas of interest: education, science, culture and communication.

One activity of note is the creation of an Observatory for ICT within the region. The objectives of this are to provide updated information on the evolution of the Information Society at national and international levels, and to foster debates on related issues. The Widayatama University in Bundung, Indonesia has been designated as the host and Coordinator of the Regional Observatory of the Information Society in Asia (ROISA). Countries throughout Asia are urged to set up a National Observatory of the Information Society to collaborate with relevant organisations within the country and to provide inputs to the ROISA.

## APIN meetings and activities

The second APIN meeting was held at Beijing, China, in 2004 and focused on information literacy. Participants from seventeen countries met at the Institute for Scientific and Technical Information of China (ISTIC) to discuss the important role of information literacy in the region. Participants agreed that APIN should launch campaigns to raise awareness

of information literacy, and that APIN should be an "authoritative and comprehensive information hub in the emerging knowledge societies with active participation and contribution by APIN National Units (NU) in all member countries".

UNESCO supported the National Library of Malaysia project "E-Library User Education" ([www.elib.gov.my](http://www.elib.gov.my)). This is a web-based self-tutorial for use in public libraries, created for the public, to help them become skilled library users. UNESCO and the National Library of Malaysia have distributed the e-lib packages on CDROM to all APIN member countries.

In 2005, UNESCO and the National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Communications and IT, India, jointly produced the *E-government Toolkit for Developing Countries* in print and CDROM. This provides a useful resource for governments in the developing world to enhance their understanding of E-government and guides them in the process of using ICT towards fulfilling the objective of good governance.

The APIN network in Thailand has undertaken several library initiatives (particularly within the rural areas). School and public library workshops were co-organised by the Thai Library Association and UNESCO Bangkok for librarians from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in 2003. The Asian Library and Information Conference was held in Bangkok in 2004 with contributions from UNESCO, IFLA and the Thai Library Association. The main objectives of the conference were to promote library and information services throughout the Asia-Pacific region in a rapidly changing digital and knowledge-based social environment.

In 2005 Thailand hosted the International Conference for Asian Digital Libraries which provided the opportunity for some APIN

representatives to meet and discuss working together more closely.

This conference also provided the opportunity for a meeting of representatives from Nepal, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand and Sri Lanka to discuss support for an Asian Journals OnLine programme. The Thailand APIN National Unit (the Technical Information Access Center, TIAC) hosted the meeting, and we hope that Asian networks

can help make our knowledge resources available to all Asians and to friends everywhere.

For more information about APIN activities, see [www.apin.info](http://www.apin.info)

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## INASP Publications

**Getting Started in e-publishing**  
by Sally Morris.

This guide for journal editors and publishers has been completely updated, and is now in its 5th edition, available in print (28pp, priced at £10.00) and free on the INASP website ([www.inasp.info/pubs](http://www.inasp.info/pubs)).

# Empowering the universities – one small step through electronic access to the literature\*

Providing Indian university libraries with required literature has been an increasing problem, and one that the University Grants Commission (UGC) decided to address about three years ago. They put in place a programme known as the UGC-INFONET which now provides online access to more than 4000 research journals to over 100 universities throughout India.

This programme recognised that there were three components to ensure success:

- (1) ensuring adequate connectivity within the universities;
- (2) negotiation of affordable rates from the publishers; and
- (3) training librarians and users, and ensuring good local administration.

It was decided that a single internet service provider would be the most efficient method of ensuring broadband access, and ERNET was selected, as they were already well known for providing connectivity to education and research institutions. In just two years more than 150 universities have been provided with broadband connectivity, through either terrestrial or satellite links.

The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), Ahmedabad, which is an inter-university centre of the UGC, was chosen to administer the programme. Their role is to select publications for the consortium, to negotiate with publishers, on agreement with the publisher to recommend to UGC, and on approval to place the order with the publisher. UGC provides funds so that the facility is cost-free for the universities.

In addition to negotiating with the universities, INFLIBNET also provide training for library staff and users, to make sure that the available resources can be used to best effect.

Whilst most universities have welcomed the programme, and are taking full advantage of it, there are still some where full benefit is not being derived. The programme has been most successful where the university has taken steps to promote and make access available throughout the university, and it has been least successful where the administration has failed to identify or provide support for an individual to implement the programme quickly. It has been found important for students and faculty to have access from their

own departments – and where this is available usage is considerably higher.

Another important component of this programme has been the wide geographic range, covering universities in every corner of the country, so that researchers in Jammu and Kashmir have the same access to the literature as peers in any of the metropolitan centres.

For the future, it will be relatively straightforward to include all universities within this programme, but the bigger challenge is provide access to the over ten thousand colleges that are affiliated to the universities. Most of these are devoted to undergraduate education, but the need for access to research information is no less great. The majority do not have adequate online connectivity, and the subscription models currently being used for the universities will be impractical and expensive.

INFONET is one symbol of the resurgence of the Indian university system, and the speed of implementation, and the tangible benefits show the success of such a coordinated, and well structured programme.

For more information, visit [www.inflibnet.ac.in](http://www.inflibnet.ac.in), [www.ugc.ac.in](http://www.ugc.ac.in)

Or email the article author:  
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\*This article has been summarised from: Ajit Kembhavi (2006) *Empowering the universities – one small step through electronic access to the literature*. Current Science 90(3), 293–295. ([www.ias.ac.in/currensci/index.html](http://www.ias.ac.in/currensci/index.html))

# Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh

By Dr Bimal Guha

The Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh (EPAB) is the only organisation for the development of editing and publication professions in Bangladesh. Within the country, there is dearth of trained editors and publishing specialists, and although a lot of research work is being conducted in both government and non-government organisations every year, there is a gap between the research, the development of quality publications, and the means of getting the published research to the target audience. This is mostly because of a lack of proper writing and editing, which ultimately results in poor communication. Both editors and publication specialists need to make efforts to simplify research results for better understanding and for better-planned publication.

Editing and Publication as a profession has not yet flourished in Bangladesh, and is not recognised as a technical profession. This is because of ignorance about the necessity for proper editing and effective communication. The publication professionals engaged in various organisations were extremely concerned about this situation, and so on 28 November 1986 the author convened a meeting of editing and publication professionals at the National Book Center, Bangladesh, to discuss and find a means of developing this profession. The meeting was held with Fazle Rabbi (the then director of the centre) in the chair. Most of the editors and publication specialists around the capital city gathered for the meeting. They discussed their professional problems and probable solutions. They also reiterated the necessity for developing an organisation to find ways of exchanging knowledge and experiences among themselves. After some preliminary and informal discussions, the participants felt an association should be formed, and unanimously announced the formation of the Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh. An *ad-hoc* committee



A view of EPAB executive committee meeting held on 31 January 2006 with Mirza Tarequl Quader in the chair.

was also formed with Bimal Guha as its convener.

A constitution of the association was presented within two months on 24 January 1987. Then EPAB formed its first executive committee for 1987–88 with Fazle Rabbi as President and Bimal Guha as General Secretary. The President and General Secretary of the current executive committee for 2005-06 are Mirza Tarequl Quader and Mano Ranjan Mondal respectively.

EPAB's activities include publication of its newsletter *Sampadana* from February 1988, organising a seminar on problems of editing in November 1988, a workshop in 1990, and assisting member-participation in international workshops/seminars etc. EPAB also arranged the first annual conference and tenth year celebration on 10 November 1997.

The major activities of EPAB are:

- standardisation of editing and publication;
- maintaining close liaison with people engaged in the editing profession;
- creating opportunities for skill development;
- conducting research on related issues;
- arranging training courses, seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences;
- achieving recognition of this profession as a specialised technical profession; and

- establishing a training institute for the professionals.

The executive committee of EPAB met on 31 January 2006 (their regular meeting) and discussed the opportunity for establishing a Bangladesh Journal OnLine service, and also the necessity of organising a workshop on it in a suitable time. This followed a meeting in Bangkok in December between a representative of EPAB and INASP which discussed the potential for establishing an Asian Journal OnLine service (similar to the African Journal OnLine service, [www.ajol.info](http://www.ajol.info)). The concept was gladly welcomed by the Executive Committee.

The next annual conference of EPAB is to be held on 23 March 2006. EPAB has a future plan to run an Editing and Publication Training Course and to establish a training institute for professionals.

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## INASP Staff

Nicki Sutherland has joined INASP as the Director, Finance and Administration and Egbert de Smet, Manuela Bianco and Trish Sheehan have joined the training team.

# Journal publishing in the developing world: MedKnow Publications as a model



By D. K. Sahu

## Scholarly journal publishing in India

A number of journals from India, similar to other developing countries, are published by the learned societies or their editors without the involvement of commercial publishers. The circulation of these journals is more or less restricted to the members of the respective societies. With very few paid non-member subscriptions, these journals have limited visibility and hence articles published in these journals are cited less frequently than their western counterparts. The resultant low Impact Factor inhibits authors from submitting their quality work to the journal.

Among other problems faced by these journals is scarcity of resources and a permanent editorial office. These invariably lead to delays in the peer review process. The delays in the postal correspondence during the peer review process add to the authors' agony. For many journals, the editorial offices keep changing which leads to loss of contact with the authors who have to keep track of the changing addresses of the journal office. MedKnow Publications, now providing services to more than 35 journals, helps journals to break the jinx of poor visibility-recognition-poor science.

## Role of Medknow Publications

MedKnow provides all the essential services required by journal editors. The aim of these services is to improve the global reach of the journals, and at the same time

relieve the editorial offices from the mundane clerical activities of the peer review process and the technical difficulties of electronic publishing. The editor has more time and vigour for the scientific work involved in the peer review process. In addition, even if the editorial office moves, the business contacts (such as the subscribers and advertisers) remain with MedKnow. The copyright of the scientific content and right to decide subscription rates remain with the journal.

## Online peer review and e-publishing

MedKnow maintains an independent website for each of its journals which provide full text of articles without any access restriction. The full text is available in HTML pages (derived from XML) as well as PDF. The websites use the OpenURL standard, making linking easier, and Dublin Core metadata making retrieval easier. The websites provide interactive features such as ability to add comments on published articles, usage statistics and translation into eight foreign languages. A visitor can also download the bibliographic details into a citation manager. The references cited in articles are linked to PubMed and other external sources. In addition, the names of bacterial species are the linked to databases such as DSMZ and Species 2000. All the eponyms in the full text articles are linked to [www.whonamedit.com](http://www.whonamedit.com) which provides information on the origin

of the term. These unique features make the reading more enriching.

The journals published by MedKnow are archived in multiple places including OAI-compliant e-print repositories and portals such as Bioline International, MedInd, etc., and also permit self-archiving. These efforts ensure the long term archiving and accessibility of the published content.

MedKnow has successfully put in place an online manuscript submission and peer review system ([www.journalonweb.com](http://www.journalonweb.com)). Over 10,000 manuscripts have been processed through this system which was launched in 2001. Eliminating the use of hard copy submissions, online processing of articles has resulted in a considerable decrease in the submission to decision time on the manuscripts.

## And the impact ...

The visibility and reach of the journals has increased greatly, as can be seen from the article downloads, number of articles submitted, citations received and increases in non-member paid subscribers (Table 1). The *Journal of Postgraduate Medicine (JPGM)*, [www.jpgmonline.com](http://www.jpgmonline.com), a publication of the Staff Society of Seth G.S. Medical College and K.E.M. Hospital) with a print circulation of less than 400 now attracts almost 100,000 visitors with more than 110,000 article downloads every month. The number of manuscripts submitted has also increased (770 articles received in 2005 compared with 180 in 2001), with growing numbers coming from outside India (Fig. 1, overleaf).

With the use of the online peer review system, the journals have been able to tackle the volume of submitted manuscripts efficiently and the submission to decision period is now less than 6 weeks for most of these journals. ●

Table 1: Overall performance of select journals in the year 2005

|                         | % of original papers from abroad | No. visitors on journal's website per day | No. of reviewers/ referees with journal | % growth in subscriptions in 2 years |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <i>J Postgrad Med</i>   | 44                               | 3300                                      | 2433                                    | 126                                  |
| <i>Neurol India</i>     | 43                               | 2040                                      | 1590                                    | 102                                  |
| <i>Indian J Surg</i>    | 29                               | 640                                       | 310                                     | 188                                  |
| <i>Indian J Med Sci</i> | 22                               | 610                                       | 1198                                    | 124                                  |
| <i>Indian J Cancer</i>  | 29                               | -   | 496                                     | 211                                  |



Fig. 1: Online readers are not restricted to the confines of a single institution or country as can be seen from the geographic distribution of 500 visitors on [www.jpgmonline.com](http://www.jpgmonline.com) (Source: Google Analytics)

Table 2: Impact of open access visibility on citations of *Journal of Postgraduate Medicine*

|   | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005* |
|---|------|------|------|------|-------|
| No. of citations for articles of previous 2 years | 12   | 37   | 63   | 142  | 156   |
| No. of articles in previous 2 years               | 111  | 147  | 155  | 173  | 161   |
| Projected Impact Factor                           | 0.11 | 0.24 | 0.41 | 0.82 | 0.99  |

\*To 31st January 2006

## Supporting Science in Vietnam

The Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) is one of the biggest S&T organisations in Vietnam. Founded by the government in 1975, its main office is in Hanoi with affiliated institutes throughout the country employing 2,360 personnel, and including 22 research institutes.

The Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) was established in 1982, to support the S&T information activities of VAST, including collecting, processing and disseminating S&T information and databases, capturing and maintaining R&D results and basic surveys on natural resources and environment, publishing S&T

journals and books; carrying out research on S&T development strategy and management; and studying the problems of time and calendar.

The ISI library plays a dominant role in the VAST library network, and is also a member of the National Library network of Vietnam, providing services for the Vietnamese scientific community.

Last July, the Library moved into a new building with greatly improved equipment.

For further information, contact Dr Mai Ha, Director of the Institute for Scientific Information, VAST, Hanoi.

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The increased visibility has also increased the citations received: for example, the projected Impact Factor of *JPGM* has increased from 0.02 in the year 2000 to 0.99 in 2005 (Table 2). Interestingly, in spite of providing free access these journals have not lost the paid non-member subscriptions, but, in fact, have benefited from the increase in subscriptions.

The increasing article downloads, manuscript submissions and citations suggest that journals from everywhere in the developing world could benefit from professional help in publishing. In doing so, the publisher should act as facilitator in getting the readers and authors for the journals without impinging on the financial or intellectual rights of the journals.

For further information, visit the MedKnow website: [www.medknow.com](http://www.medknow.com)

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## Royal Society of Chemistry offers Africa free access to journals archives

The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) is the first Learned and Professional organisation to provide African countries with free access to science journal archives.

The 43,000-member London-based international Society has made its historical research archives that contain 1.5 million pages and 250,000 articles available free of charge electronically as part of its commitment to help build science and technology capacity in Africa.

Dr Campbell, a leading drug discovery scientist, introduced the RSC Archive for Africa at the Annual Congress of the Chemical Society of Ethiopia on 24–25 February in Addis Ababa, where the newly created Federation of African Societies of Chemistry was launched.

The RSC Archive will be freely available to higher education institutions throughout Africa via INASP: PERI.

# Publishing a first-class journal, and having fun doing it

By Kumar P Mainali

When Arjun Adhikari and I founded the *Himalayan Journal of Sciences* in 2002, we entered a field already crowded with competing publications. Why was it essential to introduce a new journal? We had three basic reasons: to promote science education in Nepal; to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to problems that were inherently resistant to academic compartmentalisation; and, frankly, to have fun. Since then we have had some successes, learned more than we expected, and found that “fun” has to find room in the interstices between crisis, stress, and exhaustion.

## Promoting science in Nepal

Academia is a “publish or perish” ecosystem. Notwithstanding the convenience and penetration of digitalised information, peer-reviewed journals remain the gold standard of publication. Scientific careers in Nepal are seriously hampered by the lack of journals that appear regularly and frequently enough to guarantee rapid dissemination of new findings. Publication in a handsome and respected journal raises the prestige of a scientist not only in the eyes of their employer and colleagues, but in the eyes of students, and can help recruit the new scientists that Nepal so desperately needs.

Sadly, the lack of such primary journals in Nepal generally means that our best research is published in foreign journals, which are both expensive and hard to acquire in Nepal. As a result, information crucial to our development becomes essentially unavailable to planners, entrepreneurs, and other scientists.

## Multi-disciplinary approach to complicated problems

One consequence of the information explosion is that areas of study are splitting and diverging. Inconveniently



enough, our most urgent problems resist academic compartmentalisation. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, depletion of energy resources – these are almost abstractions in the West. Here, they are clear and present crises, and no single field can be expected to come up with a silver bullet to deal with any of them.

The *Himalayan Journal of Sciences* was conceived with the intention of fostering interdisciplinary awareness among scientists focusing on the multilayered issues confronting the Himalayan region. This is not to say that we will publish only papers with multidisciplinary approaches; we hope that simply by publishing a diversity of studies within one journal we will encourage our readers to familiarise themselves with the full range of pertinent disciplines to achieve a fresh perspective.

## Fun

Most of us choose our fields because they match our versions of fun. Arjun and I happened to enjoy a rather eclectic range of work, from pure research to event planning. Publishing a journal is one of the few occupations that would allow us to explore and make contributions in an open-ended array of fields and endeavours. We have recently founded an NGO called Mountain Legacy, which sponsors a series of conferences that began in Namche Bazaar a couple of years ago; the next in this series, “Mountain Hazards, Mountain Tourism”, will cast a spotlight on Rolwaling Valley and Tsho Rolpa. One outcome of the conference will be an agenda and the timetable for the Mountain Legacy Institute, a free-form research nexus based in Rolwaling. If all goes well, we will

soon have a new research magnet, comparable in many ways to the Pyramid in Lobuche, but with a broader perspective encompassing social sciences as well as the physical and life sciences. This is indeed exciting work!

## Survival

On the other hand, the stress is all but intolerable. With no fixed resources, we live like paupers, dependent on random acts of kindness. When Arjun and I were sitting with our first edition, photo-ready but with no funds for publication, I happened to mention our quandary to a class I was teaching at St Xavier’s. Two weeks later, the students had drummed up enough advertising to pay for the entire issue.

More recently, we had been worried about the excessive cost of Jack Ives’ new book, *Himalayan Perceptions*, an update of *Himalayan Dilemma* (Ives and Messerli, 1989, Routledge London and New York), which is probably the single most influential monograph ever published on Himalayan environmental issues. We proposed to Jack Ives that we republish the book in Nepal, at a cost low enough to enable our scientists and policy-makers to acquire it; he has consented and also volunteered to donate all proceeds to *HJS*. Not an end to all our problems, but at least enough to buy some time.

That’s how it goes. You cast your net wide, make as many contacts as possible, and hope that sooner or later some deep-pocketed donor will see the importance of what you are doing and give you what it takes to turn a stubborn dream into an independent and stable institution that can make a huge difference in the lives of individuals, the welfare of our society, and the sustainability of our Himalayan legacy. It doesn’t take a lot – maybe \$10,000 per year – and we have faith it will happen soon. It has to.

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# INASP and FAO hold scientific information session at Tunis pre-conference

By Peter Ballantyne

On 13 November 2005, INASP and FAO sponsored three sessions on *accessing, documenting, and disseminating scientific information for development* as part of a conference on research organised alongside the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis. Presentations were grouped under three themes: Gaining and sustaining access to science findings; Publishing and disseminating science findings; and Information access and issues of bandwidth.

The session was framed within the wider policies of the International Council for Science (ICSU) that calls for “full and open access” to scientific data and “universal and equitable access” to scientific publications. It also built on the science information agenda for action identified by ICSU in 2003 which can be summarised as follows:

- ensure affordable and reliable Internet connectivity for all universities and research institutes;
- promote capacity building and education;
- ensure full and open access to public data;
- promote interoperability and metadata standards;
- provide support for the collection and preservation of essential digital data;
- promote equitable access to scientific information;
- encourage initiatives to promote scientific literacy;
- support research on ICT use in key priority areas; and
- recognise the role for scientists in decision-making in/for the information society.

## Gaining and sustaining access to science findings

Participants heard the experiences of the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) with a specific focus on Malawi; how the

Global Development Network (GDNet) supports social science researchers in developing countries; the experiences of AGORA and HINARI enabling researchers to gain access to agriculture, health and biomedical literature; the activities of the SIST project to support the development of information and communication systems for education and research institutions in Africa; and the eIFL experience, particularly related to library consortium development.

It was clear from all the presentations that more international information in electronic form is becoming available free or at affordable prices to developing country scientists and researchers. Moreover, the ability of some institutions to pay for information resources is also increasing (mostly at amounts far lower than the publisher ‘list’ prices). Innovative institutional arrangements such as national consortia are proving to be essential in this regard. Increasing attention is also being given to increase the visibility and accessibility of research outputs of developing-country scientists, though less progress has been made here than on getting international science to them.

## Publishing and disseminating science findings

Under ‘publishing’, presenters from the CGIAR, FAO, the US National Academies Press and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina explained their activities and some lessons learned; a presentation from Bioline International made the case for open access journal publishing.

Here we heard a great mix of experiences from the FAO supporting national efforts to document and exchange their own information products; the CGIAR’s current focus on ‘internal’ connectivity, publishing and library tasks moving towards a research ‘system without boundaries’; the multitude of exciting and innovative projects emerging

from the Alexandria Library; and some of the innovative skimming and discovery tools used by the National Academies to help readers locate relevant information. Evidence from Bioline and the other presenters showed that interest in open access publishing and archiving is spreading and the search for sustainable publishing models continues.

## Information access and issues of bandwidth

Finally, since large and fast Internet ‘bandwidth’ is now crucial for any of these activities to be successful, presenters from IDRC/PAREN, INASP and the AVU discussed bandwidth challenges in African universities and what they are doing to overcome them. Compared to the situation two years ago, we are beginning to see a much greater awareness of the need by universities and research institutes to combine forces to negotiate more affordable (and faster and larger) connectivity as well as greater attention to intra-institutional bandwidth management to ensure that existing connectivity is fully optimised and prioritised to educational or scientific goals.

### More information:

<http://worldsci.net/tunis>  
[www.icsu.org](http://www.icsu.org)  
[www.inasp.info/peri](http://www.inasp.info/peri)  
[www.gdnet.org](http://www.gdnet.org)  
[www.healthinternet.org](http://www.healthinternet.org)  
[www.aginternetwork.org](http://www.aginternetwork.org)  
[www.sist-sciencesdev.net](http://www.sist-sciencesdev.net)  
[www.eifl.net](http://www.eifl.net)  
[www.fao.org/agris/](http://www.fao.org/agris/)  
<http://http://ictkm.cgiar.org>  
[www.bibalex.org](http://www.bibalex.org)  
[www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu)  
[www.bioline.org.br](http://www.bioline.org.br)  
[www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)  
[www.inasp.info/training/bandwidth](http://www.inasp.info/training/bandwidth)  
[www.avu.org](http://www.avu.org)

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## 93rd Indian Science Congress recommends Optimal National Open Access Policy

The special session on Open Access held at the 93rd Indian Science Congress at MANAGE, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, on 6 January 2006, came up with the following recommendation for “Optimal National Open Access Policy”.

The Government of India [including DST, DSIR, CSIR, DBT, DoD, DAE, DRDO, ICAR, ICMR, UGC, IITs, IISc, and NITs] expects authors of research papers resulting from publicly-funded research to maximise the opportunities to make their results available for free. To this end the Government:

- Requires electronic copies of any research paper that has been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, and is supported in whole or in part by Government funding, to be deposited into an institutional open access repository immediately upon acceptance for publication.
- Encourages Government Grant Holders to publish in a suitable Open Access Journal where one exists; the Government will cover the publication costs, if any.
- Encourages Government Grant Holders to retain ownership of the copyright of published papers where possible.

For further information, contact Subbiah Arunachalam, Distinguished Fellow, MSSRF & Coordinator of the session, Email [arun@mssrf.res.in](mailto:arun@mssrf.res.in)

Or see the conference website: [www.93isc.org](http://www.93isc.org)

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## Project on information literacy for Vietnamese librarians just started

Vietnamese academic librarians are now being trained in the area of information literacy in a project recently launched with funds from UNESCO's Information for All Programme.

The project on information literacy is being run jointly by the Hanoi University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), Australian Development Scholarship (ADS) Centre Library and Vietnam Development Information Center (VDIC).

The new UNESCO project will assist capacity building of selected Vietnamese academic library professionals. It aims to develop their information literacy and training skills in order to enable them to make the best use of available resources, as well as to teach other professionals and to share knowledge through personal, regional and international networks.



In addition to basic training, the project will produce a variety of Guidelines, in particular on the information literacy concept, competencies, framework and practical plan, applicable to academic library communities in Vietnam.

For more information contact Susanne Ornager, UNESCO Bangkok, [s.ornager@unesco Bangkok.org](mailto:s.ornager@unesco Bangkok.org)

### ***Annual Reviews Joins the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) to deliver scientific review literature to developing countries worldwide***

Annual Reviews is pleased to announce a three year partnership with PERI that will provide a large number of eligible countries with free access to some of the most highly ranked scientific review literature in the world.

Annual Reviews was founded as a non-profit organisation dedicated to helping scientists the world over cope with the ever-increasing volume of scientific research and data in a growing number of disciplines. Since the publication of the first Annual Review of Biochemistry® in 1932, the Annual Reviews publications review 32 focused disciplines within the Biomedical, Physical, and Social Sciences. Each year, distinguished researchers and editors (including Nobel Laureates, National Medal of Science winners, and recipients of other prestigious awards) critically review, synthesise and filter the vast amount of primary research in specific disciplines to guide researchers to the principal contributions of the field and to help keep them up to date in their area of research, saving them time and effort. Available in print and online, each article is its own search engine, providing a gateway to the essential primary research literature referenced within each topic.

These timely and authoritative collections of critical review articles comprehensively reflect the breadth and depth of specific scientific fields. The collection serves to advance science by expanding communication among researchers, academics, and professionals across the globe, providing the definitive information resource online and in print.

To learn more about Annual Reviews, please visit [www.annualreviews.org](http://www.annualreviews.org)

## African broadband access accelerates

Broadband access has become increasingly available in Africa over the last four years according to the authors of a new report published by Balancing Act. The report is based on a survey of 100 operators on the continent.

According to authors Paul Hamilton and Russell Southwood, between 2001 and the present day a wide range of both wireline and wireless broadband technologies have been deployed across Africa. The first were deployed from around 2001, and the pace has picked up from 2003 onwards. The technologies which have been deployed have changed over time; the most recent trend has seen the implementations of WiMAX 802.16 standard networks which can deliver broadband over a range of up to as far as 75km.

Source: <http://www.tectonic.co.za/viewr.php?id=762>

Report: <http://www.balancingact-africa.com/broadband.html>

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## Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA)

ITOCA is a capacity building organisation aimed at enhancing information and communications technology (ICT) skills for African Librarians, information specialists, scientists, researchers and students in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Formerly the TEEAL Africa Office, ITOCA was established in 1999 as a marketing and support office for Cornell University's Albert R. Mann Library TEEAL programme for Africa.

For more information, visit [www.itoca.org](http://www.itoca.org)

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## Low-energy Internet for Education – Where Electricity is a Challenge

On December 8, 2005, dot-EDU set up a low-cost, low-energy using lab in rural Uganda that may be just the solution for places where electrical problems (surges, brief cuts, and brownouts) tend to damage ICT equipment. At Bulera Primary Teachers College, the staff began to set up a hybrid system that uses both 12-volt direct current (DC) as well as standard AC from the mains. Eventually, it will shift over to become a ten work-station lab that is

entirely run off of 12-volt. There are further plans to have the lab run on "boda" power if the main electrical system is down for a long time. (A boda is a motorbike used in many rural places; a litre of petrol – about US\$1 – and a simple roller device can allow the motorbike to charge the battery system enough to run the lab for hours.)

A key part of this lab is the use of low-energy, low-cost "thin client"

### **UN ICT Task Force Working Group Series: Open Access for Africa - Challenges, Recommendations and Examples** Edited by Samuel Danofsky

What options are there to increase access for people in Africa? Would a Pan-African fiber network be possible? These and other issues are explored in this publication that builds on the workshop "Open Access" which took place in Maputo in May 2005 ([www.openaccess.uem.mz](http://www.openaccess.uem.mz)). This workshop was organised by the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force Working Group on the Enabling Environment, in partnership with IDRC, Sida, the Eduardo Mondlane University and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. The publication includes contributions from presenters at the workshop as well as other authors and examines different aspects of how to provide increased availability of ICT infrastructure and services for Africa, including identifying the appropriate actors, relevant technologies, and suggestions for regulatory frameworks as well as how to support the entrepreneurship that is necessary to build sustainable information and communication technology networks.

Source:

<http://www.unicttaskforce.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1563>

devices – rather than regular desktop PCs, which use much more power. The terminals have no moving parts, no fans, and cost well under \$300 US dollars, yet – when connected to a server – have all the ports and capabilities of modern PCs.

More information: [www.dot-com-alliance.org/newsletter/article.php?article\\_id=142](http://www.dot-com-alliance.org/newsletter/article.php?article_id=142)

The next *INASP Newsletter* will be published in Summer 2006. If you would like to contribute to its contents, please write to the editor at the Oxford address. Contributions must be received by **1 June 2006**.



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