Uncovering Hidden Gems

The Journals Online project at INASP

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The INASP Journals Online (JOLs) project supports peer-reviewed journals from developing and emerging countries to publish their journals online, giving researchers access to local knowledge and the opportunity to contribute their own articles. The aim is to increase the visibility of research from these countries while also increasing the capacity of journal editors to improve the quality of their journals, and manage them online.

Beginning in 1998 as simple HTML pages on the INASP website, the methodology for the INASP Journals Online Project (JOLs) has evolved through experience with the initial African Journals Online project (AJOL). Most of the journals did not have PDFs of their full text and many were not willing to make their content available for free, so a document delivery service was created to disseminate the full text freely to developing countries and for a small charge to developed countries.

A partnership with the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) in Canada in 2004 allowed AJOL to be transferred to the Open Journal System (OJS). INASP developed the software to suit the needs of the multiple journal AJOL website thus providing a much more sophisticated, but low cost and low bandwidth website which improved the user experience as well as providing a robust database for the service. As a result of the AJOL developments, PKP went on to produce new versions of their software which incorporated the multiple journal site and a number of the other innovations originally developed for AJOL.

In accordance with INASP's mandate to develop sustainability and local capacity, AJOL was moved to Africa in 2005 and it is now managed by a not-for-profit trust in South Africa. It has gone from strength to strength with more than 370 journals from 27 countries on the site in November 2009 and the website was recently updated and re-launched.

Two evaluations were carried out on AJOL and the experience gained was used in the development of an Asian JOL, but after a lot of discussion from the interested parties, a different approach was used. Instead of having one large site incorporating journals from many countries, individual country sites were developed and then combined into a search portal called AsiaJOL.

In order to assist editors to improve the quality of their journals and train them in the use of the online peer-review system, a series of in-country workshops was developed and has become an important part of the JOL concept. The first workshop usually discusses the issues of online publishing and then editors are encouraged to create their own online strategies and promotion plans. The second workshop is usually held after a country JOL has been established and it addresses some of the production quality issues, but mainly focuses on training the editors to load their own content onto the website. The third workshop brings together the same editors to discuss the functions of an editorial office and goes through the full online peer-review process using the JOL website. In some instances, the second and third workshops are combined.

The visibility of the research on the JOLs was further enhanced when INASP entered into an agreement with CrossRef to allow all articles published on the JOLs to have digital object identifiers (DOIs) assigned to them. Journals are encouraged to include DOIs in the reference lists of their own articles so as to improve the experience of researchers using the articles.

Asian JOLs

The following Asian JOLs have been set up: Vietnam (VJOL) and Nepal (NepJOL) 2006, Bangladesh (BanglaJOL) 2007, Philippines (PhilJOL) and Sri Lanka (SLJOL) 2008.

Journals Online	No. of Journals	No. of Issues	No. of articles	No. of FT articles	% of articles FT	No. of FT views	No. of visits	Countries from which visits came
Bangladesh	45	195	2,716	2,197	80	702,969	431,297	213
Nepal	42	139	1,960	1,319	67	609,232	328,436	216
Philippines	33	116	1,089	864	79	518,718	361,883	208
Sri Lanka	17	106	1,090	1,052	97	98,684	46,582	181
Vietnam	23	142	1,473	1,010	69	326,922	128,080	178
Total	**160**	**698**	**8,328**	**6,424**	**77**	**2,256,525**	**1,296,278**	

Table 1: Summary of Statistics for AsiaJOL

In November 2009 the Asian JOLs included 160 journals with 8,328 articles of which 77% are available as open access full text (see Table 1). There have been 2.25 million views of full text articles and nearly 1.3 million visits from countries all over the world.

BanglaJOL is used as an example to illustrate the increase in article views over time (Figure 1) and the same trend is displayed by each of the other JOLs.

More information about the usage of all the JOLs can be found in the newsletters on the INASP website. Additionally, a purely qualitative measure of the change in visibility for the journals can be obtained from comments by the editors in their correspondence with INASP.

The grouping of the separate Asian JOLs was accomplished in 2008 by the development of the PKP harvester which gathers the metadata from the individual JOL databases and brings them together on AsiaJOL where they can be searched individually or together, thus allowing researchers to find more material which is relevant to their specific region. The Indonesian Journals Online project is also included in the database although it is not one of the INASP JOLs. This part of the project is still being developed.
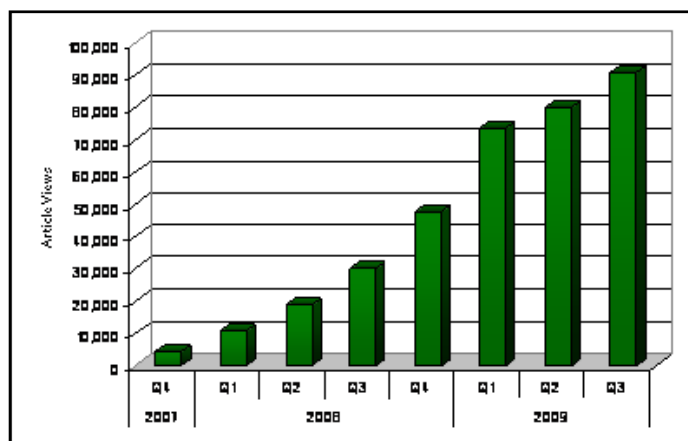

Fig. 1: Article views for BanglaJOL

> "I must thank you for your support of our journal through PhilJOL. As soon as we got into PhilJOL, the number of submissions has increased significantly. The increase is so significant, that I am considering suggesting to our publisher that we increase the number of issues per year from 2 to 3. The quality of the submissions has also improved! I know that this improvement is partly due to our visibility in PhilJOL."
> **PhilJOL Journal**

Discussion

The Asian JOLs have been successful in that they have allowed the journals to obtain a web presence quickly, easily and at little cost without the need for technical expertise or their own server. We have intentionally kept the JOL websites very simple so that they are more easily downloaded in bandwidth-poor countries. However, there is still some work to be done in reducing the size of the PDFs of the articles and introducing HTML versions of the articles to make them even more accessible.

Being part of a community of journals from a country has been very important because it makes them easier to find and increases the visibility of the journals. Some of the journals did have websites before joining the JOL, but because they were often part of their university websites or did not comply with internationally accepted standards, they were not easily found. Journals are still joining all of the JOLs as they realise the advantages the sites can offer and the support they will be given in learning how to use them.

The number of visitors to the sites and the large number of countries from which they come has shown that the formation of the JOLs has contributed to the increase in visibility of the locally produced research (see Table 1).

The workshops have been an important part of the methodology, because they have allowed the editors to meet and discuss issues which they might not have been aware of before. The results of a survey on levels of indexing showed that as a result of attending workshops

> "It has been an excellent year for us. Till today we have received 47 manuscripts from authors around the world - highest ever in our 15 years of publishing!"
> **BanglaJOL Journal**

> "I am very pleased with PhilJOL; our journal and the health information contained therein are suddenly much more visible online than ever before. This availability would not have been possible or easily achievable by a developing country publication such as ours were it not for the generous support of INASP. You are levelling the playing field. Many thanks."
> **PhilJOL Journal**

and being part of a JOL, many journals are now included in more indexes, thus increasing their visibility. Face-to-face training has helped the editors to use the system, although bandwidth issues have meant that the use of the full peer-review system has not been as rapid as we would have hoped.

Sustainability of the JOLs is also important and it is planned that, if possible, each of the JOLs will be handed over to local management within four years of inception. This depends on the identification of a suitable local host organisation and it may, or may not, involve an actual transfer of the physical hosting of the website depending on the power and bandwidth conditions within the country. Vietnam JOL was transferred to local hosting at the National Center for Scientific & Technological Information (NACESTI) in March 2009.

At the moment many of the journal editors still tend to send their content to INASP for it to be loaded onto the websites but, in theory, as they become more willing to use the online peer-review system, the sites will require less central support because the content will be submitted by the authors and published by the editors. The role of the central administrator will become more one of advocacy and record keeping.

The search portal of AsiaJOL has been slow to start, and this part of the project is still being developed but it has the potential to be an important research tool which may eventually allow JOL databases from Africa, Asia and Latin America to be linked and searched in the future.
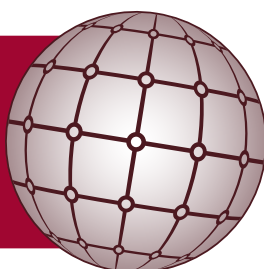
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Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information

The JOLs are a part of the second phase of the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii).

PERii focuses on the needs of developing and emerging countries by working with partners to support global research communication through knowledge exchange, network building and capacity strengthening.

Taking advantage of the possibilities offered by ICTs, the core programme areas focus on: affordable access to international scholarly literature; writing, publishing and communication of research; effective use, evaluation and management of ICTs to support research; development of modern, digital research libraries; and enabling evidence-informed policy making.

For more information on PERii and its component programme areas, visit the website:
www.inasp.info/perii

African Journals Online (AJOL)

The JOL project began with AJOL in 1998 as simple HTML pages on the INASP website. In association with the PKP, AJOL was transferred to OJS and the JOL methodology was developed using AJOL experience as the template. AJOL currently operates through the National Inquiry Services Centre South Africa (NISC SA).

www.ajol.info

Vietnam Journals Online (VJOL)

VJOL was established in association with the National Center for Scientific and Technological Information (NACESTI), the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), and Vietnamese Academy of Science and Technology (VAST).

It is now managed in Vietnam by NACESTI.

www.vjol.info.vn

Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL)

BanglaJOL has been established in association with the Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh (EPAB) and the Bangladesh Academy of Science (BAS).

www.banglajol.info

Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL)

NepJOL has been established in association with Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL).

www.nepjol.info

Philippines Journals Online (PhilJOL)

PhilJOL has been established in association with Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University.

www.philjol.info

Sri Lanka Journals Online (SLJOL)

SLJOL has been established in association with the University of Colombo and the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka.

www.sljol.info

Asia Journals Online

Asia Journals Online (AsiaJOL)

AsiaJOL is a portal to scholarly journals published in Bangladesh, Nepal, The Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia.

www.asiajol.info