Improving access to published research - the INASP initiatives

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The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) was established by ICSU (the International Council of Science) in 1992 to provide support for networking between information providers and users, particularly to bridge the information divide between the developed and developing world. INASP currently operates a range of programmes to support researchers, health workers and rural outreach workers with access to relevant information.

To support access to scientific and other research information, INASP launched the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) in 2002 after a 2-year pilot project. PERI comprises several different components, as below:

1. Access to international research
2. Access to local and regional research
3. Training support for effective use of online resources
4. Training support for local and regional publishers
5. Support for country collaboration
6. Research and development

To support access to international research, INASP negotiates low-cost or no-cost access to international online published resources from major publishers (such as Blackwell, Oxford University Press, etc.). These are then provided to the developing countries who

have requested them, and payment is either made by the country or from external funding. It is important to note that access is free to the researchers ("at point of use"), since any payment comes from the library, institutional, governmental or international development agency funds. To assist efficient use of these resources, INASP provides training support in using and managing online resources, both to researchers and the library community. Over 1000 individuals from more than 200 institutions have received some training during the last two years.

The full list of resources made available through this programme, and the countries eligible to receive this support can be found on the INASP website. (The site also provides information about other free online resources which researchers anywhere in the world can access with no charge.)

To assist access to national and regional published research, INASP provides support for promoting awareness and access to national and regional journals and other scholarly works. In particular support is provided for promoting and publishing these resources online to ensure visibility among the international online published resources. An example of this type of work is the African Journals OnLine (AJOL) initiative, which hosts tables of contents, abstracts and publication information for over 200 African-published journals. To assist national and regional journals to become more sustainable and visible to researchers worldwide, INASP provides training and resources for journal publishers and editors, and also supports workshops initiated in-country. Over 100 publications have been represented at the training workshops over the past two years.

To build sustainability into this programme, INASP are working with colleagues and partners around the world to assist the development of country collaboration and partnerships. To this end support is being provided to train in negotiation and consortia skills, and to assist with partnerships worldwide. INASP also undertakes research projects to assist access and management of online resources: an example of this is a study in maximising bandwidth usage, which has resulted in a published report (free on the INASP website), and the development of training courses with the support of the Flemish InterUniversity Council (VLIR). Another example is the recent partnership with Lund University Libraries to jointly develop the Electronic Library Information Navigator (ELIN@) for low bandwidth environments.

INASP are not alone in working to enable greater access to research information worldwide, and are very conscious of the importance of working closely with the different organisations to avoid duplication of effort, and to ensure that researchers in developing countries are able to make informed decisions about

their choice of research materials. For example, PERI provides access to a wide range of disciplines, whereas HINARI concentrate on biomedical literature, and AGORA on agricultural (and related) subjects, so recipient institutions may be best served by selecting only one of the initiatives.

Equally, other organisations are also working to build visibility to developing world research, for example the Bioline initiative which provides a platform for full text journals, and Open Journals System (from the Public Knowledge Project in Canada) which provides software support for a fully online publishing system. It is important that the different initiatives work cooperatively so that developing country publishers are able to select the most appropriate project to enable their publications to thrive.

The worldwide scholarly publishing community is currently in a state of great change, with the potentials offered by online delivery of content contributing to discussions over access. Within this environment, INASP work with partners to ensure the maximum access to relevant information is provided to the developing and transitional countries, and that their own research and publishing communities are aware of the debates and questions being raised around the world so that they can participate in the debates, and contribute their own experiences and opinions.

References
AGORA: **http://www.aginternetwork.org/**
AJOL: **http://www.ajol.info**
Bioline: **http://www.bioline.org.br**
Elin@: **http://www.lub.lu.se/headoffice/elininfo.shtml**
HINARI: **http://www.healthinternetwork.org/**
ICSU: **http://www.icsu.org**
INASP training resources: **http://www.inasp.info/training**
Open Journals Systems: **http://www.pkp.ubc.ca/ojs**
PERI: **http://www.inasp.info/peri**
VLIR: **http://www.vlir.be/**

Svensk sammanfattning

En av de svåraste utmaningarna för forskare i låg-och medelinkomstländer är att få tillgång till internationella forskningspublikationer. Kostnaderna för att prenumerera på tidskrifter och andra informationsresurser samt bristen på utbildning i att använda dem är nyckelproblem. Det finns ett antal initiativ (på lokal, nationell och internationell nivå) för att erbjuda olika typer av gynnsamma rabatter alternativt helt fri tillgång för forsknings- och utbildningsinstitutioner i dessa länder. Förutom att ge stöd till utbildning och träning är The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) också en av de

organisationer som är involverade i ett sådant initiativ - the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI). Artikeln ger en kort översikt över de olika initiativen och över INASP och PERI-programmen.