

THE WINNING FORMULA

The Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC)

2009

Since its inception in 2003, the Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) has blazed a trail for cash-strapped research organisations across the developing world, working together to overcome the impact of budget cuts. KLISC now provides electronic access to over 20,000 journal titles from across the academic spectrum to its 54 member institutions. Subscribers enjoy both access to peer-reviewed research for a fraction of the usual cost and benefit from collaboration with like-minded institutions and the strengthening of ICT skills and resources.

In common with many developing countries, money has been tight for library and information services in Kenya for decades. The impact of poor funding on research across the subject areas is significant and some Kenyan universities had been unable to afford subscriptions to journals for years. Of wider significance still is the effect such inequality has on the economic and scientific advancement of developing countries.

In 2000, INASP, as part of their overall strategy, looked for ways to help combat such shortcomings in accessibility. This led to the introduction of the first phase of the Programme for Enhancement of Research Information (PERI). As part of this PERI, INASP worked to negotiate reduced subscription rates with international publishers to supply a package of electronic journals to developing countries on a national basis. Needless to say, access to the journals was very well received, but the financial support from INASP was only planned to last for three years. As the end of this period loomed, many institutions in Kenya were extremely reluctant to give up their new-found journals, and were determined to find a way to continue to pay for them – and so KLISC was born in late 2003.

Although organisations in all of our partner countries face different challenges, we hope that the ongoing success story in Kenya will inspire, and perhaps help, the formation of consortia elsewhere.



KLISC stakeholders meeting, 2008

Ground rules

Stakeholders from the interested institutions in Kenya initially met in 2004 to establish how the consortium would operate – its objectives, eligible organisations, the cost of the journals package and how it would be divided. Helpfully, the University of Nairobi offered to host and coordinate KLISC and continues to do so today. The members agreed the following:

Objectives

- To share information resources in stock
- To facilitate capacity building in libraries and information centres in Kenya
- To share procurement costs of information resources
- To promote the use of ICT in information management
- To promote development of local content
- To enhance dissemination of information for research and national development

Membership

Membership consists of academic, not-for-profit national institutions and organisations and, as of September 2009, there are 54 members. Membership is limited to the following institutions/organisations:

- Public universities Private universities
- Government institutions and departments
- Public libraries, national archives, museums, etc.
- Non-profit national tertiary colleges
- National research institutions

The Winning Formula

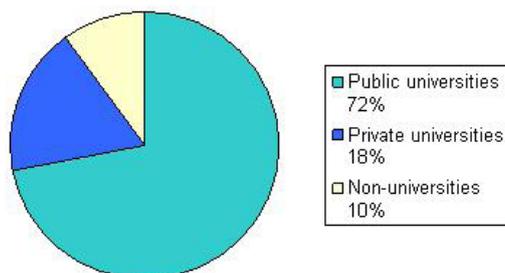
Of course, how to split the cost of the journals package between so many diverse members of a consortium will always be the trickiest part. The issue of how much each institution should contribute is a thorny one since different organisations clearly employ different numbers of people

and have both different budgets and access needs. Major areas of discussion are how many journals there should be and which to prioritise. The total cost of the INASP package for resources selected by KLISC is currently around US \$200 000 (around Ksh 15.1 million), and the members of KLISC finally agreed to share it as follows:

Universities: 90% (public universities pay 80% of this i.e. 72% of total, and private universities pay 20% of this i.e. 18% of total)

Non-university institutions: 10%

How do members split the bill?



The average annual subscription fee for a single institution comes to about Ksh 300 000 (roughly US \$4000). Together with the subscription fee, all members pay a one-off registration fee of Ksh 5000 (around US \$65) and an annual membership of Ksh 10 000 (roughly US \$130) to cover administration costs such as postage and communication. The University of Nairobi invoices KLISC members, collects fees and pays for resources on behalf of the consortium.

What else do you get for your money?

Access to high-quality, peer-reviewed academic journals is obviously the *raison d'être* of the consortium. But members have also enjoyed a host of other benefits such as ICT training sessions run by KLISC for both library staff and researchers, and in many institutions ICT facilities have been upgraded to do justice to the journals package. Members have also been able to use their improved resources to support each other in the management of information systems, keeping informed of new developments and interaction with experts from a variety of backgrounds. The building of an international network has opened new lines of communication and members have welcomed the resulting spirit of cooperation. These newly forged links have been a real benefit for people at international, national and local levels.

Testing times

Despite the achievements of the Kenyan consortium, the road to its success was not always a smooth one. Founding members had to overcome a host of problems, many of which will be familiar to other researchers and librarians interested in setting up consortia.



A KLISC-run Monitoring and Evaluating Electronic Resource Use (MEERU) workshop. A future facilitator of MEERU Vietnam was also invited to attend.

We have already explained how the KLISC members dealt with the major bone of contention: how the costs of the programme should be shared out. But along with this, the existing ICT infrastructure in many institutions – in terms of both hardware and human resources – was inadequate to support the journals package, and money for upgrades and training was tight. The lack of an independent secretariat also caused some friction. And finally, plain old-fashioned human nature meant that some people were simply reluctant to embrace change.

There are still a few ongoing difficulties that the consortium is keen to iron out, for example, some members pay their subscriptions late, and the ICT facilities in some institutions are still not up to scratch.

A bright future

KLISC is now standing on its own two feet, and a number of measures are in place to ensure its continuing independence and success. An executive committee has been formed, and a governing board is currently being established. Members' registration and annual fees continue to sustain the consortium, and various committees have been formed for purposes including fundraising, monitoring and evaluation, and to lobby for government support.

Finally, the consortium is keen to raise awareness of its activities, to recruit new members, and to show hard-up institutions in other developing countries that getting access to essential, original research might be easier and cheaper than they think.

For more information on KLISC, contact the University of Nairobi Library:
libraryhelp@uonbi.ac.ke

For more information on INASP or the current phase of the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii), visit the INASP website:
www.inasp.info
www.inasp.info/perii