Applying scientific thinking in the service of society

ACADEMY OF SCIENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA (ASSAf)

SCOLARLY PUBLISHING PROGRAMME

Presentation to SEMINAR ON RESEARCH UPTAKE AND UTILISATION:

“A Consensus Model for Research Dissemination and Uptake”

14 Sept 2009

W Gevers, Chairperson: ASSAf’s Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa
OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The ASSAf Scholarly Publishing Programme is conceptualised as a concerted intervention into the country’s national system of Innovation (NSI), aligned with the Ten-Year Innovation Plan of the DST, and focused on the enhancement of the quality, quantity and worldwide visibility of original, peer-reviewed publications produced by researchers in the public sector, the fostering of a new generation of highly competent and productive scientists and scholars, and enhancement of research uptake and utilisation. It is based on approaches typical of Academy activities (evidence-based, peer review, etc.)
ASSAf REPORT 2006: JOURNAL-BASED PUBLICATIONS

• Strong indigenous journal system essential

• Code of best practice in editing and peer review needed

• Cyclic peer review of journals by ASSAf panels proposed

• Suggests accreditation of research outputs by govt. should be based on peer review-QA system as next phase of incentivising quality in Higher Educ. Instits.
• National platform required for open access through high-quality, free-online journals AND institutional repositories - govt. backing needed, mechanisms to be explored

• Information system to be set up, plus citation indexing and valid bibliometric methods

• Translation/uptake/utilisation of scholarly content needed for public benefit - esp. education, innovation, development

• International: efforts to promote public sector, level-playing field, freely accessible indexing system
ASSAf REPORT: PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS 1,3 AND 5

- National Scholarly Editors’ Forum established - terms of reference agreed - consensus “National Code of best practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review” published - database of journals/editors nearly ready - blog being established - three annual meetings held with good attendance and participation.

- Mandate given for discipline-grouped peer review of SA scholarly journals - criteria and process guidelines approved - first two Consensus Peer Review Panels nearly finished (Social Sciences et al, Agriculture/Basic Life Sci et al) - reports will be open domain and multi-purpose for policy-makers, system analysts, publishers, contributors and readers - next four groups of journals underway.
ASSAf REPORT: PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION 4

- Negotiations pending for inclusion of best-practice guidelines in CHE/HEQC QA systems for higher education institutions, science councils

- Working toward free-online, 4-tiered course system in scientific writing for postgraduates and young staff - consultative expert workshop expressed strong support
RECOMMENDATION 2 (contin.)

- Discipline-grouped consensus peer review of SA journals by ASSAf Panels will provide strong inputs into future accreditation models/policy for research outputs (plus Scholarly Books study now released)

- There will be a tightening up of the validity of S&T indicator analyses

- There will be normative effects on whole NSI through better training, best practice, competition for excellence
Vision of increasingly visible, highly cited/high-impact, collaboration-inviting, locally published journals in SA:

- Task Team on (possible) “national platform for publication of high-quality, open access (“Gold Route”) scholarly journals”
- Examination of SABINET; AJOL; Hindawi (Cairo); SciELO (S. America, ex Brazil)
- Institutional repositories (“Green Route”) encouraged (cooperation with NRF, HEI’s, etc)
CONSULTATION TODAY: possible adoption of SciELO model for SA

- WG “opinion piece” in SciDev.Net and recent Science Editorial: the case for regional journal systems; many supporting voices
- Merits of SciELO model considerable:
  - exportable system to new countries, but remains common system, interoperable, basic “rule-book” (Brazil office core to whole system)
  - now extends to other South/Central American countries
  - quality threshold for inclusion (national representative-type committee); monitored
  - full open-access publishing platform, full-text free online, fully indexed for citations, + other info.= informative +++

BUT:
- all print publishing, journal editing, etc. is outside system
c. 550 journals in SciELO, 180 in Brazil (ex 1000+ overall published)

Citation analysis shows “international group” and “regional group”

Negotiations currently with Thomson Scientific on linking with ISI: Web of Science

Core Brazilian operation funded by BIREME/PAHO and Sao Paulo “NRF” at c. R6-7 million per annum - for hardware and technical / management staff

Software, training, start-up support available ex Brazil
“SciELO SA”: The way-to-go?

• “SciELO SA” seen as possible “nucleus” for extension to other African countries, ultimately “developing country web-of-sci”
• ASSAf has journal peer review model for quality threshold, multi-benefits of quality improvement
• Retro-digitisation feasible, partnership with Sabinet/Carnegie
• Appt. of newly identified f/t SPU Director, Susan Veldsman, to drive project with chairperson of CSPiSA
• Start-up in early 2009, soon 8+ pilot journals in SciELO SA, budgets adjusted, staff being recruited, hardware/software acquired.
Model for uptake and utilisation

- Local journals encourage coherence in local research community
- Outcomes/implications noticed, taken up better
- Integration of developing and mature scholars into communities of practice
- Rigorous quality assurance enhances confidence, participation in system
- Better indicators, better monitoring
- Intellectual property protection: implementation assisted