

INASP infobrief 6: July 2005

Journal Access Programmes in African University Libraries

INASP carried out a survey of the journal access programmes that were being used in universities in Africa. The survey results obtained during 2003 formed a background document for two follow-up roundtables (in November 2003 and October 2004) between representatives of African universities, programme providers and publishers. The roundtables were enabled by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and INASP. This *Infobrief* describes the key outcomes and recommendations of these three activities.

Scope and findings of the survey

A questionnaire was sent (by Email and post) to librarians from 135 institutions in 32 countries. Replies were received from 31 libraries in Cameroon, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana (4 institutions), Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria (5 institutions), South Africa (2 institutions), Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania (2 institutions), Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe (5 institutions).

The survey considered all journal access programmes that libraries had used to supplement the journals they purchased from their own resources between 2002 and 2003. This included externally supported, free to all, print and electronic provision.

It should be noted that the survey returns and the nature of the journal access programmes described by respondents mean that the findings reflect mainly sub-Saharan/Anglophone experiences. It is also worth noting that this is a rapidly moving area and individual journal access programmes may well have changed, ceased or been created in the two years since the survey.

Responses indicated that access to journals varied widely, from those who had no journal access programmes active within their institution, to those who felt they had at least 'Adequate' access in all the subject areas. The situation varied from country to country, and between institutions within the same country.

Respondents from Ethiopia, Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda rated their particular institutions as having 'Adequate' to 'Excellent' coverage in all subject areas. At the other end of the spectrum, respondents from Sudan, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Madagascar and Zimbabwe stated they had no access to journals in any of the subject areas mentioned.

Variation within countries is illustrated by the five respondents from Nigeria – two stated they had access

to adequate or better coverage in 19 subjects, two stated they did not have adequate access in any subjects. The fifth person felt they had adequate or better access in six subject areas. There was similar variation within the five respondents from Zimbabwe.

The most frequently stated need for better coverage was to Library and Information Science material (nine people), and Social Sciences, Geography, History and Law were the next most requested (four or five respondents).

Twenty journals access programmes, and a few smaller initiatives, e.g. donations of single journals, were commented on by respondents. As can be seen from the chart below, this range of journal access programmes provided on average 'Adequate' to 'Excellent' coverage in all subject areas. The sciences, and especially medicine, had the most programmes that provided adequate access.

Clearly, this does not mean that each individual institution had adequate access to all subject areas as the number of programmes in place in each institution varied both between and within countries. Respondents gave details of the following numbers of active programmes at their institutions.

Cameroon	2
Cape Verde	0
Egypt	3
Ethiopia	2
Ghana (4 institutions)	1, 3, 8, 9
Kenya	2
Lesotho	7
Madagascar	0
Malawi	16
Namibia	5
Nigeria (5 institutions)	0, 0, 3, 4, 6
South Africa (2 institutions)	5, 5

Sudan	0
Swaziland	3
Tanzania (2 institutions)	5, 6
Uganda	5
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe (5 institutions)	1, 4, 4, 5, 8

Respondents were also asked for their views on what they considered to be the most and least successful journal access programmes, and their reasons for these choices. An overview of their responses, together with examples of the programmes they wrote about, is given below. Full names of the programmes are given in the Appendix of this report.

The positive features mentioned by respondents fall broadly into eight groups. These are set out below, with the most mentioned features first.

1. *Relevant, useful material.* The respondents commented on programmes being 'popular with students and staff' (ACU), containing 'valuable information' (BMJ) and 'useful journal abstracts' (CTA) 'appealed to and met the needs of a wide spectrum of our clientele' (eIFL) and 'being useful to our library users' (PERI). Overall this was mentioned 12 times as being a successful feature of a programme.
2. *Comprehensive coverage.* This attribute was mentioned nine times with comments that programmes such as eIFL, HINARI, IDEAL and PERI are successful because they 'cover several subject areas' or offer 'diversity'.
3. *CDROM and paper provision.* These formats were

mentioned as being a positive feature of a programme. CDROMs were seen as saving money due to lessening reliance on local ISPs and telecom companies, being user friendly and being heavily used. The provision of paper document delivery by programmes such as AJOL, BAI and JDP was mentioned as a positive attribute.

4. *Regular provision.* A library's ability to provide complete journal volumes was stated as being important with NUFFIC, BAI and JDP mentioned as providing regular donations and 'back issues which are critical for filling gaps'.
5. *Library selection of resources.* The ability of the library to make its own selection of resources was identified as important. Comments included the fact that a programme 'permits us to choose what we need' and 'we select what we need' as positive features.
6. *Free and easy to use.* These attributes were mentioned as being useful. For example, eIFL was said to have 'easy instructions' and AJOL resources 'opened quickly and easily'.
7. *Fast and up to date.* Both of these features were mentioned by one or two respondents as a positive feature of journal access programmes.
8. *Support.* Finally the provision of support and training within a programme training was seen as making it 'very successful', with the 'provision of training and other support' (PERI) being mentioned.

The survey also identified concerns and problems with the journals access programmes. The main challenge was that some were not easy to use, either because the interfaces were poorly designed or because technical issues slowed or even prevented access (BMJ, HINARI, PERI), and sometimes frequent changes in the service meant that there was a loss of access (IDEAL).

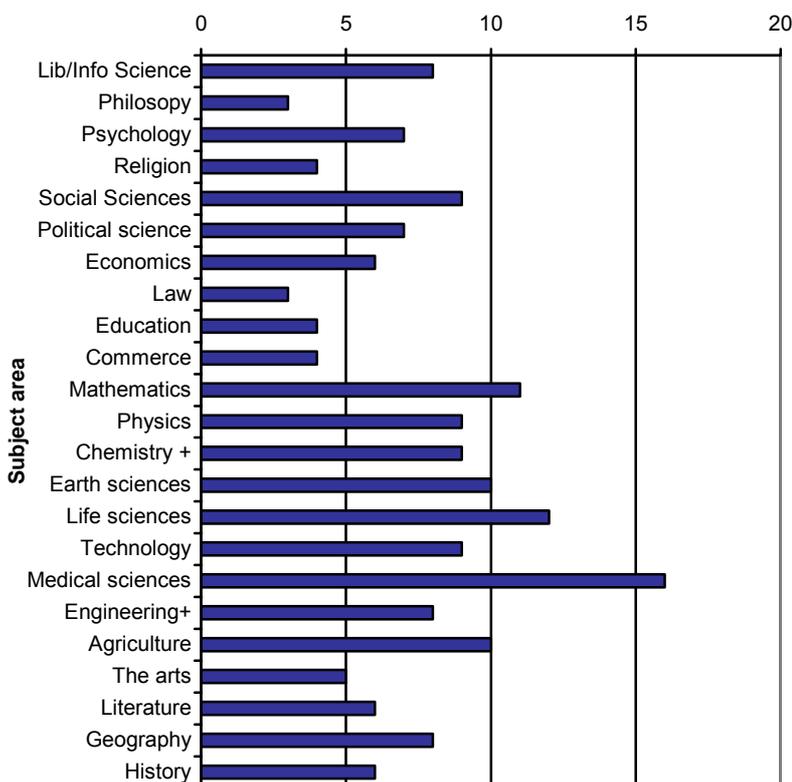
The content of some of these programmes was also an issue, with a lack of full-text articles (TEEAL), inadequate numbers of journals provided (Carnegie), narrow range of resources (British Council) and donation of incomplete volumes (BAI) all mentioned as negative attributes of some programmes.

The respondents also felt that some programmes were less successful because they presented management difficulties – such as being too expensive to be sustainable, lacking 'seed funding' (ACU), not providing affordable electronic access (eIFL) and creating a need for training of users that could not necessarily be met – and had access restricted to specific departments within an institution (TEEAL).

Other difficulties identified were due to:

- lack of staff and staff skills to support programmes,
- technical and financial difficulties with connectivity that inhibited use,
- a lack of awareness of available access programmes.

No of programmes providing 'Adequate' or better subject coverage



Scope and outcomes of follow-up roundtables

The survey indicated that although there were many programmes in existence, there was still a lack of adequate journal access or a lack of journal use in many institutions. Therefore, it was agreed that it would be useful to enable representatives of African universities, programme providers and publishers to meet to consider ways of improving this.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for all three groups to meet at the same time so two separate roundtables were enabled: the first with representatives of African universities and programme providers, held in Ghana; and the second with programme providers and publishers, held in London.

The aims of the discussions were to:

- improve understanding of the current issues and challenges for stakeholders,
- assess how journal access programmes could be made more effective,
- develop recommendations for the stakeholders of journal access programmes.

The first step was to gain a common understanding of what was considered a 'successful' programme, and the following attributes were identified.

- It is a cooperative partnership of, and is of mutual benefit to, all stakeholders.
- It has a clearly articulated purpose, format and standards.
- It operates with one focal point within each country, e.g. country consortia, Ministry of Education.
- It has an approved 'business' plan, jointly drawn up by the institution and programme provider.
- It is technically appropriate and suits the host institution's infrastructure.
- It delivers appropriate targeted content that meets expressed information needs.
- It allows the library to manage their own collections.
- It includes appropriate capacity strengthening for library staff and users.
- It includes journals in CDROM and/or paper format, as well as electronic.
- It is well known and well promoted, with high levels of awareness/usage.
- It permits the archiving of back files and guarantees continuity of titles.
- It is affordable rather than free, with financial contribution from the institution/country.
- It is sustainable, with a long-term commitment of support and a mechanism to move towards 'normal market conditions' over time.
- It has support at governmental level to help ensure sustainability.
- It does not duplicate the content of other programmes.
- It is flexible and adaptable.

Roundtable participants then went on to develop a series of recommendations for the various stakeholders in journal provision. The workshop identified 'stakeholders' as: university libraries, university management, programme providers and publishers.

Recommendations for university libraries

- Ensure you are well-informed about the available programmes.
- Carry out advocacy and awareness-raising activities in your institution.
- Ensure copyright is respected within your institution.
- Have a mechanism for establishing information needs and resource usage.
- Share needs and usage data with programme providers/publishers.
- Ensure key information (such as contact Email addresses and IP addresses) is up to date and shared with appropriate contacts.
- Share experience of programmes with other librarians (both within and outside your institution).
- Make a case for sustaining programmes to university management and other policy makers.

Recommendations for programme providers

- Ensure you are well-informed about a participating institution's needs, management, long-term strategy and infrastructure.
- Provide publishers with institutional profiles, details of information needs and feedback on usage.
- Include training support of librarians, users and management within programmes, including information on copyright protection.
- Share information effectively, including the terms and conditions of participation.
- Communicate and cooperate with other programme providers to ensure a coordinated approach.
- Put in place systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of programmes.
- Consider ways of supporting/boosting the status of librarians.

Recommendations for university management

- Minimise bureaucracy within the management of journal access programme to ensure swift, effective decision making.
- Consider ways of ensuring that trained support staff remain at the institution.
- Facilitate sustainability of programmes by writing support into university budgets as early as possible.
- Make a commitment to supporting programmes and improving IT infrastructure.

No clear **recommendations for publishers** emerged from the two roundtables but it is hoped that further discussions – ideally with publishers and university librarians meeting face-to-face – will elicit ideas in areas such as:

- ensuring provision of equal levels of service to all customers,
- providing programme providers and institutions with credible, consistent and comparable usage statistics,
- ensuring that prices are realistic and informed by market conditions in partner countries (especially as countries move towards independent, direct negotiations).

It was also felt that effective management and communication between all stakeholder groups was vital, especially at the beginning of any programme, and that all stakeholders should:

- be involved from the planning stage of any journal access programme,
- enable clear (jargon free), regular, two-way communication both between and within groups,
- enable frank and honest communication on both positive and negative aspects of a programme,
- be flexible and adaptable in dealing with outside influences (e.g. political changes),
- seek creative solutions to lack of foreign exchange
- have a discreet set of contact people that coordinate journal access programmes,
- develop clear and agreed long-term aims and viability from the outset,
- take a team approach to implementation so as to avoid problems with staff movements,
- keep organisation and implementation as streamlined and effective as possible.

Conclusions

Participants in both roundtables felt that this had provided a useful, and possibly unique forum, in which this group of stakeholders could exchange views and share learning. It was agreed that this should therefore be an on-going process, with the next steps being:

- to establish a permanent roundtable which will meet once a year,
- to set up a Web site to collate and link information about the available journal access programmes,
- to publish this *Infobrief* collating the learning from the journal access survey and Ghana and London roundtables.

Appendix

Examples of organisations/programmes engaged in journal access include:

- *Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Journals Project
 - *African Journals OnLine (AJOL)
 - *BioMed Central (BMC)
 - *Book Aid International (BAI) Journals Schemes
 - *British Council
 - *British Medical Journals (BMJ) Publishing Group
 - *Carnegie Corporation of New York
 - *CTA Agricultural Package
 - CTA Library Project
 - e-BioSci
 - *Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL)
 - Electronic Journals Library
 - *ExtraMed
 - *FreeMedicalJournals.com
 - *Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI)
 - *ICTP e-journals delivery service (eJDS)
 - ICTP/TWAS journal donation programme
 - *IDEAL (service ceased to operate on December 31st 2002)
 - Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA)
 - International Book Project (IBP)
 - International Digital Electronic Access Library (IDEAL)
 - *Journal Donation Project (includes Nigeria in Africa)
 - Medbioworld
 - *Medline
 - *NUFFIC Netherlands Periodicals Project (NPP), delayed subscription service
 - *Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI)
 - PubMed Central (PMC)
 - Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)
 - *Supply of Academic Publications (SAP) project
 - *The Essential Agriculture Library (TEEAL)
 - The Sabre Foundation
- Also
- Individual publishers
 - Learned societies
 - *Funding agencies etc: e.g. DfID and Sida/SAREC (whose support includes procurement of e-resources and facilitation of ICT training through PERI), British Council
- Those programme marked with an * were mentioned in responses to the questionnaire.

About INASP

Enabling worldwide access to information and knowledge

The mission of INASP is to enable worldwide access to information and knowledge with particular emphasis on the needs of developing and transitional countries. Established in 1992, 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.

We act as an enabler, connecting worldwide information and expertise. Working through networks of partners, we aim to strengthen the ability of people in developing and transitional countries to access and contribute information, ideas and knowledge. In particular we seek 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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