

Blackwell Publishing's Developing World Initiatives

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Abstract

Blackwell Publishing work with many of the leading professional and academic societies to publish 700 journals in medicine, science, social science and the humanities. Blackwell has been a keen participant in several initiatives to make these journals available online within countries which have not traditionally been able to afford many print subscriptions. These innovative schemes include INASP, HINARI, AGORA, INTAS, and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research. This paper outlines the background to Blackwell's decision to join these initiatives, gives a summary of each of the deals with some early results, and comments on some of the issues facing publishers.

About Blackwell Publishing

Blackwell Publishing is the world's largest society publisher working on behalf of 300 scholarly and professional associations to publish around 700 leading peer-reviewed English-language journals. Subjects covered include clinical and research-based medicine, life and physical science, agriculture and animal science, health, social science, economics and business, and arts and humanities. There is also a lively books publishing programme stretching over a similarly diverse range of disciplines.

As society publishers, Blackwell's brief is to ensure that the research in each journal reaches the widest possible audience and has a positive impact on its discipline and, by extension, society as a whole. At the same time we are, of course, also charged with ensuring that revenue streams to the association are maintained, done through our traditional markets.

Closing the Digital Divide

We, and the societies with whom we partner, are acutely aware of the importance of peer-reviewed research and its potential for engendering change. The disparity in access to high quality scientific, medical and economic research between the developed and developing world is undoubtedly closely tied to the gap in wealth and health between peoples.

With the latest information and scientific evidence available and accessible in low-income countries, policy-makers, professors, scientists, and doctors will be empowered to find solutions to issues of poverty, health, education and the environment. In addition, increased access to current research should lead to greater participation by scientists from the developing world in the global debate on any number of topics. By keeping up with current findings and research techniques and through updating teaching curricula, there will be increased opportunities for papers originating in the developing world to reach a global audience.

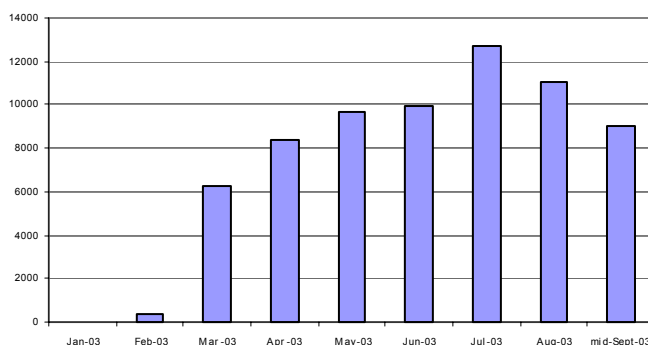
At Blackwell Publishing our goal is to positively contribute to the closure of this 'digital-divide'. We therefore want to ensure that the peer-reviewed research

published in our 700 journals is accessible in libraries in the developing world, as it is in the developed world. For many years, Blackwell has offered deep discounts to developing world libraries for subscriptions to print journals. However, problems with funding and delivery meant that very few were able to take advantage of this.

Online journals, and their low distribution costs, have changed all this. We can now open access to e-journals in any site anywhere. It's important to recognise that there are still challenges with delivery, though the nature of these have of course changed from postal problems to issues of hardware, bandwidth and internet infrastructure. At least when these issues are resolved, the primary information is there and available for all.

Access to Medical E-Journals

Blackwell Publishing are active and enthusiastic participants in a broad range of initiatives to deliver this information to libraries in the developing world. We were founding publishers of the WHO's Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI). 210 of our medical, health and nursing e-journals, alongside titles from five other publishers, are now freely available in medical schools, universities, and research institutes in the poorest countries, ie. those whose per capita GNP is below \$1000. Access is provided via the HINARI website where users are authenticated before passing through to our own online journals delivery service, *Blackwell Synergy*, to search and browse the journals. We are very pleased to confirm that use of the journals from these HINARI sites has really accelerated during 2003, from zero in January, to more than 67,000 full-text article downloads to date. Interestingly, 4 of the top 10 most accessed journals in the Blackwell HINARI collection are dentistry titles.



HINARI usage of Blackwell Publishing's journals – Jan to Sept 2003

Most frequently used titles by HINARI institutions

Top 10 Most Used Titles	Article Accesses 2003 YTD
Journal of Clinical Periodontology	2644
Kidney International	2081
Clinical Oral Implants Research	1936
British Journal of Dermatology	1913
Periodontology 2000	1757
International Endodontic Journal	1681

Dermatologic Therapy	1570
Tropical Medicine and International Health	1409
British Journal of Haematology	1401
International Journal of Dermatology	1281

Extending Access to Agriculture

Following the success of HINARI in disseminating healthcare information, Blackwell Publishing are keen participants in the AGORA programme, launched in October 2003. The goal of this FAO-based initiative is to help improve food security in low-income countries by making international agricultural research readily available to local policy-makers, specialists, and technicians. Blackwell publish several of the world's leading titles in agriculture, veterinary science, fisheries and environmental science and are pleased to make these available online in countries which, arguably, need them most. We look forward to analysing the usage of these journals as the scheme becomes more established.

Access to all Subjects via INASP

Even before the WHO initiative took shape, Blackwell Publishing were working with INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications) to provide access to our complete collection of online e-journals to libraries in low-income countries. Unlike the UN schemes, this includes access to titles in, for example, our ecology, economics, and politics lists, as well as the medical and agriculture titles, representing over 250,000 peer-reviewed articles. Access is provided directly through *Blackwell Synergy*, via IP address or username, rather than through a central portal. It is interesting therefore to see the different levels of take-up and journal usage amongst the 19 countries currently accessing Blackwell Publishing journals through INASP. So far in 2003, 22,000 full-text articles have been accessed this way and the most popular journal overall has been *Conservation Biology*. As an example of regional variation, the most used journal in Sri Lanka this year has been *Freshwater Biology*, and in Uganda it has been the *Information Systems Journal*, but whether these titles have been used by many or by a single enthusiastic researcher, we cannot tell.

Most frequently used titles by INASP institutions

Top 10 Most Used Titles	Article Accesses 2003 YTD
Conservation Biology	730
Freshwater Biology	539
Acta Ophthalmologica Scandinavica	470
Aquaculture Research	459
Tropical Medicine and International Health	436
Molecular Ecology	427
Journal of Applied Microbiology	381
Australian Journal of Earth Sciences	358
Journal of Biogeography	320
Fisheries Science	308

Countries accessing Blackwell Publishing journals through INASP

Armenia	Belarus
Bolivia	Ecuador
Ethiopia	Ghana
Kenya	Malawi
Moldova	Mozambique
Nepal	Senegal
Sri Lanka	Tanzania
Turkmenistan	Uganda
Uzbekistan	Zambia
Zimbabwe	

And to Eastern Europe

Blackwell Publishing also have several arrangements in place to secure access to our e-journals in Eastern Europe and Russia, another region with a high-demand for primary research but which suffered from the same 'digital-divide'. For two years now, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research has sponsored access to our complete collection of titles in 300 institutions in Russia. Access has been provided through *Blackwell Synergy*, and also through a local Moscow-based server for the science and medicine titles only. Again, we have seen a great increase in the readership of e-journals from this territory since the content has become available, with *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* achieving the highest use in Russia.

Several other countries in Eastern Europe have also gained full access to our journals through special discounted deals for local library consortia, and particularly through our arrangement with INTAS. This is a scheme, funded by the EU, which has made all our science and medical journals available for 3 years in all the libraries in 6 former Soviet republics.

Issues to consider

Providing access to e-journals is relatively easy to administer from a publisher's technical perspective, but we should remember that there are still several other important issues which we always need to consider. These include: authentication – ensuring that legitimate research institutions within only the countries included in the offer can access the content; licensing – so that only permitted use of the research is allowed; multitudes of different deals – with different titles and access arrangements in place for different countries; monitoring the loss of print subscriptions – and the impact this has on the societies' accounts; and managing change going forward – such as when the schemes finish.

One final issue which, at Blackwell Publishing, we see as of primary importance for e-journals, and which consumes a great deal of our marketing resources already, is the issue of awareness raising and training in their use. We, and the societies for whom we publish, are extremely pleased to support these many innovative programmes for bridging the 'digital-divide. Now that the information has been made available, we look forward to the time when readership of the research increases to match the inherent demand, and the benefits, outlined earlier, to the healthcare, education, and economic systems in the developing world are realized.