

## Electronic Science Publishing and Developing Countries: Conference Explores Access Initiatives, Related Topics

### Hooman Momen

Open access and open archives were two main themes running through the International Conference on Scientific Electronic Publishing in Developing Countries, held 30 September-2 October 2002, in the Pacific port city of Valparaiso, Chile. Linda Rowan (*Science*), the opening speaker, provided an overview of the rapid growth in online publishing and online journals, with currently over 6000 journals in electronic format. She presented current developments at her own journal, using as an example a recent article with a video link embedded in the electronic version showing the use of hooks by crows.

The keynote speaker on the second day was Roger Elliot, of the International Council for Science, one of the sponsors of the meeting. He stressed the importance of providing developing countries with access to the world scientific literature and outlined some of the initiatives to that end, including the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, another sponsor of the meeting.

Open access was discussed by many speakers. Different models of open access were presented, but the term could generally be defined as a model of scientific publishing in which the cost of publishing is borne by the provider of the information (institution, funding agency, or author) and access to the information is not limited by the users' ability to pay. Jan Velterop, of BioMed Central, presented the BioMed Central model: currently access to over 80 online journals is free, and costs are

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HOOMAN MOMEN is editor of the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*.

borne by a mixture of advertising, author charges, and institutional sponsorship. Authors retain copyright to articles, but users can freely access, download, and print the articles. He presented the idea that for journal articles "all use is fair use."

A further open-access model was presented by Abel Packer, of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information, another sponsor of the meeting. He introduced the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) project. This ambitious project has already put more than 130 Latin American journals from five countries online. Additional countries from Latin America and Europe are planning to join the project. Besides offering free access to and high visibility of the Latin American scientific literature, the project provides a database to search the literature and bibliometric tools to evaluate it.

Charles Hancock (*Journal of Biological Chemistry*) explained that although he produced a very large journal (more than 50,000 pages per year) that depended on print and online subscriptions for funding, it was still possible to provide universal free access to the information in the journal in creative ways. Another model of open access that was presented was the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI). At the time of the meeting, this partnership involved 26 publishers providing free access to more than 2000 biomedical journals for researchers in more than 300 institutions in 54 countries in the developing world.

Michael Nelson (Old Dominion University) presented the concept of the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) for publishers and editors to obtain increased coverage and readership. He explained

that *open* referred to the fact that the protocol was openly documented and the metadata (data about the data) were exposed, *archives* meant a repository (of documents or other resources), and *initiative* referred to an effort to increase availability of scholarly communication. By separating data provision from service provision (harvesting and searching for data), OAI has made it easy for editors and publishers to participate. Both BioMed Central and SciELO announced that their archives were OAI-compliant and could be searched by the increasing number of OAI service providers.

The National Research Council of Chile (CONICYT) and the Catholic University of Valparaiso (UCV) were the other sponsors of the meeting and the local organizers. Ana Maria Pratt, of CONICYT, presented the Chilean experience with online publishing and in particular its successful national SciELO project that has received academic recognition by the Chilean authorities. Graciela Muñoz, of UCV, presented a solely online journal published by her university, the *Electronic Journal of Biotechnology*; this successful venture is now referenced in all leading index databases.

The local organizers provided a hospitable social program. Attendance at the meeting was mainly from Latin America, but speakers from India, Africa, and Russia were on the program. The full program is available at the conference Web site ([www.icsep.info](http://www.icsep.info)), including the detailed presentations of the speakers in PowerPoint format and links to the sponsoring and participating institutions. 