

The Role of Science Journals in Promoting Capacity Development in the Developing World (Follow-up of 2006 Meetings on Creating and Supporting Sustainable Societies)

Moderator and Speaker:

Theodore Wachs
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and Environment
Berne, Switzerland

Speakers:

Gavin Yamey
PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases
San Francisco, California

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Boston, Massachusetts

Anthony Robbins
Tufts University School of Medicine
Boston, Massachusetts

Barbara Gastel
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College Station, Texas

Reporter:

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Annals of African Medicine
Zaria, Nigeria

Introducing the session, Theodore Wachs indicated that it was a follow-up of sessions held at the 2006 annual meeting by the CSE Task Force on Science Journals, Poverty, and Human Development. He noted that an article quoting *The Lancet* Editor Richard Horton, "Lost Science in the Third World",¹ was the catalyst for efforts to encourage science publishing in the Third World.

Gavin Yamey spoke on the role of *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* in capacity-building in developing countries. He noted that

neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) produce deformities and disabilities, promote poverty, and impair education. Many of the diseases cause stigmas but have been largely forgotten in developed countries, as have the people they affect. However, donations,

"...restricted access to literature impedes the efforts of health workers in obtaining reliable health, development, and capacity-building information."

drug developments, and attention from the global health community are helping to change the outlook.

PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases was launched to address insufficient communication among the various players, exclusion from global scientific conversation of researchers in countries where the diseases are endemic, and a need to raise the profile of NTDs. Yamey noted that restricted access to literature impedes the efforts of health workers in obtaining reliable health, development, and capacity-building information, and this hinders the strengthening of health systems and health research and creates inequality in global science commu-

nication. Most subscription-based journals devote little or no space to health problems in developing countries. *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* is the first open-access journal devoted entirely to NTDs and is not-for-profit.

The mission of *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* includes unifying the NTD community by publishing in an open-access format, increasing access to literature and profiling the work of authors in areas where the diseases are endemic, disseminating top-quality information globally, and encouraging advocacy and community-building. So far, about 50% of submitted papers are by authors in low-income countries.

Phyllis Freeman discussed the role of AuthorAID, a program to help authors in developing countries to write and publish their work. She noted the following problems common to authors in developing countries: identifying what to write, deciding which journal to submit to, analyzing and presenting data, using conventions, and overcoming difficulty with English. Resources are scarce, and authors face various barriers. AuthorAID attempts to help through matching, teamwork, and outreach. Recent developments with the Internet provide a global reach, and senior scientists and journal editors near retirement and manuscript editors would help as volunteers. In 2007, the project is starting a knowledge community and experimental matching (www.inasp.info/file/413).

Anthony Robbins spoke further about the AuthorAID knowledge community. It is a Web-based collaborative environment to be used by authors and mentors. The community will feature a collaborative environment for matching mentors and authors

and tools to assist and track the mentoring process and provide assistance to authors in preparing better scientific papers. The architecture of the site will include launch pages and AuthorAID content; a mentoring system to handle all aspects of mentoring, including author enrollment and mentor-matching; and an administrative area for mentor selection and statistical tracking. The advantages of this design include open source and open standards, a graphic design compatible with low bandwidth, and flexible engines and input requirements.

Barbara Gastel discussed the possible content of the knowledge community's open area, including information and resources on

writing scientific papers; items on preparing electronic manuscripts; information on the publishing and peer-review processes, publication ethics, and copyright issues; items on editing and how to find author's editors; and links to instructions for authors of various journals and Web sites for relevant organizations of editors. The content of the open area will be dynamic, and Gastel asked for suggestions. 🔥

Reference

1. Gibbs WW. Lost science in the Third World. *Sci Am.* 1995 Aug:92-99.

Call for Abstracts Research Poster Session 2008 CSE Annual Meeting

A poster session on research in science editing is to be included in the 2008 CSE Annual Meeting (Vancouver, Canada, 16-20 May). Deadline for abstracts from potential presenters is 1 March 2008. For further information, please see www.CouncilScienceEditors.org.