In this issue:

Amplifying Impact
AuthorAID’s train-the-trainer workshops
By Barbara Gastel
pg. 2

Scientific Writing Workshops
An opportunity for the academic community in developing countries
By Concepción Díaz Mayans
pg. 4

Building an International Community
The guiding principles behind the AuthorAID website
By Stuart Church
pg. 5

An Interview with Bernard Appiah
The AuthorAID Graduate Assistant discusses the project’s impact
By Sioux Cumming
pg. 6

Publications
pg. 7

Learning from Experience
The AuthorAID mentoring scheme in action
By Dr Daniel S. Korbel
pg. 8

A Social Education
The use of Web 2.0 in university libraries
By Lyn Robinson
pg. 10

News and Events
pg. 12

AuthorAID
A brief history and update
By Julie Walker

AuthorAID began at INASP in 2007 as a three-year pilot project with additional funding from Sida. It was established with two primary goals: to support developing-country researchers to publish and communicate their work and, ultimately, to increase the visibility and influence of research undertaken within the developing world.

It proposed to achieve those aims through three key components:

• A web-based Knowledge Community
• An online mentoring system
• Outreach through training workshops

Guided by an action-oriented project team, the AuthorAID website began in 2007 and an online mentoring system went live in 2009. The first research writing skills workshop was held in 2008 and since then there have been 15 INASP supported workshops, numerous follow-on workshops and 3 train-the-trainer workshops. By April 2011 AuthorAID had over 2800 registered members, over 267 mentoring pairs and over 100 journal and conference papers published and presented as a result of AuthorAID support.

AuthorAID was extensively monitored and evaluated throughout the three-year pilot project and a report was published in February 2010 which showed the project to be a success. Following this successful evaluation, Sida decided to provide additional funds for the project as part of INASP’s Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii) core funding for the period 2010-2012.

With this new funding, AuthorAID set some ambitious objectives. These included the development of: a Spanish language website; a new area on the website dedicated to mentoring; an AuthorAID Small Grants scheme; a facilitators’ network and discussion list; and e-learning modules for the AuthorAID website.

We are already close to realising most of these objectives and the recent appointment of an AuthorAID Training Coordinator means we can soon start work on the development of the e-learning modules.

By the end of 2012 we hope that AuthorAID will have developed into an essential resource for researchers and that universities throughout the world begin to see the benefits of investing in their own writing skills programmes.

For further information on the AuthorAID project at INASP contact Julie Walker juliewalker@inasp.info or visit the website (www.authoraid.info).
Amplifying Impact
AuthorAID’s train-the-trainer workshops
By Barbara Gastel

Many of us have heard, ‘Give a person a fish, and you feed them for a day. Teach the person to fish, and you feed them for a lifetime.’ However, one might add, ‘Teach people to teach others to fish, and you feed communities long-term.’ This philosophy is a key aspect of AuthorAID activities, specifically the train-the-trainer workshops.

AuthorAID has now held two fully fledged train-the-trainer workshops. The first was in Tanzania in June 2010, the second in Nepal in March 2011. Earlier, in November 2009, a workshop given jointly with AuthorAID partner IFS (International Foundation for Science) included a train-the-trainer aspect. Also, AuthorAID research-writing workshops—which have occurred several times per year, starting in 2008—encourage sharing of knowledge gained and materials obtained.

Implicit in the Research-Writing Workshops

Preparing attendees to share what they learn is implicit in AuthorAID research-writing workshops. Aspects contributing to this preparation include use of local co-facilitators, inclusion of small-group exercises, and encouragement of participants to teach others.

AuthorAID writing workshops typically run for four days with a co-facilitator from the host country joining the lead facilitator. The co-facilitator adds commentary, promotes discussion, sometimes gives one or more lectures, and may interpret or help do so. This process helps co-facilitators prepare to give research-writing workshops themselves. The co-facilitators from the 2008 workshop in Nicaragua and 2009 workshop in Bangladesh have been especially active in giving workshops.

In small-group sessions, attendees identify major points from lectures, raise questions to ask, and start applying content to their writing. They then present highlights of their discussion to the full group. As well as helping attendees assimilate and start applying lecture content, these activities prepare them to share material with others.

‘AuthorAID research-writing workshops... encourage sharing of knowledge gained and materials obtained’

Finally, attendees are explicitly encouraged to share what they learn. They therefore receive copies of the PowerPoint presentations. The event feedback form reinforces sharing by asking attendees whether they will be able to pass on what they have learned. In open-ended comments, many respondents have mentioned plans to teach others.

Train-the-Trainer Workshops

The train-the-trainer workshops have thus far each lasted one day and followed immediately after a research-writing workshop. In each case, the facilitator of the writing workshop went on to lead the train-the-trainer workshop. In each case, attendance was limited to about ten participants, all from the writing workshop. By
attending the writing workshop first, participants were immersed in the subject matter and saw the teaching methods.

At the workshops, the morning session begins with an interactive lecture on the basics of learning and teaching. This is followed by presentations on giving effective lectures and facilitating effective discussions. Interspersed are discussions of how the principles and approaches had been used in the research-writing workshop and could be applied in other teaching of research writing.

The afternoon focuses more specifically on teaching research writing. It begins with an interactive lecture on organising and delivering an AuthorAID workshop. This lecture was the followed by one exploring alternative or additional options for using AuthorAID materials (for example, in short workshops, semester-long courses, and intensive courses).

The workshops end with an exercise in which groups each address a scenario. The scenarios have included: planning a research-writing workshop along with other workshop participants in the same town.

Follow-up to determine which events materialized, what they were like, how they went, and how the workshop could provide better preparation would be desirable. It would be ideal to know whether the trainees trained others to be trainers and whether further spin-offs occurred.

Feedback would indicate that the train-the-trainer workshops have been favourably received, and some attendees have suggested making them longer. One issue to consider is that, although having a train-the-trainer workshop the day after has some pedagogical and logistical advantages, the attendees may be too saturated to concentrate fully. Upcoming train-the-trainer workshops—the next of which will be in Ethiopia in November 2011—will provide the opportunity to explore variants of the current model. In whatever way these workshops evolve, we look forward to ‘helping teach people teach others to fish’.

Barbara Gastel
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The presentations and scenarios from the Nepal train-the-trainer workshop appear at:
At the end of 2008, I was given the opportunity to attend the scientific writing workshop held in Nicaragua with the support of INASP and organised by the National Council of Universities (CNU), the National Agrarian University (UNA) and the PERii Country Coordination Team in Nicaragua.

For this workshop, the lead facilitator was Prof. Barbara Gastel from Texas A&M University and the co-facilitator was Dr Freddy Alemán from the UNA. Prof. Gastel, with her great talent for communication and her deep knowledge on research and scientific publications, motivated me in such a way that those workshops are still a part of my life.

The scientific writing workshops... boost the production of content and the publication of scientific papers.

The scientific writing workshops are an initiative of INASP and their main aim is to help participants from developing countries develop skills for scientific writing, in order to increase both the quality and quantity of their publications.

In Cuba, we started to hold small scientific writing workshops in some institutions in 2009, but in 2010 we held a high-level workshop at the Experimental Station ‘Indio Hatuey’. There were 40 participants, including scientists, editors, professors, referees and policy makers. The four-day workshop was well received and participant feedback very positive. The value and relevance of the workshop content was evident and other institutions showed a great interest in holding similar/follow-on workshops. The University of Matanzas held one such workshop with excellent results.

The main objectives of these workshops are as follows:

- Develop researchers’ skills in writing scientific papers
- Increase Cuban researchers’ capacity to efficiently publish and disseminate their work
- Increase both quality and quantity of participants’ publications
- Teach the researchers to use the facilities offered by the scientific writing website, AuthorAID, for publishing and disseminating their work
- Provide access to a range of documents and presentations on best practice in writing and publication

The scientific writing workshops correspond with the National Policy of Information of Cuba, since they boost the production of content and the publication of scientific papers. In addition, research and publication of scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals is a relevant issue in the Policy of Science and Technological Innovation of the Ministry of Higher Education.

The workshops introduced concepts and tools, and allowed their application in practice by means of lectures and practical sessions. The sessions about access to the AuthorAID website for helping researchers in developing countries to publish and otherwise communicate their work, was of great interest for the participants. The AuthorAID website also serves as a wider global forum to discuss and disseminate research.

The workshop materials were updated and translated into Spanish by colleagues from Nicaragua, Cuba and Mexico and are available on the AuthorAID website.

In Cuba, the scientific writing workshops have helped to train more than 70 professionals from different institutions. The AuthorAID writing skills workshops, along with most of INASP’s activities, encourage use of the cascading methodology. This focuses on training key individuals who are then able to go back to their institution (or faculty, or country, etc.) and train others, who, in turn train others and so on. This method not only increases the impact of a single workshop, but enables capacity building and sustainability. Events such as the writing skills workshop have the potential to reach a far greater number than the initial 70 participants.

A strong research culture requires both access to and creation of research. Researchers in developing countries must be able to publish and communicate the results of their own work if they are to contribute to international debate or pass on important lessons and experiences. Through global research production and availability local research has maximum impact.

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Development of skills for scientific writing workshop held at the Experimental Station ‘Indio Hatuey’, Cuba in June, 2010.
Building an International Community
The guiding principles behind the AuthorAID website
By Stuart Church

Since its inception in 2007, the AuthorAID website has evolved from a simple blog-based site into a global community with over 2500 registered researchers from more than 60 countries. With the AuthorAID project securing more funding, it is likely that the website will play an increasingly important role in the future as the numbers of registered users further increases.

What is the site for?
At present, the goals of the website are:

• To support AuthorAID’s ‘offline’ events and activities such as international workshops
• To act as a central location for fostering and managing mentoring relationships between researchers
• To act as an online source of information and guidance about the authoring and publication of research outputs
• To informally support the exchange of ideas and knowledge between researchers

Guiding principles
As you might expect, the transition and growth of the website has presented many challenges. The following principles have been useful in ensuring that the evolution of AuthorAID remains true to the goals of the project:

Simplicity
With a culturally diverse audience, many of whom do not have English as their first language, the site needs to be clear and simple. Because of this, we try to focus on doing the basics well, rather than provide feature upon feature or an over-complicated interface. We also strive to use straightforward language (which isn’t always that easy when talking about academic research!).

Speed
Our aim is to make the site download as quickly as possible. While this is rarely a problem in developed countries, it can be a major obstacle to accessing information in developing countries where network bottlenecks are common. We try to minimise this effect by making the page sizes of the AuthorAID site as small as possible. This means reducing the file sizes of images and scripts on the page.

Relevance
One of the key things about the AuthorAID site is that it is very focused. The site exists to serve the core aims of the AuthorAID project and support the research community in learning about and sharing ideas about authoring and publication of research. There is very little extraneous information.

The site exists to serve the core aims of the AuthorAID project and support the research community...

Building a community
An additional, ‘softer’ challenge in the development of the AuthorAID site has been how to best engage with our audience as the site has grown. We learned quite early on that there is a real need to have AuthorAID representatives visibly involved in discussions and gently guiding and supporting the members of the community. In this respect, we are fortunate the have the prolific blogging efforts of Barbara Gastel at Texas A&M University. Barbara has effectively become the ‘voice of AuthorAID’, a crucial role in the community. In addition, the recent creation of an AuthorAID discussion group has provided an additional avenue for researchers to informally share ideas and network.

Understanding the needs of researchers
The success of the AuthorAID website depends to a large degree on how useful and usable the tool is to the research community, particularly in developing countries. Because of this, we take a very ‘user-centred’ approach to the design and development of the website, regularly engaging and seeking feedback from researchers.

Although geographical boundaries can be an issue, our aim has always been to try to better understand our audience and how they would like AuthorAID to help them. To this end, we’ve carried out regular user surveys to generate insights and get feedback on how the website is performing. We also use Google Analytics to understand how researchers are arriving at the site and what content they access when they do. Finally, we take whatever opportunities we can to engage directly with AuthorAID researchers; for example, we have carried out usability testing in Rwanda and Kenya (when visiting as part of AuthorAID project meetings), and in London when visiting international researchers were meeting.

We use the findings from our user research to guide the design direction of the AuthorAID site. These usually start off as sketches, which are then worked up into clickable, interactive prototypes that can be tested and discussed before the designs are actually incorporated into the site by the development team at the Institute of Learning and Research Technology at the University of Bristol. This prototyping approach is a quick and effective way of bringing a design to life in a way that can be evaluated without the need for costly development.

What does the future hold?
There are many exciting developments in the pipeline for the AuthorAID website. These include a redesigned Resource Library, more effective ways to find researchers with similar research interests, increased personalisation, and even the addition of e-learning materials to provide tailored learning in specific aspects of the authoring and publication process. The next 12 months will hopefully present us with many more interesting challenges!
Can you give us some information about yourself?

I was born in Ghana and got my Bachelor’s in Pharmacy from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. When I was a student, I was a student editor and that was when I really got involved in writing and editing. After I graduated, I worked with the National Drug Information Resource Centre, part of the Ministry of Health of Ghana, as a drug information pharmacist. We had a journal called The National Drug Information Journal, of which I was a co-editor. Part of the work also involved communicating with health professionals, giving them information on medicines. I was also involved with the pharmaceutical society of Ghana, which is a body of all registered pharmacists in Ghana. I was part of the editorial team.

I moved to the U.S., Texas, to do my Master’s in Science Journalism at the Texas A&M University. At the same time, I was doing my Master’s in Development Communication from the Philippines Open University. I completed both in 2010, and, the same year, I was admitted to a Doctorate programme in public health. So, now, I am student of the Texas A&M Health Science Centre School of Rural Public Health and my major is in Social and Behavioural Health.

Can you tell us about AuthorAID and its component parts?

I think the name is very good, because you are aiding an author, but the emphasis is on developing countries to publish, or communicate their work. So I see AuthorAID as a very useful and excellent project to help researchers in developing countries to research and edit their work.

AuthorAID has, I would say, two main components: the online and the offline.

Our online component has a lot of resources for researchers. The online component also includes the discussion group where we have a number of people wanting to publish their work or get more involved in publishing. It is an online community where they can get to interact together and get to know more about scientific writing.

In addition to that it is a place to share ideas, people may wish to communicate via email, but the website enables researchers to contact each other and exchange ideas. So, you know, those are some of the aspects of the online component that are very useful.

The offline component typically is more to do with workshops where you will have a facilitator or co-facilitator organising a workshop in a developing country. Through which participants get to know more about writing and get help to improve their writing.

We have Facebook and Twitter, too. So, when you combine all of these, I think it is very useful for authors.

“AuthorAID is bridging the gap between developing countries and developed countries in terms of publishing.”

What specific role do you have to play in the AuthorAID project?

I have been involved with AuthorAID since September 2009 and I am a graduate assistant for AuthorAID. I do a number of things. One is to help promote the project – in terms of recruiting mentors and mentees. I tend to approach researchers and let them know about the usefulness of the project. This is more of a voluntary thing so you just have to try to encourage them to do that. I tend to do this through emails, conferences or meetings when I get a chance. I do talk quite a lot about AuthorAID.

Then also, there is the mentoring aspect of AuthorAID, and one of the things I do is match mentors and mentees together. Usually, I use their subject area interests to do the matching.

We have a discussion group which I moderate. Discussion groups can be tricky and, while people are encouraged to ask questions about writing, sometimes they go quiet and you don’t hear anything for a while. Because of this, I help to sustain the interaction by posting questions. I design questions and post them on the discussion group and then people respond. So far we have about 500 members on the discussion list.

Sometimes someone is registered to be a member of the AuthorAID community but may not have a mentor and that person may want to publish. So an email is usually sent to the AuthorAID contact and then I look for a potential reviewer from the website. This does not create the one-to-one mentoring relationship, but allows an exchange of ideas and sharing of expertise on a case-by-case basis.

Through this, people really get to know more about publishing. On the website I do what we call, the ‘Writing Tip of the Week’. Every week we have a ‘tip’ that I submit, just a very short statement that relates to writing.

What do you think have been the key impacts of AuthorAID – firstly in general, and then, secondly, the impacts on you as a person?

AuthorAID has had a very great impact on my life. I mean, personally, I want to help people. When I see a picture of a researcher looking for a mentor, it really pushes me to do more for these people. So the impact it is having on my life is that I always have to know a lot of the resources on the website and also try to, as much as possible, know the needs of the researchers.

Coming from Ghana, and being involved in so many things while I was there, I really appreciate a lot of the challenges involved in publishing when you are from a developing country. That also pushes me to do more for AuthorAID. But, more importantly, if somebody needs a paper to be published and through AuthorAID somebody, a mentor or potential mentor, someone as part of the community, decides to do it freely without collecting any money, that is what AuthorAID is for and it gives me so much joy.

I think that it is a very good service, a voluntary service which people devote their time to but do not receive monetary rewards. But for me, the reward is seeing...
someone’s paper published because of AuthorAID. Not only publishing a paper, but also going to the website and getting the information he or she needs, that is really a great joy. Also, the feedback I get, especially for the writing tips, people send me emails and say ‘that is good, keep doing it’, and that obviously pushes me to work more.

You do a lot of things behind the scenes. It’s good to be able to tell people what you do for a change. Is there anything else you would like to add on the activities or AuthorAID that we haven’t covered?

I think AuthorAID is a very excellent project that needs to be continued. Most of the time, because of lack of funding some projects start off very well and then funding reduces its continuation.

AuthorAID is really helping researchers. I know that most of the mentees also want to become mentors in the future, so in terms of sustainability, it is eventually going to let future generations know more about writing. I think that there is that kind of disparity between what is done in developing countries and what is done in advanced countries. AuthorAID is bridging the gap between developing countries and developed countries in terms of publishing.

So the more it is sustained, the more we will be able to know about what is happening in developing countries. I mean it is not good for the international community, particularly for those in advanced countries, to just do studies in advanced countries and impose their findings on developing countries. It is better for developing countries to have their research published and known so that they can also use it to influence their policies. And I think AuthorAID helps in that so it needs to be continued.

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Publications

Research in the Palm of Your Hand
Cambridge University Press’ low bandwidth mobile access point - CJOm

One of the aims of PFD is to encourage publishers to explore what they can do to help ease the digital divide and support research in developing countries. Cambridge Journals Online Mobile (CJOM) has helped to speed up download times in low-bandwidth areas and make their content easier to use.

www.inasp.info/research-in-the-palm-of-your-hand

Reflections of a Trainer
Information literacy training at the Parliament of Zimbabwe
Ronald Munatsi

A basic principle of effective training is that the facilitator has a good understanding of the subject material and resources at hand. However, knowing the background and needs of the audience can be equally important. This case study looks at the adaptation and application of information literacy training methodologies to participants from the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

www.inasp.info/reflections-of-a-trainer

What Works for You?
The effective transfer of teaching methodologies in Tanzania
Evans Wema

The training-the-trainer approach to workshops can be very effective, providing both a strong understanding of the subject material and developing the skills necessary to pass it on. However, participants often come from varied backgrounds and go on to train groups with specific, or equally varied, needs. This case study examines initiatives in Tanzania that enabled Information literacy teaching methods to be adapted and applied to a variety of audiences.

www.inasp.info/what-works-for-you

Working Towards Sustainability
A summary of INASP’s case studies, newsletters and reports in 2010

Working Towards Sustainability is an annual summary of INASP’s publications. This provides summaries and links to all of our case studies, reports and newsletters in 2010.

www.inasp.info/working-towards-sustainability

Publishers for Development Newsletter
The second Publishers for Development (PFD) newsletter was published in February. The PFD newsletter is a bi-annual publication available both electronically and in print.

www.inasp.info/pfd

Bibliometric Study of Latin American Countries Supported by INASP, 1996–2008
Directed by Dr Ricardo Arencibia-Jorge

This report presents the findings of a collaborative study conducted by the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education, the National Center for Scientific Research and INASP. It consists of a bibliometric analysis of the scientific production of five Latin American countries (Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Honduras) during the period 1996–2008. The report examines changes in the scientific research output of these countries, and compares them to patterns in a control group of eight countries whose development is at a comparable level to that of the studied countries.

www.inasp.info/bibliometrics
When I started my career as a researcher in life sciences, I realised very quickly that the scientific knowledge and technical skills I learned in university would not be enough to become a successful scientist. Of course it is important to be able to ask the ‘right questions’ and to get robust answers to these. However, you also need good scientific writing and summarising skills. These skills are absolutely vital for both junior and senior academics. Ultimately, your skills at presenting research findings and future plans to varied ‘audiences’—be it reviewers and readers of national and international scientific journals, funding agencies or policy makers—will determine your future within the research community and also the impact your research will have.

When I was a student, and later a junior researcher, there was little emphasis on the skills required for successful publication of scientific work. Equally, the need to understand funding structures and the fact that different ‘audiences’ require different presentational approaches was never addressed. It can be very difficult to establish yourself as an independent researcher if you do not understand precisely what these audiences look for. From discussions with colleagues from across the world, I have learnt that the need for training in these skills is even more acute in developing countries which often lack training capacity and well-established support networks.

I was, therefore, very pleased to learn about the AuthorAID project, which aims to tackle this need through a mentoring scheme and open access resources. I immediately signed up as a mentor because I recognised that this scheme was a practical way for me to support junior researchers from developing countries. When I had first signed up in 2009, the project had only recently gone past its inception phase, the web interface had just gone live and the scheme had not yet been advertised widely. I was, therefore, very surprised to see how many people were already members—it seemed that the interest in the scheme was considerable and the demand for mentoring high.

At this point, understandably, I was full of worries and questions. What would I need to do? What was expected of me? How would I go about finding mentees? Would I be able to make a useful contribution? Would this remote mentoring setup actually work?

It can be very difficult to establish yourself as an independent researcher if you do not understand precisely what these audiences look for.

Fortunately, my feeling of uncertainty did not last long. Within a few weeks I was approached, through AuthorAID, by a West African student enrolled in a PhD programme at a university in Eastern Europe. She had found my details by browsing through the already enormous directory of AuthorAID members who were interested in becoming a mentor, trying to match her research interests with theirs. When we exchanged CVs via the AuthorAID system it became clear that there was a considerable overlap in our scientific interests. This proved to be a fruitful starting point for our ensuing mentor—mentee relationship. To formalise this, we worked out a learning agreement that would aim to ensure communication until she finished her PhD. This learning agreement turned out to be a very useful point of reference that guided us throughout the mentorship experience.

My new mentee was in the final year of her PhD and was looking for assistance in getting her work published. The local guidelines for her PhD programme required a minimum of two published scientific manuscripts before she would be awarded with her degree. At that point of her doctoral studies, however, she had spent most of her time generating data in the laboratory and had had little time spare to devote to writing up her results. With so much focus towards her research, I realised there was little time and emphasis placed on planning her final year. I was also surprised to learn that most of the drive and initiative about publishing her work in reputable journals came from the student herself. My mentee felt that while she had previously presented some of her data as conference posters, there were few guidelines and little preparation for getting her papers accepted and published. She was very aware of the importance of disseminating research findings in peer-reviewed publications but expressed concern that this may not be manageable in her current situation.

We began to use the AuthorAID website and email to exchange documents, swap internet links and keep each other up-to-date. We decided, however, that, for
From a Mentee’s Perspective

I registered on the AuthorAID website in April, 2010 with the goal of finding a mentor to help me improve and guide my writing skills. For a long time I had wanted to have my work published but I didn’t get guidance through the process. When I got to know about AuthorAID, I was happy since I knew the realization of my dream was at hand. I took time to look for mentors whose interests matched mine.

Since then, my experience with AuthorAID has been great! Through the AuthorAID website, I met my mentor Jackie Goodrich—a PhD student at the University of Michigan. Jackie has been very dedicated in offering me guidance on how to improve my writing skills. For instance: giving insights; ensuring my objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound); the flow of sentences; and many more. These, she has done despite her busy schedule, always reviewing my work and providing comments in good time.

I got in touch with Jackie when searching for a mentor on the AuthorAID database. After introductions, I sent her my initial draft of papers which we sent back-and-forth several times with comments and changes before they were finalized. In addition to comments on my papers, she gave me tips on data analysis and obtaining access to journal articles outside of those available through INASP, among other things. We have been working on two papers together which I have sent to different journals. I have since received reviewers’ comments from one of the journals, and I am currently working on addressing these comments. I have shared this with Jackie, and she is continuing to offer guidance until my papers are published. We also have plans of working on a joint paper in the future.

I feel lucky to have met Jackie through AuthorAID as our partnership has made my writing experience much more interesting. With this kind of capacity building, I believe my writing skills will continually improve such that one day; I will be a very good writer. My advice to young researchers is that there is help out there, go look for it; it will not come knocking on your door. Register with AuthorAID and seek out a mentor to help improve your writing skills and to become better researchers who can make a difference.

Ms Rhouve Ochako
Demographer
Nairobi, Kenya

It was exceptionally satisfying to see my mentee’s quick progression in producing a quality manuscript. us, the best and most convenient way of communicating was through Skype. With a computer and internet connection, phone calls were free and that allowed us to have in-depth discussions in an efficient and intuitive manner. This was not without problems, however. Agreeing on a convenient time proved to be challenging and we sometimes had to cancel our Skype meetings at short notice. Mostly, however, our Skype calls—which tended to last for about an hour—were very successful. To make the most of this, we would decide on an agenda beforehand and write up a brief summary afterwards.

We spent the ensuing months discussing how best to structure and present her data, and how to approach the daunting job of putting the first words on paper by breaking down the task into smaller portions. A large part of our communication focused on identifying the ‘right’ journal for the kind of data she had generated and on figuring out the importance of journal impact factors in her field of study. These discussions were very enthusiastic and it was exceptionally satisfying to see my mentee’s quick progression in producing a quality manuscript—a goal that, at first, had seemed ambitious.

In addition to the immediate needs of publishing her data, we also discussed how she could approach writing her PhD thesis, stressing the need for tight deadlines and achievable sub-goals. I felt that our conversations about her future career plans in academia and finding research funding were very fruitful. We also compared our views on what we thought was important when establishing yourself as a researcher from and in a low- or middle-income country compared to the situation in the North.

Personally I thought that one of the main challenges was trying to fit my ‘extracurricular’ activities as an AuthorAID mentor into my day. It was an important step for me to recognise that I had taken on actual—not simply ‘virtual’—responsibilities towards my mentee. I therefore had to force myself to plan ahead in order to cope with bouts of ‘mentoring activity’ which turned out to be an excellent exercise in project management.

I found this and our cultural exchange to be the most rewarding and enlightening parts of my mentoring experience. In that sense, it far exceeded what I had initially stated in our original learning agreement as my main goal as a mentor: “I hope to [...] be able to provide a valuable contribution to the mentee’s academic development”. In other words, being an AuthorAID mentor goes beyond a conventional teacher-student relationship—it is a really stimulating and worthwhile learning process for both mentee and mentor.

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A Social Education
The use and benefit of Web 2.0 in university libraries

By Lyn Robinson

The idea of Web 2.0 has been around for several years now. Almost since the name was coined, librarians have seen possibilities in using these methods, and this general approach, to improve services. Things didn’t happen as quickly as enthusiasts expected, however, and despite many research studies and pilot projects, libraries have been quite slow to adopt Web 2.0 into ‘normal’ services. This situation is now changing, and we can see the beginnings of widespread adoption of Web 2.0 facilities worldwide, with good practice based on the experience of the pioneers. University libraries have been at the forefront, believing that adoption of Web 2.0 will make their services more appealing to new generations. They have also seen the opportunity to mesh their services more closely into teaching, especially as e-learning develops.

Web 2.0 is not a single technology, or a major software release. It is about how people are using networked computers to create and share information. Shared authorship, shared use; between one or two friends, within a single organisation, or between large, global communities. Web 2.0 handles not just text, but sound and video, and virtual worlds. Web 2.0 is important because it is how people increasingly communicate, particularly through social networking.

There is no authoritative statement as to exactly what tools and facilities are encompassed by the idea of Web 2.0. Within university libraries, Web 2.0 applications include those for: communication; social networking; shared authoring; media sharing; and keeping up-to-date.

Communication

This category includes Simple Messaging Service (SMS), instant messaging, Twitter, blogs and podcasts.

SMS, or texting, is not always regarded as a Web 2.0 application, as it is usually used on mobile ‘phones without any reference to the web, by contrast with instant messaging, between computers. Both are usually private person-to-person communications, and have been adopted in university to provide ‘virtual reference’, and other enquiry services.

Twitter, now very widely used in many countries, allows short (140 character) messages to be broadcast; they may be read by anyone, but are aimed at those who ‘follow’ the broadcaster. Many university libraries have a Twitter account, to provide frequent short updates and information on services, and raise the libraries visibility. Because Twitter is usually most effective if it has a ‘personal’ tone, an individual librarian is often deputed to be the ‘twitter voice’ of the library.

Blogs are perhaps the most familiar aspect of Web 2.0, with over 70 million in existence. They are logs or diaries kept on the web, usually accessible to all, although they can be restricted to a group of members. Blogs can have multiple authors, although they are usually written by one person. They are generally used for communications which are fairly short, but much longer than a text or a tweet. Many university libraries use them as a means of giving service information: for example, on the blog of Bournemouth University Library (UK) “you will find information about service developments, new resources, trials, system downtimes, and much more”. Others, particularly those aimed at specific subject interests, may include wider information: for example the blog of the Engineering and Mathematics Subject Librarian at City University London (UK) “is here for those interested in resources, news and ‘bits and pieces’ from the world of engineering and maths, and some updates from the library”. Academic library blogs are often integrated with other Web 2.0 features, such as Twitter feeds, and media sharing resources.

Podcasts are used to provide short audio, or increasing video, files. University libraries are beginning to use these extensively as well as, or instead of, printed materials for information, study skills advice. An example is a series of podcasts on study skills and library use from Oxford Brookes University (UK).

Social networking

This category includes several sites which are very popular in many countries, for general social purposes, e.g. Facebook, and for professional networking, e.g. LinkedIn. They are based on the concept of groups of ‘friends’ who are able to see each others postings of news, opinions, photographs, etc. University libraries have set up such groups, in order to increase their visibility, and hope to attract the interest of users. Experience shows it is wise to do this with care; users, particularly younger people, sometimes resent the ‘intrusion’ of institutions such as libraries, into ‘their’ spaces.

A site of this kind may be used to give access to various library resources: for example, the Facebook page of Loughborough University Library (UK) gives access to the library catalogue, the university institutional repository, and a federated search engine.

Shared authoring

This category includes systems for creating and sharing documents, spreadsheets, websites and so on. These are referred to generally as wikis; there are some important specific examples, such as Google Docs. Libraries have adopted such tools, for example, to create guides to resources to which users can contribute. An example is a wiki for business.

Blog of the chemistry library at Imperial College, London
http://libinfo.wordpress.com

Twitter feed from the Law Library at City University, London. http://twitter.com/lawbore

Loughborough University Library4(UK)

Oxford Brookes University3(UK)
information resources\(^5\) in the libraries of Ohio University (USA).

Media sharing

A variety of systems are available for sharing photographs (e.g. Flickr), videos (e.g. YouTube), bookmarks (e.g. Delic.i.ous) and bibliographic records (e.g. LibraryThing or Cite-U-Like). These are usually ‘social’, in that any user can enter material and all users can comment on it, and can index it with their choice of tags.

Of these systems, the one which is most obviously relevant to activities is LibraryThing\(^6\), a collaborative cataloguing system with a Web 2.0 style of interface, which allows users to comment on, recommend, and tag books. This might be used by a small library as an alternative to a conventional catalogue; more commonly it would be used as a complement, to give a more attractive interface. An example is the LibraryThing catalogue of Oxford University’s Latin American Centre Library\(^7\).

LibraryThing, which can download records from a wide variety of national libraries and other providers of bibliographic records, is mainly intended for use with books; Cite-U-Like\(^8\) provides the same kind of facilities for articles, and Delicious\(^9\) for web resources.

An example is the Delicious tagging\(^10\) of resources at the library of the London School of Economics (UK).

Other tools in this category can be used to make special library materials available: an example is a collection of architectural photographs\(^11\) at Cornell University Library (USA) on Flickr.

They may also be used for new forms of user guidance, as in the example of a YouTube channel\(^12\) at Hofstra University (USA) used for library instruction videos.

Keeping up to date

These services help to keep track of the diversity of information and communication generated by Web 2.0. They include RSS feeds and start-pages.

RSS feeds provide an alert whenever the content of a website of interest is updated.

Start pages are web pages which are used as the home page for a person or a service. They are convenient points of entry to other web pages and sites, offering an overview of available services, and collating blogs, media collections, news updates, weather forecasts and all kinds of other, often rapidly changing, information; many of these links are, in fact, RSS feeds. Libraries are beginning to use start pages to offer convenient points of entry for their users, using public Web 2.0 applications such as Netvibes\(^13\). An example is the Netvibes page at the Science, Agriculture and Engineering Library at Newcastle University\(^14\) (UK).

So the picture is one of a steadily expanding use of Web 2.0 features in the systems and services of university libraries. Web 3.0 – the semantic web? That’s a story for another time.

Further reading

D Parkes and G Walton, Web 2.0 and libraries: impacts, technologies and trends, Oxford: Chandos

M Tripathi and S Kumar, Use of Web 2.0 tools in academic libraries: a reconnaissance of the international landscape, International Information and Library Review, 2010, 42(3), 195-207

Social software, libraries and e-learning, blog by Jane Secker (London School of Economics) http://elearning.lse.ac.uk/blogs/socialsoftware

Library 2.0: Librarians and the Internet, Social Media and Web 2.0, a forum for discussing this topic http://www.library20.org

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URLs

1. http://bulib4resources.blogspot.com
12. http://www.youtube.com/user/HULconnect
NEW JOURNALS ONLINE
LAMJOL and MongoliaJOL launched

The latest additions to the Journals Online (JOL) are the Latin America Journals Online (LAMJOL), which hosts journals from Nicaragua and Honduras, and Mongolia Journals Online (MongoliaJOL).

Both are very new (LAMJOL has 7 journals and MongoliaJOL has 2), so we welcome suggestions for other journals which would like to be included.

Please contact Sioux Cumming (scumming@inasp.info) if you have any queries about the site or suggestions for journals which could be included.

Further information about the JOL project can be found at: www.inasp.info/jols

E-LEARNING MODULE
Digital Libraries, Repositories and Documents

The newest Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) e-learning module entitled Digital Libraries, Repositories and Documents, offers learners the essentials for creating and managing their own digital libraries and repositories. It covers all the relevant processes for planning and resourcing, and considers the latest technologies and trends for digital data management and preservation. Relevant issues concerning the legal framework for copyright and intellectual property rights are also covered.

The module is offered online and on CD-ROM free of charge, and is currently available in English only. The Spanish version will be published in June 2011 and the French at a later date. For more information please visit the IMARK website: www.imarkgroup.org

WELCOME!
INASP has had several new staff members join the team in recent months.

Alex Ademokun
Programme Officer, Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM)
Before joining INASP in January, Alex studied and carried out research in immunology at King’s College London and Cambridge University.

Fran Deans
Programme Officer, Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM)
With a PhD in social anthropology, Fran has worked for several years abroad as a researcher and programme officer. Her most recent assignments were working in Albania and Burundi to promote and support volunteerism for development.

Eileen Kennedy
Administrative Officer
Eileen has a degree in Psychology & Anthropology and a Post Graduate Certificate in Public Health. Eileen has extensive experience as an Administrator, PA and Office Manager, much of it in the NHS, higher education and research.

Ravi Murugesan
AuthorAID Training Coordinator
Before joining INASP, Ravi worked at Cactus Communications in Bombay for five years in editorial and education management roles. He received a Master’s degree in engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the US, where he was also an Honorary Fellow, and is certified by the Board of Editors in Life Sciences.

RSS FEEDS
Keep up to date with the INASP and AuthorAID RSS feeds. These feeds provide updates on awards, grants, events and publications, as well as training materials and resources. You can access the feed by visiting the website or use the links below.

INASP RSS: http://www.inasp.info/media/www/rss/news.xml
AuthorAID RSS: http://feeds.feedburner.com/authoraid_resource_library

Visit http://www.inasp.info/file/13a207ee94100ac4845ce3928f600eaa/rss.html for more information on RSS feeds and readers.