

2010 Research4Life User Experience Review

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Acronyms

3G	Third-generation wireless communications
ADSL	Assymetric Digital Subscriber Line
AGORA	Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture
CD	Compact Disc
DSLAM	Digital Subscriber Line Access Multiplexers
DVD	Digital Video Disc
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GNI	Gross National Income
GPRS	General Packet Radio Services (a form of mobile broadband)
HINARI	Programme for Access to Health Research
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies (also “IT”)
IDRC	International Development and Research Centre
INASP	International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications
IP	Internet Protocol
Kbps	Kilobits per second
LAN	Local Area Network
LDC	Least Developed Country
Mbps	Megabits per second
NLM	National Library of Medicine
OARE	Online Access to Research in the Environment
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PERii	Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information
ToT	Training of Trainers
UPC	<i>Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas</i>
UPCH	<i>Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia</i>
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Section 1

Summary

1.1. Overview and summary of findings

The overall assessment of the Research4Life (R4L) initiative emerging from the *2010 User Experience Review* is that:

- R4L is an effective and highly valued provider of access to research publications in subscribing institutions; R4L can reliably be characterized as the primary means of access to research publications in developing countries today.
- Lack of awareness within subscribing institutions and generally—compounded by limited means of interaction among users, institutional points-of-contact and R4L personnel—impedes realization of the programme’s full potential impact.
- Problematic access to the full text of research articles is the single most critical challenge cited by users of all three R4L programmes.
- Band 2, in which institutions in higher-GNI (Gross National Income) countries are required to pay subscription fees, places a burden on some participating institutions and on R4L programmes. Some institutions in these countries receive unequivocally improved access to research information; others cannot afford even the minimal fee required.

This overall assessment, the summary findings and the recommendations presented in this section are all addressed in greater detail in the body of the report, beginning with Section 2.

1.1.1. Methodology

The 2010 User Experience Review relied on site visits to 59 institutions in 12 countries,¹ with four countries classified as Band 2, and on web-based surveys of institutional points of contact—an *Institutional Survey* that received 1,303 responses—and of developing-country researchers and others who were potential users of R4L. This *General Survey* received 804 responses, including 284 respondents who reported that they had used R4L. On-site interviews were conducted in April and May 2010. Web-based surveys were launched in June 2010 and completed in June and July 2010.

The distribution of site-visit institutions and of survey respondents is generally proportional to the numbers of institutions subscribing to HINARI (~4,100), AGORA (~2,000) and OARE (~1,900). Survey responses, in particular, reflect high percentages of participation by people in sub-Saharan African countries; Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe are among the countries with highest levels of participation in the *General Survey*. R4L personnel report that levels of response by country generally reflect the rates of subscription to R4L on a per-country basis.

1.1.2. Access to research information in developing countries

Institutions subscribing to R4L most frequently engage in research and education, with additional emphasis on practical activities such as patient care, agricultural advisement and environmental policy development.

There is high demand for access to research information, with uses of that information clustering around additional research and around practical activities. Seventy-eight (78) percent of *General Survey* respondents state that access to research information is “extremely important” to their work. Almost all (91.6 percent) conduct field or clinical research, with fewer (72.9 percent) conducting lab-based research. Almost all (91.4 percent) of these respondents publish nationally or internationally.²

While respondents appear to use all available means to access research information, a large majority (88 percent of respondents to *Active Researcher interviews*) report that they use the Internet most frequently for this purpose. Critical challenges at respondents’ institutions include Internet speed (61.7 percent, *General Survey*) and access to publications “discovered” via web search (58.5 percent). Other factors related to “ICT infrastructure,” such as reliable electrical power and the cost of computer use and Internet connectivity also pose challenges.

¹ The word “country” is used throughout this document to signify a “country, area or territory”; such use does not imply any endorsement of statehood claims by the political units so described.

² Per information regarding the methodology, information was collected in English, French and Spanish, including survey versions in these languages. Unless specifically noted, all data presented or discussed in this report reflects the aggregate of responses in all three languages.

1.1.3. Use of R4L

Responses of R4L users generally conform to the characteristics outlined for all respondents, with very high demand for research information (97 percent, *General Survey*), heavy reliance on the Internet (89 percent). Of note, 58.5 percent of R4L users responding to the *General Survey* report that they face challenges accessing research information that they have found via search.

Use of R4L by respondents is generally high, with 61 percent (*General Survey*) reporting that they used R4L in the 30 days prior to taking the survey, and 44 percent of Active-Research interview respondents reporting that they had used R4L more than 10 times in that 30-day period.

The value of R4L is reliably demonstrated by evidence that respondents who have used R4L once (22.9 percent of *General Survey* respondents) have become regular users (21.6 percent of *General Survey* respondents).

In addition, R4L programmes are the most frequently used sources of online research publications among all respondents. Thirty-two (32) percent of *General Survey* respondents cite HINARI as their most frequently used resource in comparison with other online life-science and biomedical publications services; 27 percent and 14 percent of respondents cite AGORA and OARE, respectively, as their most frequently used resource in comparison with other agricultural and environmental publications services.

1.1.4. Challenges to R4L use

R4L users identify main challenges to R4L use that parallel the challenges reported by the larger, non-user group of *General Survey* respondents: Poor Internet connectivity and limited access to relevant resources once they are found. Of critical importance: Users of all three R4L programmes (33.6 percent of *Active Researcher* interviewees; 41.0 percent of *General Interview* participants; 68.6 percent of *General Survey* respondents) cite lack of access to the full text of articles provided by R4L as a major challenge; only 10.7 percent of respondents report that accessing the full text of research articles is not a problem.

For the R4L initiative itself, lack of awareness on the part of potential users and lack of means of communication with actual and potential users are two key barriers to increased impact. Most current users learned of R4L via email outreach (44.1 percent, *General Survey*) or by searching the web independently (38.4 percent). A large percentage of subscribing institutions (36.3 percent, *Institutional Survey*), including those with personnel who have in R4L-sponsored training, have never conducted any form of outreach to potential users. Programme Help Desks, which comprise key means of linkage between R4L and its subscribers, appear to be understaffed and burdened with multiple responsibilities, including Band-2 invoicing and follow-up. Help-Desk response times and response resolution, however, are reasonable in light of these challenges.

1.1.5. Band 2

Band 2 comprises an ineffective transition from Band 1 to full-price (or to higher-price) subscriptions, inasmuch as a high percentage of respondents reports that

their institutions cannot pay the required US \$1,000 subscription cost (57.7 percent, *Institutional Survey*). In addition, invoicing, follow-up and nuanced communications require significant staff resources from the R4L programmes.

1.2. Summary of recommendations

The following recommendations are made at various points in this report:

Improved access to the full text of articles, Section 6.4.5:

- Improve access to the full text of articles
- Study the consequences of an “free-access” approach³
- Review and revise restrictions and exclusions
- Publish clear policies on full-text access and exclusions
- Improve the accuracy of search results in relation to full-text availability
- Review and revise Band 2

Increased support for awareness building, Section 6.4.8:

- Improve search optimization for R4L websites
- Develop capacity for bulk emailings
- Provide localizable resources for outreach
- Develop incentives for outreach

Increased communication among users, institutions and programme personnel, Section 6.6.3:

- Develop social-network structures using existing platforms
- Develop an R4L communications and collaboration platform

Improved implementation of Band 2, Section 7.5:

- Link Band 2 status to a “basket” of indicators
- Centralize Band 2 administration
- Shift Band 2 from institutional payments to national payments

³ “Free-access” in this usage is intended to mean removal of exclusions and other restrictions on access to the full text of articles.