

# Flood of discoveries in Nepal!

Access to full text of world's 7000 leading journals will revalue the role of TUCL

Krishna M Bhandary

S G ALBERT IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID that research is to see what everybody else has seen and to think what nobody else has thought. And, thinking to generate new ideas should always be preceded by looking at the generated ideas. Since new knowledge is mostly announced via journals, they are indispensable components for scientists and experts both to get generated knowledge and to publish their new ones. Recently, there has been a remarkable progress in the former in Nepal.

In February 2003 the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), a cooperative network established in 1992 by the International Council for Science (ICSU) as a programme of the Committee for the Dissemination of Scientific Information (CDSI), nominated Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL) as National Coordinating Institute for the implementation of its Program for Enhancement of Research Information (PERI). The purpose of this collaboration is availability of new knowledge in digital form to Nepal.

After the PERI is fully implemented in September 2003, the full texts of 7,000 scholarly journals as well as abstracts and contents of 20,000 journals from around the world will be accessible at TUCL and certain other centres designated by TUCL. The journals are primarily technical, and represent a broad range of scientific fields, including medicine, agriculture, forestry, natural resource management, and engineering, as well as other fields in the social sciences, humanities and business administration.

As the increasing gap between haves and have-nots poses an increasing threat to world stability, it is essential that Nepal and other developing countries take steps to

strengthen their scientific base. Researchers, academicians and students in Nepal are expected to benefit greatly from the program. At present, they cannot purchase subscriptions to western journals even if they wish to. This availability of full-text database can radically alter the way they think and the way they conduct research, eventually leading to better designed research projects and to more productive application of established ideas. To a significant extent, this program is expected to fulfil the demand for research results in Nepal.

The information resources of PERI would normally cost over one million pounds sterling. PERI pays this sum to the publishers. These resources have been made available to us for £27,500. INASP has made arrangements with Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMFA) to cover costs for 2003. Bravo, DMFA! Although there is some hope of obtaining funding for 2004 and 2005 from DMFA and the International Department for Foreign Affairs (DFID), it would be wisest to think consider how costs can be met if donors do not materialize. Once the information resource is available, TUCL can offer access to other institutions at no further cost. TUCL is working out details for extension of access to all libraries, research institutions, colleges and not-for-profit educational institutes throughout Nepal.

Promoting quality publications in the countries where the programme is implemented is also one of the objectives of PERI which puts them on its website for worldwide dissemination. This would benefit Nepalese publication to get international recognition. ■

*Krishna M Bhandary is librarian of Tribhuvan University Central Library, Kathmandu, Nepal. E-mail: tucl@healthnet.org.np*

List of selected PERI resources for Nepal

<b>EBSCO</b>	Full text of 6000 journals; abstract and content of 7300 journals in all branches of science, technology, medicine, social science, humanities
<b>Blackwell Synergy</b>	Full text of over 600 leading journals in natural, physical, and social sciences; technology; medicine; and the humanities
<b>Springer Verlag</b>	Full text of 432 high-quality journals in many disciplines
<b>Oxford University Press</b>	Full text of over 120 leading journals in science, technology, medicine, humanities and social science
<b>Emerald</b>	Full text of 100 journals in marketing, business, engineering, material science
<b>CAB Compendium</b>	Many journals in agriculture, forestry, management, and conservation of natural resources
<b>Cochrane Library</b>	Good resource for medical and health science

# Marketing science journals

The wide circulation of a journal is as important as its publication

Bharat B Shrestha

A HUGE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION IS generated every year in the field of science and technology. Many scientists from different countries are working on similar topics either in co-operation or independently. The research findings of one scientist are important for others in solving many problems. Research communication also avoids overlap in research and saves time and resources. The exchange of information and ideas among them is very important to achieve goals earlier. Regular meeting between them is, however, impossible. Publication in electronic media or in printed form (e.g., journals) and wide circulation is the most appropriate means of communication. Primary information is mostly fragmentary. These fragments should be distributed to the interested peoples. Research results will not have any meaning unless they are published and circulated. A good journal is a forum in which peoples from different regions can communicate, share ideas, discuss and solve problems.

There are a large number of good journals in the international market but very few have found their place in libraries of our university and research centers. This terrible lack of access to such journals hampers our research and education although their availability is not going to make a great contribution to our research and development. This is because there is a huge gap between the studies addressed by such journals and those conducted by our scientists. Journals published in Nepal are therefore critically important, for they can be a platform for our scientists.

When we count the number of science journals published in Nepal, perhaps we are not poor. This is good news. But the bad news is that many of them are very poor in quality, irregular in publication and have very limited distribution. They are printed on low-grade paper with a short lifespan. Many annual journals are published at an interval of several years. For many journals a single issue becomes the first and last. The Ministry of Science and Technology published the first issue of *Scientific World* in 1999 and a second issue has not appeared yet!

Limited distribution of published journals is a major problem in scientific communication. A journal is published, piled up in the publisher's office and ultimately damaged by silverfish or sold to a paper collector as waste paper. A better approach can be sale at reduced price or free distribution to interested people. The proceedings of the first (1988) and second

(1992) National Science Conference organized by RONAST were distributed free of cost to participants of Third National Conference in 1999. Although reduced sales undermine the aim of publication, there is another aspect to this problem. The author visited the office of the dean of the Institute of Science and Technology (IOST, TU) to collect the recent issue of the *Journal of Institute of Science and Technology*. But the store keeper said that he could not give out the journal because it had not been decided to distribute or sell it, even a month after publication. The same was the case with *Banko Janakari*, published by the Forest Research and Information Service Center (FRISC). *Science Reporter*, published by the National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resource (India), is available in the shops of Nepal; why not the publications of RONAST, IOST and FRISC?

If we cannot ensure that a journal is economically self-sustaining, we can know that it is going to perish soon. Peoples are realizing the importance of publication and the number of readers and customer is increasing. Researchers are facing difficult problems and have to waste more time getting information. If it is easily available in time they do not hesitate to pay a minimal price. So the first thing to do is to improve the quality of journals in content and printing. Articles should be reliable and reviewed by experts. A good journal has an expanding market and people can pay a reasonable price. Sometimes it may be necessary to encourage people to buy the journals by highlighting its significance. Journals and other publications of government organizations are distributed free of cost but are not available to all interested people. If you do not have a close relation with officials you have to request several times to get a single copy, and sometimes even then you will not succeed! This situation needs to be corrected promptly. If they are published in sufficient number, sold at price that reflects their actual cost, and made available on the public market (e.g. in book shops) the journals will not lose money, and interested people can get information easily. For this it is necessary to improve the distribution system. Books and journals published by ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development), IUCN (International Union for Nature Conservation), NEFAS (Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies) and other organizations are easily available in bookstores, but why not journals published by RONAST, ministry and TU? Major journals published by ministries, RONAST and TU should find a place in every library at academic institutions, research centers, NGOs and INGOs. Publishers can use existing book distributors to make them available to the general public. And, one important thing that is to be remembered from time to time is that a journal not available to those who want and need it is not worth publishing. ■

*Bharat B Shrestha is a teaching assistant at Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University. E-mail: bhabashre@yahoo.com*

# WTO casts a shadow over Nepal's natural legacy

Can't live with it, can't live without it. Confused? The golden rule: Economic priorities should not be allowed to outweigh environmental imperatives

Krishna Roka

APART FROM THE CURRENT POLITICAL turmoil, the major debate in our news media focuses on the issue of when Nepal should become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Globalization has erased boundaries among nations through economic, social, and environmental unification. This is a case of "can't live with it, can't live without it." The real question here involves the environmental consequences if Nepal does open its doors, for globalization has paradoxically brought forth new problems rather than solving old ones. The Northern bloc has long squandered the resources of developing countries in the name of economic progress.

Globalization in effect is not a single process but a concatenation of developments involving infrastructure enhancement; economic reforms, trade and market access, resource extraction, production and distribution of goods, and so on. The main thrust of globalization is to increase trade by increasing production. The expansion of urban societies has increased the demand for forest goods, from timber and pulp to medicinal plant, putting ever greater pressure on forest ecosystems. In recent decades, the pressures have intensified. Growing appetites for forest and agricultural products are driving logging and conversion. The Philippines' loss of 90% of its primary forest during the timber boom of the 1970s is a clear example of our shortsightedness (1). The loss started after the Second World War. Timber from the Philippines was supplied to markets in Europe and Japan after World War II, as war-ravaged countries rebuilt. Every year, forested areas four times the size of Switzerland are cleared worldwide (2). Foreign investment in logging, mining, and energy contributes to this deforestation. These enterprises are the wheels on which the globalization juggernaut careens around the world.

Under the circumstances, Nepal must think twice before opening its borders. As Nobel laureate and former chief economist of the World Bank Joseph Stiglitz says, "the borderless world through which goods and services flow is also a borderless world through which other things can flow that are less positive". Economic priorities should not be allowed to outweigh environmental imperatives. The greatest threat posed by globalization may be in the field of intellectual property rights (IPR). According to WTO rules, foreign companies and individuals may patent products and processes on which Nepalese livelihoods have depended for centuries.

Multinational companies (MNCs) are prying on developing countries with less effective central authority, gaining access to their assets with little effort. Taking advantage of the situation, they swiftly take over the country's business sector in their control. For the MNCs, economic return is all that matters; their role in squandering natural resources has become a sore point in many developing nations.

With economic liberalization, borders are open for the free exchange of ideas, culture, and technology. Via satellite, western products have flooded the screens of developing countries. Traditional ways have been transformed, as we have opted for a McDonaldized (urbanized) culture. McDonaldization of the society demands more food that both aggravates economic problems and increases pressure on the environment. Traditional agricultural practices have proven inefficient in meeting modern demands. Farmers have adapted to using excessive amount of chemical fertilizers and pesticides; the initial gains in production, however, have been followed by rapid declines, and increased dependence on chemical inputs. The damage to the soil has been incalculable.

In view of these facts, Nepal must proceed with caution, making every effort to distinguish short-term from long-term advantages, in order to minimize the adverse impacts of globalization. Although we boast of our wealth of biodiversity, the details are unknown. Myriad species are still undocumented and may wind up in the hands of MNCs. We should learn the lesson from past developmental activities (roads, dams, and so on) undertaken without environmental impact analysis: once we fritter away our resources they are lost forever. Nepal should formulate its own policies and regulations regarding patenting and extraction. Joining the WTO can and should be delayed until completion of this groundwork. Nature is Nepal's trump card, and we should play it wisely. ■

*For correspondence to the author, E-mail: roka@sify.com*

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