African Journals OnLine (AJOL)

An Internal Evaluation, 2000–2002

Print version of website: http://www.inasp.info/

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1. Introducing AJOL

The African Journals Online (AJOL) programme is managed by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP). After the end of the pilot project, it was re-launched in August 2000 as AJOL 2000. From 2001, AJOL was integrated into INASP's Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI), which has, as one of its components, disseminating local research through the establishment of regional online journal services.

1.1 The pilot project, 1997–1999

The two-year pilot project began in 1997 and services went live over the Internet in April/May 1998. The pilot project was evaluated early in 2000. It was concluded that AJOL had succeeded in raising the visibility of African journals and in creating a greater awareness of research carried out in Africa.

Recommendations included:
- expand the service expand to include more journals in more subject areas;
- include abstracts as well as tables of contents (TOCs);
- add a search feature and link to the full text where this was available;
- continue publicity and promotion at regular intervals;
- reduce administrative costs by asking journals to provide TOCs and abstracts in electronic format;
- offer photocopies of articles free of charge for a trial period to encourage use of this service;
- conduct an evaluation at the end of 2002.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the full programme remained more or less the same as for the pilot:
- to enable the results of research undertaken and published in Africa to become more widely known and accessible;
- to strengthen the African academic publishing sector, by providing income both through encouraging print or electronic subscriptions and through purchase of single articles;
- to assess the impact of using the Internet to promote African-published journals;
- An additional objective was:
- to hand-over a sustainable and operating project to an African host at the end of the three year period.

1.3 Programme elements

The services offered by AJOL continuously expanded during the three-year period, with the subject and language scope coverage increasing as further funding became available. At the end of 2002, they included:
- access to the tables of contents (TOCs) and abstracts of 113 scholarly journals published in 20 countries of Africa, in all subject areas and in both English and French; South Africa and Francophone African countries were added in 2001, as were the humanities;
- a document delivery service, with photocopies of articles supplied on request by mail or fax; payment by credit card was added in 2002;
- a key word search of journals contents, through one interface, added in 2000;
- back files maintained for five years;
- links to full text, where this was available on the Web. At the end of December 2002, 15 journals were available full text online, seven through Bioline, one through Ingenta, one through Project Muse and six either on their own site or hosted by other organizations;
- proceeds from document delivery returned to the respective journals and a subscription entered to each journal;
- instructions to authors, added in 2001;
- links to 12 other sites and services which provide access to African journals;
- links to 34 journals about Africa but published elsewhere, added in 2001;
- Web pages available in English and French.

1.4 Publicity

There were two main publicity drives, in August 2000 when the extended programme was launched and in January 2002, to provide information about new developments in the service.

Both publicity drives were based on the distribution of a flyer, accompanied by an explanatory letter. 5,000 copies of each flyer were printed, plus 2,000 in French for the 2002 drive. In 2000, distribution concentrated on academic libraries in Africa, Africana scholars worldwide, the media, Africana libraries worldwide and donor agencies. In 2002, there was an additional emphasis on libraries, journals and researchers in health and agriculture, plus contacts in the French-speaking world. The flyers were also enclosed in issues of the INASP Newsletter, which has a distribution of around 1,500.

Advertisements and notices about AJOL appeared in a number of print and electronic journals, e.g. AABC Newsletter, ALPSP Newsletter, Africa Insight, Africa Review, African Book Publishing Record, African Journal of Ecology, Bellagio Publishing Newsletter, as well as in the journals participating in AJOL. A major article about AJOL was included in *Learned Publishing*, 15 (1) January 2002. Notices were also circulated on 28 listservs and Africana sites on the Web were checked for links to AJOL.

Displays about AJOL were held at over 50 meetings and conferences worldwide during 2000, 2001 and 2002, including: AAU, African Studies Association, CAPNET, Ghana Book Fair, ICSU General Assembly, IFLA, National Academy of Sciences, Nigerian Book Fair, SCAULWA, SCECSAL, Zimbabwe International Book Fair, WALA. Presentations about AJOL were made to GDNet (both in Oxford and Brighton), African Books Collective/Dag Hammarskjold Seminar on Scholarly Publishing in Africa in Zanzibar, WHO Consultative Group on Medical Journal Publishing in Geneva.

In 2002, posters about AJOL were also made available for display at meetings and on the walls of libraries and computer laboratories.

1.5 Hand-over

Towards the end of February 2002, INASP invited institutions and organizations based in Africa to submit applications to host, maintain and develop AJOL. The advertisement indicated the expected responsibilities of the new host and the necessary infrastructural requirements. These were amplified in a 'further information' document. Six organizations expressed interest and three applications were received. These were assessed by two external reviewers, who both returned negative reports. After consultation with the major donors, INASP agreed to continue to host AJOL for at least another two years (until the end of 2004), during which time it will continue to search out and investigate possible African hosts for the programme.

1.6 Costs

Funds to run the service came from UNESCO (2000), NORAD (2000–2002) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2001–2002). Since 2001, funding has also been available through PERI (from Danida, Sida-SAREC and DFID). The total cost of running the service over the three years (including management and administration, web site design and online expenses, database development, journal subscriptions, publicity, communications and stationery, French translation, overheads) was in the region of £85,000. As the number of journals included in AJOL and use of the document delivery increased, so did the annual costs of maintaining the service. In 2002, management costs made up about 48% of expenditure, subscriptions to journals 19% and publicity 11%.

2. Evaluation: Purpose and Methodology

The internal evaluation of the first three years of the full programme aimed at discovering the overall impact of AJOL and how the service might be improved.

The objectives were to find out:
- whether the results of research published in African journals were becoming more widely known and used;
- whether the journals had benefited, either through increased income from subscriptions or other ways, from exposure in AJOL.

2.1 Methodology

Data was collected by:
- keeping a record the number and subject scope of journals included on the site;
- keeping a record the number of hits made on the AJOL site;
- keeping a record of all those who registered to use the AJOL service;
- keeping a record the number of requests for document delivery;
- requesting a random 10% sample of those who had registered to use AJOL to complete a short questionnaire;
- requesting all those who had received a photocopy of an article through the document delivery service to complete a short questionnaire;
- requesting each of the journals included in AJOL to complete a short questionnaire.

Copies of the questionnaires are provided at the end of the evaluation.

2.2 Data collection problems

One of the problems encountered in the evaluation of the pilot project was the lack of end user data. Web access logs give information on numbers using a site but not how the site is used and its value to the user.

In an attempt to overcome this problem, users of AJOL were asked to complete a registration form the first time that they accessed the site. Ten percent of these users (selected randomly within geographic regions) were then e-mailed a questionnaire, with questions on why and how they used the information provided by AJOL. However this approach met with little success. One problem is that e-mail addresses are not stable. University students form a large proportion of the user base but their university e-mail addresses are only valid whilst they are registered in the university. Also people change jobs and their institutional address is therefore cancelled. But even allowing for dead addresses, the response rate was very low. A higher response rate was received from the questionnaires to those who had used the document delivery service.

Therefore, as with the pilot project, the discursive data required to amplify the usage statistics is very limited and, though broadly indicative, is by no means conclusive.

A much better response was received for the journal questionnaire.

3. Findings

3.1 Number and subject coverage of journals

The pilot project offered access to the TOCs of 14 journals in science and technology.

The figures below show the increase in the number of journals offered over the three years of the programme:

	Number of titles
December 2000	45
December 2001	70
December 2002	113

At the end of 2002, an agreement was signed with SABINET to include 34 journals published in South Africa through their online service. Therefore from the beginning of 2003, the total number of journals will rise to almost 150. The title target of AJOL was set at 130 journals by the end of 2002.

Three to four new journals on average were added each month. These titles were publicized on the front page of the INASP Web site.

At the end of 2002, journals originated in 20 different African countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

In addition, the following subject categories were included:

Agricultural Sciences and Resource Management: 13 titles
Arts, Culture, Language and Literature: 10 titles
Health: 29 titles
Science and Technology: 33 titles
    General: 19 titles
    Engineering: 3 titles
    Food Science and Technology: 3 titles
    Life Sciences: 5 titles
    Physical Sciences: 3 titles
Social Sciences: 28 titles
    General: 8 titles
    Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology: 5 titles
    Economics, Finance and Management: 4 titles
    Education: 3 titles
    Information and Communication Sciences: 4 titles
    Law: 1 title
    Politics: 3 titles

3.2 Site access statistics

The following figures indicate hits (not including hits on images) on the AJOL pages in the month specified:

2000		2001				2002			
Sep	Dec	Mar	Jun	Sep	Dec	Mar	Jun	Sep	Dec
4,239	1,408	15,560	15,070	23,208	31,221	48,275	56,513	67,307	81,877

3.3 Registrations

Between 100 and 200 new users register with AJOL each month. As at December 2002, 4,834 persons had registered to use the service. Most were staff, researchers and students from universities and research institutions. The number of those registering each year, a breakdown by regions and the cumulative total for the whole period is as follows:

	2000	2001	2002	Total 2000/02
USA & Canada	346	417	563	1326
South Africa	295	105	262	662
Africa (not South Africa)	179	284	875	1338
Europe (not UK)	160	189	252	601
UK	102	154	243	499
Asia	34	76	139	249
Australasia and South Pacific	19	19	46	84
Central and South America	16	24	35	75
Total	**1151**	**1268**	**2415**	**4834**

Registrations come from virtually every country in the world: USA and Canada, 31 countries in Europe, 39 countries in Africa, 28 countries in Asia, 5 countries in Australasia and the South Pacific, 13 countries in Central and South America, plus the islands of the West Indies.

3.4 Document delivery statistics

Following on the recommendations of the pilot project evaluation, until the end of June 2001, the initial two photocopies of articles supplied under the document delivery service were supplied free of charge. This had the aim of publicizing the paid document delivery service and proving its reliability.

In total 296 articles were supplied:

Subject category of journal	No. of articles
Social Sciences	181
Science and Technology	57
Agriculture	38
Health	20
Total	**296**

Only 7 of the 54 journals included on AJOL at the time did not have at least one article requested. The most popular journals (with over 15 requests each) were:

African Anthropology (27)
African Crop Science Journal (20)
CODESRIA Bulletin (19)
African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science (19)
African Sociological Review (18)
African Journal of Political Science (15)

The 174 applications for free photocopies were distributed as follows:

Region	No. of applications
Europe	64
USA and Canada	51
Africa (inc. South Africa)	37
Asia	17
Central and South America	3
Australasia	2
Total	**174**

The paid document delivery service continued at the re-launch, with more payment options and a simpler pricing system. The cost was set at £5 or USD10 per article. As well as payment by bank transfer, cheque and account, credit card was introduced in 2002. In addition, from 2002, academic staff members from institutions in African countries included in INASP's PERI programme were offered free document delivery, with costs met from the Programme. The number of articles supplied was as follows:

	2000/01	2002	Total
Direct	9	69	78
PERI	n/a	147	147
Total	**9**	**216**	**225**

If the articles are analysed by subject category, the figures are:

Subject category of journal	No. of articles
Social Sciences	92
Science and Technology	53
Health	34
Agriculture	31
Arts and Culture	15
Total	**225**

Applications for photocopies were distributed regionally as follows:

Region	No. of applications
Africa (inc. South Africa)	153 (147 PERI)
USA and Canada	32
Europe	29
Asia	7
Australasia	4
Total	**225**

57 out of the 113 journals had at least one article requested. Most popular with 10 requests or more were:

Journal of Aquatic Sciences (17)
African Crop Science Journal (15)
African Journal of Finance and Management (14)
African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science (13)
African Finance Journal (12)
Journal of Cultural Studies (10)

The proceeds from document delivery (£3.50 for each article supplied) were remitted to the journals either at the end of the calendar year or added on to the journal subscription payment. The table below shows the amounts received by journals during 2000 to 2002:

Proceeds	No. of journals
£35 and over	6
£21 to £31.50	6
£7 to £17.50	27
£3.50	18
£0	56
Total	**113**

3.5 User survey

485 forms were distributed by e-mail to a random 10% sample of those who had registered to use AJOL before the end of December 2002. Of these 78 forms were not delivered and were returned to INASP. 39 completed or partially forms were returned, making a response rate of 10%. The best response rate was from Africa (13%). Not all the questions were answered by all the respondents.

Of the respondents, 85% were from universities or research institutions and 15% from NGOs. 21% of all respondents were librarians.

The date each respondent had registered was compared against the number of times each had accessed AJOL. Although 17% of the respondents had only accessed AJOL the once, the remainder showed a considerable variation, between daily and once a year. 24% said that they accessed it at least once a fortnight.

65% used AJOL to find out what had been published in African journals for purposes of research and in order to keep up to date. Some approached the database with a specific problem, e.g. in order to look for articles on food labelling issues and legislation. It was recognized as particularly useful to Africans and African libraries, because the service, subscriptions to journals and document delivery were offered free through the PERI programme. One respondent also noted that it was an invaluable way of finding out what had been published in relatively obscure journals that did not feature in other search engines.

The librarian respondents all gave as their purpose finding information for library users and setting up access to AJOL from their library Web sites. 6% said that they used AJOL to find out the details of journals to which they might submit articles for publication and 6% said they had been recommended to do so by their library.

The following table gives usage made by respondents of the various services within AJOL:

AJOL Service	Always	Usually	Never
TOCs	5 (26%)	10 (53%)	4 (21%)
Abstracts	8 (6%)	10 (46%)	4 (18%)
Links to full text	5 (35%)	7 (41%)	4 (24%)
Search facility	8 (33%0	13 (54%)	3 (13%)
	Yes		**No**
About the journals page	14 (54%)		12 (46%)
Journals published elsewhere	11 (48%)		12 (52%)
Useful sites and services	14 (70%)		6 (30%)

Only 5 (20%) of the respondents (one of whom complained that his e-mail had been returned) had actually made contact with one of the participating journals.

16 (55%) said that they had subsequently read one of the journal articles found in AJOL, with over half of these saying that they had done so two or three times. The following table indicates how they acquired the articles:

Method	No. (%) of respondents
Online through a full text service	8 (53%)
Own library or library's doc. del.	4 (27%)
INASP's document delivery service	2 (17%)
Supplied by a colleague	1 (7%)

The number obtaining through an online full text service is something of a mystery, as only 15 of the African journals included in AJOL at the end of 2002 were available online.

The majority of respondents rated AJOL as important to their work. However it is likely that those who valued AJOL would be more inclined to reply to the questionnaire. One comment was that AJOL gave African intellectual output international repute.

Rating	No. (%) of respondents
Very important	8 (31%)
Important	12 (46%)
Marginal	5 (19%)
Not important	1 (4%)

Improvements recommended by 13 respondents were:
- facilitate full text online access at minimal cost—6 (46%)
- include more journals—2 (15%)
- improve the search facility—2 (15%)
- deliver articles electronically—2 (15%)
- distribute a bulletin with news about AJOL—1 (9%). Two respondents also said that the arrival of the questionnaire formed a reminder that AJOL existed and that they should use it more.

3.6   Document delivery user survey

89 forms were sent to customers (who had given e-mail addresses) of the AJOL document delivery service. 11 forms were returned as undelivered. 22 completed or partially completed forms were received, giving a response rate of 28%. All those responding were from the university sector (including three librarians) and 16 (73%) were from Africa.

Frequency of use was more intense than for the general user survey. 10 (45%)said that they accessed AJOL once a fortnight or more, whilst only 3 (14%) had accessed it just the once.

The reasons for using AJOL were similar to those mentioned in the general user survey. 14 (70%) were searching for up to date and relevant research on Africa. The fact that AJOL covers journals not available elsewhere (e.g. in libraries or in databases) was valued. Before AJOL, it had been difficult to know what had been published in African journals. One person said that he used AJOL to ask for reprints.

Using AJOL's document delivery service had been a positive experience. All except one respondent rated it as excellent or good, with the order and payment system clear and easy to use. One respondent had never received his order and one had had problems with currency transfer. Orders are sent by post or fax, if under 10 pages. 10 (53%) had received within one week of order, 5 (26%) between one and two weeks and 3 (16%) within two and three weeks. A majority of respondents said that they would have preferred to receive their order in another format:

Method	No. (%) of respondents
Online	11 (61%)
Electronic transfer	9 (64%)

Given that 73% of the respondents were from Africa, where bandwidth problems are considerable and even access to computers often difficult, this figure is high. Those who preferred to receive in hard copy said that it saved the expense of printing out (which could cost a lot for a young African scholar) and that electronic transfer would depend on the size of the file.

Reasons for choosing AJOL's document delivery service as opposed to another supply method included:

Reason	No. (%) of respondents
Only option: journals not available elsewhere	10 (45%)
Ease of use, reliable, prompt delivery	6 (27%)
Free through PERI	3 (14%)

African users stressed that offering free photocopies through PERI was promoting research in Africa and encouraging young African researchers, who could not afford the document delivery charges levied by other suppliers.

Suggestions of ways to improve the AJOL document delivery service included:
- provide full text online—6 (27%)
- provide electronic transfer via e-mail attachment—5 (23%)
- make services better known through university libraries—2 (9%)
- improve/extend the coverage of African journals
- send articles by DHL (suggested by the one person who had not received his order)
- provide back issues of journals on a CD-ROM
- offer payment through an account system (this is an option that is already offered)

3.7   Journal survey

Questionnaires were sent to all the journals, to find out the impact of AJOL on their subscriptions and sustainability. 16 forms were returned, either undeliverable or not completed because the journals had too recently joined the programme. 61 completed or partially completed forms were received, giving a response rate of 67%. However on a number of forms some questions were not answered, as the journals felt that, having joined AJOL within the last year, it was too soon for them to evaluate its impact.

20 (57%) noted an increase in subscriptions in 2001 and 33 (70%) an increase in 2002. For most journals the increase was in African subscriptions, although some journals did note new subscriptions in Europe, North America and the rest of the world. 18 (67%) of journals felt that the new subscribers had definitely or possibly become aware of their journal through AJOL. Others felt that it was impossible to tell, as AJOL was only one of a number of marketing initiatives. Here it should be pointed out that a number of libraries in countries supported under the PERI programme (mostly in Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America) are offered free subscriptions to journals included in AJOL. In 2001, 268 two year subscriptions to 45 journals were entered and in 2002, there were 153 new subscriptions to 59 journals. So at the end of 2002, 421 subscriptions to 59 different journals were current. Many journals indicated that the increase in African subscriptions came through the PERI programme.

Journals recorded an increased interest in other ways and 26 (73%) said that there were indications that this was the result of AJOL. One said that previous to AJOL, all contributors were from Africa. Now submissions came from Europe, North America and the rest of the world.

Increase in:	No. (%) of respondents
Request for sample copies	18 (39%)
Letters to the journal	22 (52%)
Submission of articles for publications	38 (88%)

Benefits of being included in AJOL were cited as:
- greater visibility and awareness in country, in Africa and internationally. Inclusion gives a measure of respectability and credibility (e.g. authors receive reprint requests and feel recognized on the world stage)—41 (87%);
- offers a combined African platform, in which journal is showcased with other African titles;
- increase in number of subscriptions. (At the same time some journals said that they had expected a greater response);
- increase in number of articles submitted. Some journals thought that the inclusion of author instructions had greatly assisted this.

Journals were asked if they would be willing to pay for inclusion in AJOL. At the moment the service is free both for journals and users. 31 (63%) answered a resounding 'No', pointing out that funding is a major problem and that charges were not appropriate until journals are sustainable. One journal pointed out that it earned USD 2,000 from subscriptions but that the cost of producing and circulating four issues was in the region of USD 4,000. The remainder answered 'Yes', but most with qualifications and conditions. The few journals that had had markedly improved sales in recent years, felt that AJOL was doing a good publicity job and that they should pay something to help the sustainability of the project. But most said that whilst they agreed to the idea of payment in principle, they would need to generate more subscription income first and even then the charge would need to be low and in local currency.

A variety of improvements to AJOL were suggested. The most popular—apart from 'keep up the good work' which was common to many—are listed first, with those cited by one or two respondents at the end:
- become more active in assisting and supporting journals in practical ways, e.g.
    - arrange workshops and support attendance at conferences
    - arrange sponsorship and partnerships
    - support the newly formed Association of Editors
    - campaign to get subscriptions to journals from libraries outside of Africa
    - stop duplication of journals covering the same subject area
- embark upon a stronger marketing strategy, using
    - flyers
    - advertising in journals
    - regular information bulletin
    - regional agents for AJOL
- assist journals to publish online and host full text of journals on the AJOL site
- cut costs by:
    - asking journals to send copies free of charge
    - turn AJOL into a subscription service, which keeps income to cover costs

- increase number of journals (but at the same time one respondent advocated stricter quality criteria for the inclusion of journals)
- send out monthly usage statistics to journals
- refine subject categories (e.g. a better heading for multi-disciplinary journals and a separate heading for chemistry)
- offer an indexing and abstracting service for African journals
- update contents more quickly

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Use of African journals

One of the principal objectives of AJOL was to get research published in African journal more widely known and used. Data collected from the registration and site access statistics and the user questionnaires indicates that it has succeeded. Use of the Internet has proved to be a successful means of promotion.

The AJOL site attracted new users at a rate of between 100 and 200 each month, reaching a total of just under 4,850 at the end of December 2002. Users are mostly from university and research institutions, with the majority from Africa, both the natural markets for AJOL. Hits on the AJOL pages increased exponentially, from 4,239 in September 2000 to 81,877 in December 2002.

Most users appear to access AJOL to find up to date and relevant research on Africa, consult it fairly regularly and consider it important to their work. One value is that it covers the contents of journals not easily found elsewhere, either in databases or library holdings.

The number of articles supplied through the AJOL document delivery service appears low and could indicate that references found are not subsequently followed up. However just over half of those responding to the questionnaire indicated that they had subsequently read the full text of an article. And 13 out of 15 respondents acquired the full text by means other than INASP's document delivery service.

A wide variety of the journals offered appear to be used, not just one or two of the most well known titles. During the free photocopy offer, 47 out of the 54 journals then included had at least one document delivery request. And 57 out of the 113 journals included at the end of 2002 received requests for paid document delivery.

4.2 Impact on journals

Journals were overwhelmingly appreciative of the general impact of AJOL, in that it enabled African journals to reach more readers and offered a combined African platform on which journals were showcased alongside other African titles. They felt that AJOL gave a journal respectability and credibility, as well as international visibility.

One concrete benefit was the impact on journal quality. Most journals said that they had begun to receive many more research papers for publication and not just from Africa. This was seen by the majority to be a direct result of AJOL. A lesser number of journals noted an increase in requests for sample copies and in letters received.

However any great increase in journal income, either through new journal subscriptions or document delivery payments, was not seen as resulting from inclusion in AJOL. Although many journals did indicate an increase in new subscriptions, most of these were from Africa and taken out under and paid for by the PERI programme. The few coming from other countries were not thought to be the result of AJOL. And whilst 57 journals had received some payment for document delivery, for most of these the total reimbursed was under £7.

4.3 Online access and electronic delivery

Both AJOL users and the journals themselves placed either online access/electronic delivery or assistance in mounting full text online as priorities for the future. Eight out of 15 respondents said that they already accessed the full text of articles found in AJOL online and six out of thirteen respondents wanted AJOL to facilitate full text online access, with a further two

requesting the delivery of articles electronically. Of those who had received paper/fax copies of articles, improvements suggested were that AJOL in the future offer full text online or electronic transfer by e-mail attachment as well. At the same time, journals asked for assistance in publishing online and/or housing full text on the AJOL site. A user suggestion was for AJOL to provide back issues of journals on a CD-ROM.

Journal access in the West is predominantly online. Unless African journals and document delivery services can also offer electronic access and transfer, they are likely to remain on the fringes of scholarship. Using the Internet for the display of TOCs and abstracts is no longer enough

4.4 Support to journals

AJOL was established as a marketing tool, but journals are now suggesting that AJOL is extended into a more pro-active service, supporting the development of journals in general. It is true that AJOL alone cannot ensure that journals are used and read. In the final analysis this depends on the journals including high quality research, well-edited articles and being published on schedule. Ideas for this support included arranging workshops and attendance at conferences; sponsorships and partnerships; assisting the newly formed Association of African Journal Editors; facilitating co-operation to prevent the duplication of journals in the same subject area; campaigning to obtain subscriptions to journals from outside of Africa.

INASP's PERI programme already offers opportunities to strengthen skills in book and journal publishing and has addressed some of these issues. The change that the journals are requesting is for INASP to develop a community of AJOL journals, which could collectively develop a journals support programme. In line with this, journals also requested feedback from the AJOL service (e.g. statistics of hits on their pages on the AJOL site), so that this could be integrated into their planning.

One issue that would need to be addressed is the coverage of AJOL. Some journals (and users) requested that new journals continue to be added to the site, but one definitely thought that AJOL would be stronger if stricter quality criteria were exercised. At the moment the policy is to be all inclusive and add any scholarly journal. However if active support for journals were to include training, online assistance, etc. then the number of journal benefiting would have to be restricted.

4.5 Journal sustainability and donor dependence

At the moment AJOL is free to both users and journals, with all costs met from donor funding. It was envisaged that, through the promotion offered by AJOL, journals would become more sustainable and then willing to pay something towards AJOL from their marketing and publicity budget. This has not yet happened. Even in cases where journals have felt some financial benefit, the extra subscriptions and document delivery reimbursements have been paid by PERI and not directly by the beneficiaries. In their replies, journals pointed out that funding remained a major problem and charges were therefore not appropriate at the present time.

However it was suggested that one way to cut costs was to ask each journal to send one copy of each issue to AJOL without charge. At the moment 19% of the AJOL budget is spent on journal subscriptions.

4.6 Marketing and publicity

Between 2000 and 2002, two marketing drives based on the distribution of flyers, plus displays at numerous meetings, advertisements in journals, listservs, links, etc. took place. The ongoing increase in registrations and hits on the site indicate that the publicity did work. However the journals felt that a stronger marketing strategy was still needed and some of the users indicated that they had forgotten that AJOL existed until they received the evaluation questionnaire.

New ideas for follow-up included:
- distributing a regular bulletin to users with news about AJOL. If users opted to receive this bulletin, it could provide an avenue to receive user feedback on the AJOL service, which is lacking at the moment;
- establishing regional agents for AJOL, who could ensure that publicity reached places like university libraries (which had been targeted but which were felt by respondents not to be promoting the service). PERI already has country co-ordinators in place, part of whose

remit is the development of AJOL, but this aspect obviously needs strengthening.

4.7 New services and features

Following the last evaluation, many new features were added to AJOL, e.g. the search mechanism, abstracts, links to full text, instructions to authors, etc. It was not known how much these and existing features were being used. Responses from users revealed that it was a minority of users who did not use these added services. The least popular were the About the Journals and the Journals Published Elsewhere pages. But nobody suggested the removal of any features.

The search facility was well used but it was recommended that it be improved. This is already underway, through the initial organization of AJOL on a database format. Some journals also felt that the subject headings used to categorize the journals needed refining. In particular, multi-disciplinary journals were ill placed. One new service requested was that AJOL not only be a current awareness tool, but also start indexing journal contents.

5. Recommendations

AJOL has already received funding to continue through to the end of 2005, when it is planned that another three-year internal evaluation takes place. Arising out of the present evaluation, it is recommended that:

5.1 AJOL services and features
- current services and features are all continued;
- subject categories are revisited to make them more accurate and descriptive of journal content;
- the option of AJOL also indexing journal content is investigated.

5.2 AJOL journal community
- opinions and views of journals are regularly solicited and taken into account in the development of AJOL;
- more and regular feedback on AJOL performance is passed back to journals;
- support undertaken by INASP towards the improvement of journal performance, e.g. workshops, partnerships, etc. is offered after consultation with AJOL journals.

5.3 Online access and electronic document delivery
- ways and means of facilitating full text online access to all journals included in AJOL is investigated;
- electronic document delivery be offered, alongside paper and fax.

5.4 Marketing
- existing methods of publicity are continued;
- a regular bulletin for users on developments in AJOL is distributed;
- a stronger network of country and regional agents, perhaps using the journals themselves, is established to assist with on the ground publicity.

5.5 Sustainability
- in order to cut costs, AJOL journals are each asked to donate one subscription to INASP in return for AJOL services.

5.7 Site statistics
- the statistics collection programme allows for separate counts on different features and on each journal; that this programme is introduced immediately to prepare data for the next evaluation at the end of 2005.

5.8 End user feedback
- a new method of collecting data from users of AJOL, about the way they use the service and its value to their work, is immediately investigated and implemented, so that it is available for the next evaluation at the end of 2005.

APPENDIX A1:

Questionnaire to registered users of AJOL

Dear AJOL user

Some time ago you registered as a user of AJOL. In order to allow us to evaluate AJOL and improve the service, please can you I ask you to spend a few minutes in answering the questions below?

African Journals Online (AJOL) Evaluation

Name:
Institution:
Country:
E-mail address:

1. How many times (approximately) have you accessed AJOL?
2. Why do you access AJOL?
3. Do you access:

TOCs	Always	Usually	Never
Abstracts	Always	Usually	Never
Links to full text	Always	Usually	Never

4. Do you use the search facility?   Always   Usually   Never
5. Do you refer to the 'About the journal' pages?   Yes   No
    If so, have you made direct contact with any of the AJOL participating journals?
                      Yes   No
6. Do you use the following services offered by AJOL:

Journals published elsewhere link page	Yes	No
Useful sites and services link page	Yes	No

7. Have you subsequently obtained/read one of the journal articles you found in AJOL?
                      Yes   No

    If so, how many times?
    If so, how did you acquire the article(s)?
    Through INASP's photocopy service
    Through your own library's document delivery service
    Online through a full text service
    Other (please specify)
8. How do you rate the existence of AJOL to your work?
        Very important   Important   Marginal   Not important
9. How can the AJOL service be improved?
10. Any other comments?

APPENDIX A2:

Questionnaire to users of the document delivery service

Dear AJOL user

Some time ago we supplied you with the photocopy of a journal article, ordered through the document delivery service of African Journals OnLine (AJOL).

In order to allow us to evaluate this aspect of AJOL and improve the service, please can you I ask you to spend a few minutes in answering the questions below?

African Journals Online (AJOL) Evaluation

Document Delivery Service

Name:
Institution:
Country:
E-mail address:

1. How many times (approximately) have you accessed AJOL?
2. Why do you access AJOL?
3. Rate your experience of using AJOL's document delivery service:
   Is the order system clear and easy to use?   Yes   No
      If No, give reasons:
   Within how many days did you receive the article?
   Is the payment system (if applicable) clear and easy to use?
                                                    Yes   No
      If No, give reasons:
4. Would you have preferred to receive the article in another format?
   Online   Yes   No
   Electronic transfer   Yes   No
   Other (please specify)
5. Why did you choose to use AJOL's document delivery service to obtain this article?
6. How can the AJOL documentary delivery service be improved?
7. Any other comments?

APPENDIX A3:

Questionnaire to AJOL journals

Dear Journal Editor / Journal Manager

Your journal is one of those included on African Journals OnLine (AJOL).

We are currently undertaking an evaluation of AJOL, its use and impact, since the service was re-launched in September 2000.

Please can you assist us in this evaluation by spending a few minutes answering the following questions? Either type in your answer or make a x against one of the options offered. Then e-mail the form back to me.

African Journals Online (AJOL) Evaluation

Name of Journal:
Country:
E-mail address:

1. Please indicate whether the number of subscriptions to your journal in 2001 and 2002 increased or decreased and by how many:
   2001:   Increase   Decrease
   2002:   Increase   Decrease
   If there was an increase, is there any indication that new subscribers became aware of your journal through AJOL?
    Please indicate the overall regional spread of the increase/decrease:
   Increase: Africa   Europe   North America   Rest of world
   Decrease: Africa   Europe   North America   Rest of world
2. Have you noticed an increased interest in your journal through:
   Requests for sample copies   Yes   No
   Letters to the journal   Yes   No
   Submission of articles for publication   Yes   No
      If there was an increase, is there any indication that this was the result of AJOL?
3. What benefits has inclusion in AJOL brought to your journal?
4. Would you be willing to pay for the inclusion of your journal in AJOL?
5. How can AJOL be improved?
6. Any other comments?