



# Editors' Update

Your network for knowledge

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Youngsuk Chi

## Supporting the scientific community

Elsevier has collaborated with the United Nations Environment Program, Yale University and other leading scientific publishers to give the developing world increased access to environmental research. This is part of Elsevier's ongoing commitment to close the scientific gap between industrialized and developing nations, and to support the scientific community throughout the world.

Through Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE), Elsevier makes 1,200 key environmental science journals available to some 70 developing nations. Universities, colleges, libraries, research institutes, government offices and non-governmental organizations in eligible countries now have free online access to a wide range of environment-related disciplines. These include climate change, ecology, environmental chemistry, environmental engineering, environmental toxicology and pollution.

### Acting as a single community

"It's an example of how science can act as a single community," says Youngsuk Chi, Elsevier Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Academic and Customer Relations. OARE is coordinated by the United Nations Environment Program and several other public and private partners. "Yale University is providing operational support for OARE, the Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is providing the money, and over 200 publishers, scientific societies and associations are supplying

the content," he explains. "Thanks to the commitment of these players, we're allowing countries without the financial means to be full subscribers to have the same benefits."

Eligibility for OARE is based on annual gross national product (GNP). Countries whose GNP per capita is less than \$1,000 were given free access to OARE when it was launched on October 30 last year. These so-called Band 1 countries include Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Zimbabwe. By 2008, the OARE Board plans to introduce Band 2, which will provide low cost access to countries whose GNP per capita is between \$1,000 and \$3,000. Countries in this category include Cuba, Iraq, Kosovo, the West Bank and Gaza. These eligibility criteria are based on World Bank figures available in 2006. Of course, a country's GNP can change from year to year, so its eligibility is regularly reviewed.

### Solving real problems

OARE is the latest in a series of philanthropic online initiatives

that Elsevier is involved in. Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI), launched in 2002, gives developing countries free or low cost access to major biomedical journals. The project was pioneered by the World Health Organization and uses the same eligibility criteria as OARE. HINARI was quickly followed by Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA) in 2003. Set up by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, AGORA offers the same developing countries reduced cost access to leading scientific journals in agriculture and related fields.

After successfully giving developing countries improved access to health and agricultural research, environmental sciences were the obvious field to offer next. "You can imagine the environmental issues affecting the development of these nations," says Chi. "Everything from water problems to environmentally inflicted diseases." OARE gives poorer nations an opportunity to develop their environmental capabilities and use science

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to solve real problems. “On the one hand, we want these countries to develop economically so that they can afford scientific research. But in the meantime they need to have access to scientists who have already done the research so they can discover the next step.”

Based upon the reception and growth of the HINARI program, OARE publishers have agreed to continue the project until 2015, but Chi believes it will be extended. “You can’t have an open-ended program,” he adds, “There has to be a point where we evaluate the project and decide how to proceed.” If the success of HINARI, AGORA and OARE are anything to go by, they are likely to continue for a long time. All three programs are actively used by thousands of institutions in developing countries.

### Three million downloads in three years

Not surprisingly students, researchers and policymakers are delighted to have access to these vast new resources. For HINARI alone, over three million Elsevier articles were downloaded in the first three years. “If you were to take HINARI and AGORA together, they would be Elsevier’s fifth largest customer,” says Chi. “So you can imagine how important these programs are to the eligible countries.” Usage of the programs is likely to increase

as they become better known in the target regions. To that end, Elsevier is now providing libraries with technical assistance and training so they can make the best possible use of these online assets. Now that these three programs are running successfully, Elsevier is looking at becoming involved in similar projects that level the information playing field. “There are many good programs out

and education. As a result, the foundation donates computer equipment to schools and children’s reading programs, and also makes contributions to child welfare projects. In addition, the organization also gives grants to the scientific, technical and medical community in order to fund innovative projects for information dissemination. Editors and staff can suggest worthwhile institutions and projects to the foundation.

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Through all these initiatives Elsevier makes its resources and the work of its authors, editors and reviewers available in countries and communities where they are needed. As a

result, they have the enormous potential to improve the quality

of science, health and human life. “Science is about building on what’s gone before,” says Chi. “What we want is for people to benefit from the discoveries and achievements of others without having to start from scratch.”

there,” confirms Chi. “We constantly get proposals from people that would like our participation. We look at these carefully and are developing programs of our own.”

### Enriching and developing communities

Elsevier’s philanthropic initiatives go beyond providing electronic access to developing countries. The Elsevier Foundation, created in 2002, aims to enrich and develop the communities where Elsevier has a presence. With an annual budget of \$1 million, the foundation gives grants, products, materials and services to non-profit organizations with a tax-exempt status. One of its main focuses is child literacy

#### Useful links (click below)

[OARE website](#)

[HINARI website](#)

[Agora website](#)

[The Elsevier Foundation](#)

[Elsevier Philanthropic Foundation](#)