Elsevier and Research4Life

Over the past two decades, Research4Life has worked to bridge the digital divide, providing free or low-cost access to research for publicly funded institutions in the world’s least resourced countries. As a unique public-private partnership between UN agencies, universities and publishers, it aims to reduce the knowledge gap, stimulating productive and effective research, and promoting international collaborative research. Research4Life is made up of five programs – Hinari, AGORA, OARE, ARDI and GOALI – that provide developing countries with free or low-cost access to academic and professional peer-reviewed content online in the fields of health, agriculture, environment, applied sciences and law.

Research4Life is central to Elsevier’s goal of achieving universal access to research information: as a founding and driving partner, Elsevier contributes over a quarter of the peer reviewed resources in Research4Life, encompassing databases such as Science Direct, Scopus, Clinical Key and Embase. In addition, all gold open access journals published by Elsevier are included in the Research4Life open access eligibility program, offering authors APC waivers or discounts.

Research4Life’s conducts regular landscape and users reviews, most recently in 2020. The reviews clearly show that the partnership has not yet achieved its full potential in terms of awareness, reach, understanding, effective usage and impact due to under-resourcing. To respond to Research4Life’s unmet resource need, Friends of Research4Life was established as a US-based 501(c)(3) charitable organization with an independent governance structure and Board of Directors.

The mission of Friends of Research4Life is to accelerate Research4Life’s goal to provide much-needed access to the world’s premier peer-reviewed research, to extend Research4Life training initiatives that help level the playing field for researchers in lower- and middle-income countries, to significantly increase awareness and usage of the resources offered by the Research4Life publishing partners, and facilitate the research communication process.

“This is really about increasing impact. Friends of Research4Life will enable us to catalyze support for Research4Life, so that we can scale up the important contributions made over the past two decades in access, information literacy and capacity building in developing countries. We invite like-minded organizations to join us in ramping up support,” noted Ylann Schemm, Director of the Elsevier Foundation and Chair of the Research4Life Executive Council.

Research4Life in numbers

- 129,000+ total resources
- 28,000+ journals
- 111,000+ books
- 125+ other information resources
- 10,000+ registered institutions
- 165+ publishers partners

In over 120 low- and middle-income countries and territories

- Free access
- Low-cost access

Five UN agencies working together with hundreds of partners

- WHO
- FAO
- UNEP
- WIPO
- ILO

A wide range of subject areas

- Psychiatry
- Sociology
- Microbiology
- Sociology of Health
- Microbiology
- Environmental Sciences
- Health Law
- Surgery
- History
- Environmental Law
- Animal Sciences
- Public Health
- Environmental Sciences
- Health Law
- Surgery
- History
- Environmental Law
- Animal Sciences
- Public Health

Research4Life in numbers
Our unique contributions

The Elsevier Foundation contributes important resources to Research4Life information literacy capacity building:

- A decade of support for the MLA Librarians without Borders® program providing face to face programs. Since 2016, we have supported additional Research4Life Grants, awarded annually for in-country train-the-trainer workshops. In total, the Elsevier Foundation has donated over $500,000 in grants to support Research4life training.
- Ylann Schemm, Director of the Elsevier Foundation has worked with Research4Life since 2009 and currently serves as Chair of Research4Life’s governing Executive Council. Domiziana Francescon, Elsevier Foundation Partnerships Manager, is the Co-Chair of the Communications and Marketing taskforce, which works to boost the visibility of Research4Life through online campaigns, webinars and articles. In addition, colleagues throughout Elsevier are involved in a range of Research4Life taskforces including eligibility, fundraising, technology, metrics and training.

ICSR / STM Perspective

The advent of access programs such as Research4Life have contributed to see a rapidly transforming publishing landscape – making strides in bridging the knowledge gap between high- and low-income countries.

In July 2020, a white paper co-published by Elsevier’s International Center for the Study of Research (ICSR) and STM, Achieving an Equitable Transition to Open Access for Researchers in Lower-and-Middle-Income Countries, has highlighted that despite the steady increase in research output from the Global South, in 2018, 75% of researchers from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) still published in subscription journals. Ylann Schemm organized a panel at the 2021 Academic Publishing in Europe (APE) conference, convening senior representatives from the research, development and publishing sectors to discuss how the publishing community can ensure a more inclusive OA playing field. She noted, “We are founders and drivers of Research4Life, which provides access to researchers in the Global South, but are also deeply committed to building capacity throughout the research cycle by providing content, data, analytics from Elsevier and funding from the Elsevier Foundation.”

“I thank the facilitators for the commitment you had towards guiding and engaging the participants. Taking this course was so timely: I never knew we possessed a gold mine of information at my university. With this knowledge, I can train staff and users on how to put this resource to maximum use.”

— CHIOMA EDITH MBAKWE, Nigeria, May 2020 MOOC participant