

World's largest open access e-journals portal launched

The open access movement which is gaining importance among scholars across the world got further boost when **Open J-gate**, the world's largest open access e-journals portal was launched on 27 February 2006 at New Delhi by Bangalore-based Informatics (India) Ltd as a free service for anyone across the globe. Hundreds of journals are available from various publishers and societies from across the globe free on the Internet. But all of them are widely scattered and searching the articles and getting to them is a very cumbersome job for researchers.

Open J-gate is the first portal in the world to index over 3000+ open access e-journals on one single searchable platform in the form of a standard database bridging the access gap. It gives access to over a million articles published in

2,000 plus peer-reviewed research journals in addition to articles from over 1,000 trade and professional journals. The database can be accessed at the URL www.openj-gate.com

Informatics called the launch as India's contribution to the global research and the promotion of open access movement. Open Access is to journals what Open Source is for software. As the name suggests, access to Open J-gate is free for any one to access across the world. It has enhanced the information access of researchers not only in India but all over the world.

The occasion for this historic launch was the 12th Annual Lecture on Informatics at Indian National Science Academy (INSA), where over 200 senior professors, scientists, librarians and re-

searchers from top research and academic establishments of the country had gathered. Jean-Claude Guedon, a global expert of open access movement and founder of Internet Society of Canada launched the Open J-gate.

The UGC Vice-Chairman V. N. Rajasekharan Pillai shared his ideas on open access issues that affect the global scientific fraternity the most and lauded the efforts of Informatics for launching Open J-gate – a portal direly needed by the resource-starved Indian scientific community.

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MEETING REPORT

Science communication and media practice*

'Science writers like all other journalists, must have an insatiable appetite for reading and the best must be endowed with a memory like a cabinet. They should have a zeal for science writing and the ability to write science stories in a way that the general public can understand' says Anthony Tucker, former science editor of *The Guardian*.

What the media does in the name of science communication to the masses, is to present an enormous amount of information compressed in the form of a palpable pellet to be consumed. Controversial and unconfirmed claims are sometimes published in the media, resulting in confusion in the public mind. In recent controversies surrounding mobile phone, electromagnetic fields, the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, and genetic modification of foods, proli-

feration of scientific information did not resolve dilemmas about evidence. In mass media, science should not be placed as a product to be consumed, but a process to develop scientific temperament so that the public can learn to think and distinguish between right and wrong. Scientists play a big role in communicating science to the masses. Scientists like Leon Lederman, Richard Feynman, Steven Weinberg, etc. have tried to popularize science. But in India we find only a few who are seriously involved in taking science to the door of the common public.

In our country the media of mass communication are newspapers, radio, TV, etc. The task of propagating and interpreting science to the masses naturally depends upon the media. Science reporting as such is comparatively a new field of science journalism and the number of qualified science reporters in our country is not sufficient. So training of science journalists in our country is a necessity. Keeping these facts in mind, the Indian Science News Association, Kolkata had organized a training programme on science

communication and media practice. Topics of lectures covered were basics of science communication, science news reporting and production, science and technology coverage in electronic and other media, current issues in science and technology related to global, regional, national and local aspects, modern technological aspects of science communication, and so on.

Amit Chakraborty of Tara Bangla TV (a private TV channel), lamented over the fact that our policy makers in the government perhaps started realizing the importance of S&T communication through different mass media during the middle of the 70s. Cells were set up at seven stations of AIR, namely Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Thiruvananthapuram. Their responsibility was to produce popular science programmes for people of different regions. Few more cells have been set up since then at other stations. The Guwahati station will soon have a separate cell for the production of science programmes and for providing assistance to other stations in the northeastern part of the country.

*A report on the XIX Training Programme on Science Communication and Media Practice – 2005 held during 15 July to 30 September 2005 and organized by the Indian Science News Association, Kolkata.