

## **Empowerment through marketing and training: HINARI in non-English-speaking African countries**

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### **Abstract:**

*The HINARI Access to Research in Health programme has been available to most African countries for more than 12 years, but many institutions show low usage patterns of the 40 000 scientific online information resources available from more than 150 publisher partners. This usage pattern is more pronounced in non-English speaking countries.*

*While a number of factors can contribute to this pattern, the most obvious contributor is likely to be the language in which the scientific literature is mostly published. Since there is little that an access programme can do to affect this, the authors set out to better understand other contributing factors.*

*In 2012, the programme conducted a survey of institutions registered for the HINARI programme in francophone African countries and discovered that three key indicators of higher use patterns were marketing efforts, information literacy training activities, and the presence of a degreed librarian. This means that an effort to increase marketing and training activities and to advocate for the hiring of more degreed librarians can have an impact.*

*In 2013, the programme initiated a similar investigation in eligible Portuguese-speaking countries, to determine whether these three factors present similarly.*

*The paper will discuss the survey results in more depth and the subsequent effort to gather and disseminate successful marketing techniques and training plans to empower libraries no matter the language in which they operate.*

**Keywords:** library marketing; multilingualism; publication access.

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## **Background**

HINARI Access to Research in Health programme was conceived in early 2001 to offer low- and middle-income country institutions free or nominal-cost online access to the world's biomedical literature. Thirteen years later, HINARI is now replicated in agriculture (AGORA), the environment (OARE), and applied sciences for innovation (ARDI). The partnership has grown to include four United Nations entities, Yale and Cornell universities, more than 190 publishers of all varieties and sizes, the International Association of STM Publishers, Microsoft Corporation, Serials Solutions, Swets Information Services, and innumerable individuals and institutions who have become champions and ambassadors of the concept.

Each of the four Research4Life programme portals enables users from subscribing institutions to search publishers' resources, view abstracts of publications, and download the full-text of online journal articles and book chapters.

HINARI makes available up to 13 000 journals and 28 800 books to more than 5 700 organizations, including universities, teaching hospitals, research institutions, government offices, and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in over 100 countries, areas and territories. Despite this wealth of available resources in almost all African countries, many institutions show low usage patterns of the scientific online information resources available through HINARI. This usage pattern is more pronounced in non-English speaking countries.

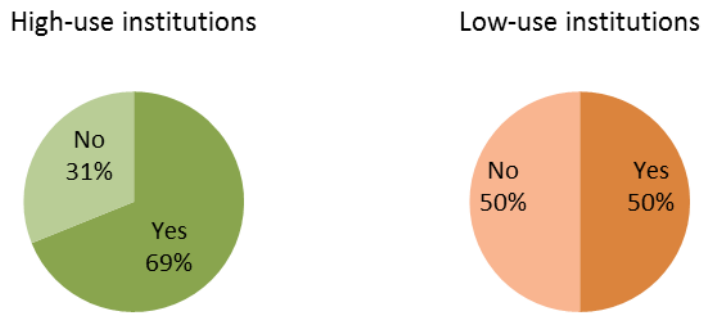
## **Investigation**

In order to better understand the barriers that might be preventing institutions from getting the most from HINARI, in 2012 one of the authors conducted a survey of institutions registered for HINARI in French-speaking countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The study separated high-using institutions from low-using institutions and the aim was to be able to use the evidence provided by the study to develop strategies for improving communication about HINARI and for reducing the time period between an institution's registration and its effective use of the available resources.

Key elements emerged beyond the expected concerns of the barriers of poor technology and English language materials. The presence of a qualified librarian, the provision of training in the use of document research tools, and ongoing promotion of HINARI within the institution were all factors that contributed to the best use of the HINARI resources.

## The librarian

The person in charge of the library being a qualified professional is an important factor in the good use of HINARI. In high-use institutions 69% of librarians had an educational qualification in library or information science whereas 50% of those staffing libraries in low-use institutions were from other fields, often being nurses, information and communications technology (ICT) staff, etc.

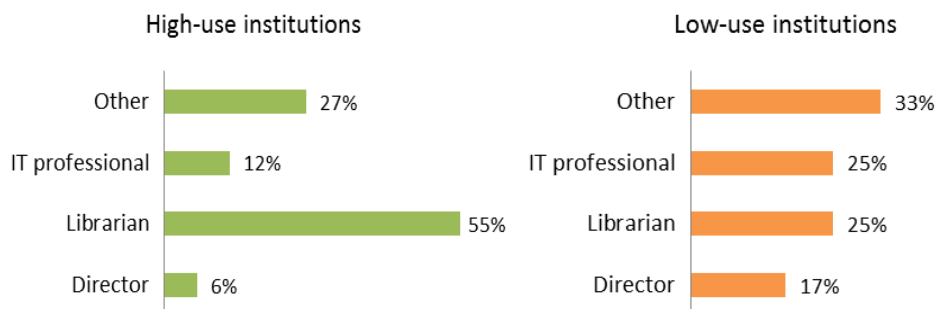


Is the person in charge of the library a qualified professional?

## The person responsible for HINARI in the institution

The person in charge of HINARI was a librarian in 55% of high-use and only 25% of low-use institutions. ICT professionals played a sizeable part in managing HINARI in many institutions and collaboration between the two branches was seen as essential.

In low-use institutions it was often the case that no individual was designated to manage HINARI and that it was left to other staff, notably medical professionals or researchers, who did not necessarily have the required information science skills and who did not feel a duty to promote the use of the tool.

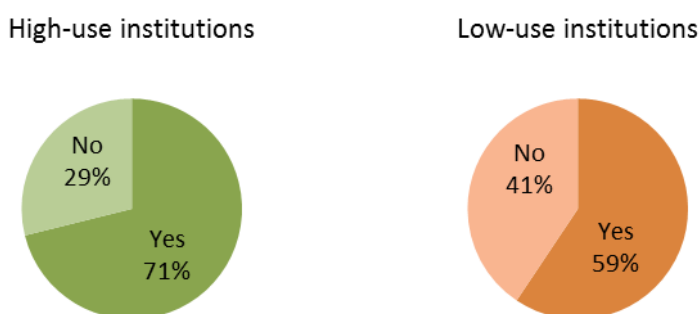


Who is in charge of HINARI in the institution?

## Collaboration with information and communications technology (ICT) specialists

When ICT specialists and librarians worked together the result was fruitful, particularly in cases where libraries lacked computing resources and/or workspaces. The ICT staff was able to solve problems encountered by HINARI users and, as in one case, develop digital portals which could be used, amongst other things, for highlighting the HINARI resources.

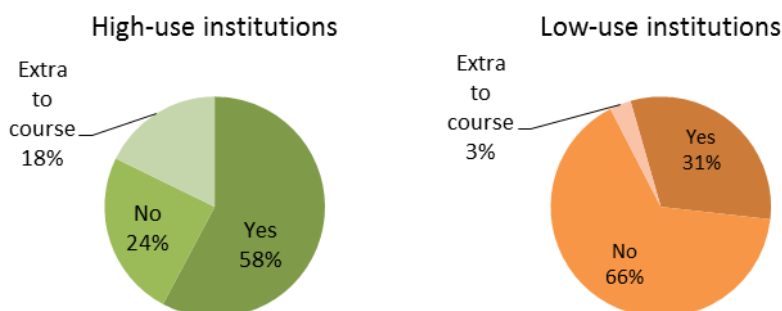
It was important that these complementary disciplines collaborate, especially in challenging network contexts like those found in Africa. In high-use institutions 71% of libraries worked closely with the IT units, whereas this was the case in only 59% of low-use cases.



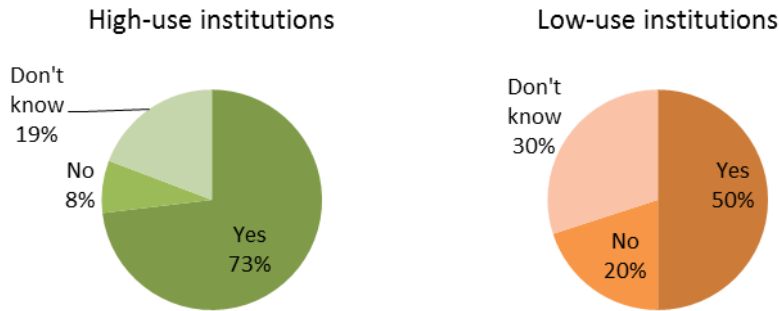
Does the library work in collaboration with ICT specialists?

## Training in using electronic resources for research

Training in electronic literature research provided by libraries was identified as a possible factor contributing to the good use of HINARI. No less than 58% of the high-use institutions offered specific training and in 18% of high-use cases this occurred in addition to courses already in place in the institutions' curricula. In low-use institutions these same conditions were representative for only 31% and 3%, respectively, of the respondents.



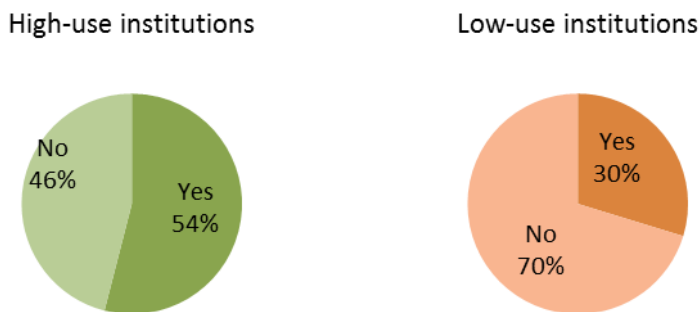
Does the library offer training in using electronic resources for research?



Are the training courses that are organized by the library well attended?

## Marketing

Any new service put in place needs to be accompanied by a promotional campaign. This ensures its visibility and, eventually, its uptake. In the absence of active promotion the service will quickly be forgotten. This was borne out by the replies regarding the implementation of marketing campaigns for HINARI by the institutions.



Has the institution run a marketing campaign for the HINARI programme?

While 54% of the high-use group had promoted the service, only 30% of low-use institutions had. It is clear that at the time of the study many institutions had full access to HINARI but that its personnel were unaware that the resource existed. In practice, a marketing campaign for HINARI or any library service can never come to an end: there is a significant turnover of personnel in research institutions and universities and there is a need to continually inform regarding the existence of library services and resources.

## Communication with the HINARI team

Communication between registered institutions and HINARI was another problematic factor. While well over half of the high-use institutions (58%) knew how to contact the programme team in the event of problems, only 28% of low-use institutions knew the e-mail address of the HINARI helpdesk.

This latter aspect of communicating with the programme office of HINARI goes both ways. One known issue for the HINARI programme office is the lack of up-to-date contacts at the institution to which they can send updates. This was borne out by an attempt to include non-

using institutions in the survey. The response rate from these institutions of 15.5% was deemed too unrepresentative to be useful and therefore discarded and not included in the final analysis.

### **Validating the issues**

With this as background, one of the authors conducted a simplified survey of institutions registered for HINARI in eligible Portuguese speaking countries. The first step of that follow-up activity was to identify missing or invalid contacts from the institutions, with the goal of reviving communication between the institutions and the HINARI team.

Of the 128 institutions contacted in this effort, more than half of the institutions (55.5%) did not respond to the questionnaire, and a further 8.6% responded, but were unable to provide a current contact name. This heavily underscores the challenges that turnover and lack of succession planning can cause for institutions and libraries both in terms of capacity development and taking advantage of opportunities such as HINARI.

As there were many fewer institutions connected with HINARI in the Portuguese-speaking countries, the survey approach this time was to gather simple anecdotal responses to the question of satisfactory use and major problems, in addition to determining the question of viable contacts for communication.

Amongst the replies were many statements that further validated the survey responses in French-speaking institutions:

- Satisfactory perception of use in institutions that also mention training or marketing activities.
- Concerns about predominance of English language materials.
- Concerns about minimal internet availability.
- Perceptions of little or no use by institutions who also indicate there has not been enough (or any) marketing or training offered.

Some specific quotes offer some insight into successes and challenges at the institutions in Portuguese speaking countries:

University in Angola:

“The use in our institution is very limited because the access code is not extensively distributed, since it is only given to faculty and management”

*[O uso na nossa instituição é muito reduzido porque a chave de acesso não está extensamente divulgada porque só a divulgamos aos docentes e direcção.]*

University in Angola:

“Truly we have been using HINARI in English with a certain difficulty, but it has been helping a lot our faculty and students that understand some English.”

*[Realmente temos usado o HINARI com algumas dificuldades na linguagem Inglesa mas tem ajudado bastante os nossos docentes e estudantes que percebiam um pouco da língua.]*

University in Cape Verde:

“It’s been a short time since we have been enrolled in HINARI and I believe that it has been used very little because of the lack of promotion in our institution.”

*[Faz pouco que estamos inscritos no HINARI e acho o uso dado muito pouco devido à falta de divulgação interna na nossa instituição.]*

Government office in Guinea Bissau:

“We have been introducing HINARI to our Guinean students and also to our health teams when providing information on research.”

*[Temos introduzido ao seu uso os nossos estudantes guineenses e aquando de algumas formações pontuais do pessoal de saúde sobre pesquisa.]*

Government office in Cape Verde:

“This platform is very useful for the development of human resources here in Cape Verde, but those who participated in the initial training workshops did not promoted it among colleagues; therefore it is still little used due to the lack of knowledge and promotion.”

*[Esta plataforma é muito útil para a formação dos quadros aqui em Cabo Verde, mas quem participou nas 1<sup>as</sup> formações não divulgaram para os colegas e desta forma ela é pouco utilizada por falta de conhecimento e divulgação.]*

Research institute in Mozambique:

“There have not been any problems with the use of HINARI both at the headquarters and in our network of research stations. Our communications division promotes HINARI and the available resources widely among our technicians and researches.”

*[O uso do HINARI tem ocorrido sem problemas tanto na sede como em toda a nossa rede de estacoes de pesquisa. O nosso sector de comunicação faz uma grande divulgação do programa junto dos técnicos e investigadores para que os recursos bibliográficos disponíveis]*

Research institute in Mozambique:

“The use of HINARI has not been satisfactory as we would like it to be. We believe that we should promote it more consistently, although information is available on our website and it was directly promoted among our health faculty.”

*[O Uso do HINARI não tem sido tão satisfatório como gostaríamos. Consideramos que deveríamos divulgar com mais insistência embora a informação esteja no nosso web site e tenha sido, igualmente divulgada diretamente aos docentes da área da saúde.]*

## **Real life impacts**

In 2010 and again in 2013, the Research4Life partnership issued calls to the user community for examples about how the programme has had an impact on their professional lives, institutions and communities. The resulting responses provide an insight into how valuable the information access can be when it is used to its fullest potential:

- A doctor in Ethiopia has successfully treated a patient with a rare and serious condition, and helped his hospital to deliver more effective training to orthopaedic physicians;
- A physician has improved the lives of HIV-infected children in Zambia;

- A Sudanese policy-maker has introduced evidence-based policy development designed to improve the Sudanese people's health in the long term;
- A midwife has improved maternity care in Zimbabwe and reduced maternal and neonatal mortality rates;<sup>1</sup>
- A health librarian has written her PhD on solving low HINARI uptake and developing a powerful training infrastructure at Ugandan universities;
- A Nigerian university librarian has championed HINARI use, resulting in a dramatic rise in research productivity.<sup>2</sup>

With these examples as motivation to ensure more users have the same opportunity to make the most of their circumstances, the programme team has been exploring options to raise awareness and improve the reach of the programmes.

### **Carrying forward into actions**

The final element of this exploration is to determine if some outside encouragement of marketing and training activities in these institutions has an impact on use. The recommendations of the original survey were to strengthen marketing and training within institutions. Therefore, the programme office conducted some short-term projects in outreach to determine at what level of effort would there be any visible effect on usage patterns.

Any look at usage patterns is simply an indicator as many factors may affect these patterns, and it is impossible to eliminate all outside influences.

### **Marketing campaign efforts**

In the second half of 2011, the programme office prepared a small marketing campaign to provide training materials and a set of already existing flyers and posters as promotional package to newly registered institutions. At the conclusion of the campaign in December of 2011, the group that received these materials was compared with a control group from the prior six months.

Usage statistics (logins<sup>1</sup>) were analysed for both groups for the 12 following months after registration. For the control group (early group), logins were analysed from May 2011 to April 2012. For the marketing campaign group (later group), logins analysed were from December 2011 to November 2012. .

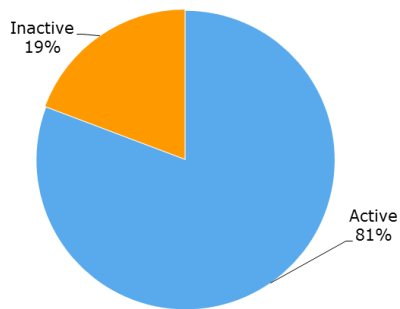
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<sup>1</sup> HINARI Logins: A login is a session that begins when a user logs in to HINARI with his/her institution's username and password and ends by either a logout or a timeout.

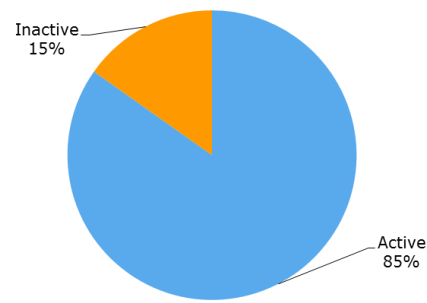


Login comparison	Early group (no promo pack)	Later group (with promo pack)
Registration period (6 months)	Dec. 2010 – Apr. 2011	May – Nov. 2011
Login data collection period (12 months)	May 2011 – Apr. 2012	Dec. 2011 – Nov. 2012
Total institutions in sample group	109	217
Active institutions	88	184
Inactive institutions (zero logins)	21	33

**Institutions in early group  
(no promo pack)**



**Institutions in later group  
(with promo pack)**



In the early (control) group, we found 81% of active<sup>2</sup> institutions (88 out of 109). In the marketing group 85% were active (184 out of 217). Both groups were significantly active (>80%).

The impact of sending promotional and marketing materials increased active usage by 4%. While the increase was not major, the effort involved was relatively minimal. We are preparing a follow-up project of more intensive marketing directed at new and revived institutions to determine whether we can create further increases in active use of the programme.

### Next steps

The more intensive marketing project began in January 2014, involving a target 20 countries. The project has two planned phases. The first step is reviving contacts and communications with the institutions in the countries, with a strong focus on non-using or low-usage institutions. Once this initial step has been completed, the second step (which is beginning in April 2014) will be to send a series of marketing tips messages to the institutions.

As opposed to the initial minimal-effort project of late 2011, which provided a promotional package of materials to the new institutions, the focus of the 2014 project will be on

<sup>2</sup> Active Institutions: Registered institution with at least one login in two of the last four months.

providing suggestions and encouragement to the institutions about how they can do their own marketing, not just of HINARI, but also of library resources and services in general. We look forward to reviewing the results of this project and sharing our findings at a future date.

## **Conclusion**

The more intensive marketing project began in January 2014, involving a target 20 countries. The project has two planned phases. The first step is reviving contacts and communications with the institutions in the countries, with a strong focus on non-using or low-usage institutions. Once this initial step has been completed, the second step (which is beginning in April 2014) will be to send a series of marketing tips messages to the institutions.

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- <sup>1</sup> Making a Difference. Research4Life; 2011  
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