The last decade has witnessed the advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a major learning tool. A cause for concern is the situation in developing countries which not only have inadequate financial resources but also lack the skills and infrastructure to manage efficient deployment of these technologies. Global initiatives launched to improve online access to journals in resource-poor countries have yet to make an impact on research activities because of these shortcomings. The ‘digital divide’ combined with the increasing cost of acquiring knowledge, has redefined the responsibility of libraries and academic institutes which now have to play a unique role in access, dissemination and ‘re-packaging’ of information in a form suitable to the needs of the users.

The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) is a pan-publisher initiative, established in 1992, as a program of the International Council for Science (ICSU) to provide ‘worldwide access to information’. INASP, registered as a charitable organization in the United Kingdom, is aggressively involved in removing hurdles which hinder the effective dissemination of information and knowledge throughout the world. It works to improve access through local capacity-building in developing countries with a special emphasis on forming collaborations. In addition it provides support to new ventures that augment local publication and access to quality scientific and scholarly material. The Network has grown to include over 1500 partner libraries and institutions throughout the developing world. Besides working for health professionals, INASP activities also address the needs of educators, researchers, library professionals, publishers and those working for rural development.

The website of INASP –http://www.inasp.info is a common portal that highlights the diverse aspects of the organization and that of its services. The two ways to explore this simple website are either from the links page or the search facility. This leads on to a list of full contents and gateways which can be further navigated. To help the users select the most relevant information, each linked page contains an annotated description of the site. The recommended sites are commonly organized into sections and subsections. For example, INASP health links has over 600 sites, organized into three sections, which are further divided into about fifty sub-sections. Links for access to information and communication development, partner organizations, publishing and communication sites, lessons on using the internet, multidisciplinary webguides, information on libraries, databases and conferences are some of the topics that are available.

The Health Links section is the best organized and leads
on to a variety of categories. Search engines, Bibliographic databases, Abstracts and Trials databases, Evidence-based medicine, News, Education and clinical skills form a part of the general resources. The section on Biomedical Research is disappointing and does not include many relevant links. Lists of free books, full text journals and newsletters tend to provide a specialized choice of resources from this single portal and are an improvement over sites with unwieldy journal listings. Specific health resources offer information on various diseases and sub-specialties. The section on Pharmacology has some interesting links to drug bulletins, formularies, standard treatment guidelines, dictionaries, relevant WHO sites and unique readymade searches on Pubmed. Research-related information is however, sparse. Links to websites relating to medical informatics, e-health and publishing skills are also included.

INASP publications are accessible from the publications link and include directories of organizations, books, research reports, reviews and a newsletter. A notable link is on training activities and material, which consists of complete workshops, designed with a "traveling workshop methodology" and is replete with downloadable background material and relevant modules. Topics which could be useful include the ones on Internet use, electronic information resources and PC troubleshooting.

Other programs and special initiatives related to INASP are PERI (programme for the enhancement of research information) that aims to facilitate the acquisition of international information and knowledge, improve access to research through the promotion of national and regional journals and provide awareness or training in the use, evaluation and management of electronic information and communication technologies (ICTs); INASP-health and health information forum (HIF) which supports health information development in developing countries; publishing support initiatives (PSI) which aims to provide publishing support to strengthen local journals; library support programmes (LSP) and African Journals On-Line (AJOL) both of which support libraries for provision of access and sharing information. The details of these initiatives are accessible from the home page.

The INASP website is a good place for researchers, teachers and students to access information on various topics. Librarians, publishers, editors and journalists can make use of the variety of resources to impart training, strengthen local initiatives, form collaborations and learn more about the efficient use of information and communication technologies.

J. Singh
Website Editor, IJP
E-mail: jatindershingh@vsnl.com

PP SURYA KUMARI PRIZE
INDIAN PHARMACOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PP Surya Kumari prize is awarded by IPS every year for the best research paper published in any journal on “diabetes mellitus, other endocrinal and metabolic disorders” in the last five years. The prize is open for Indian scientists working in Indian laboratories. The award is presented to the winner at the annual conference of IPS.

Those who wish to compete for the prize for the year 2005 may submit five reprints/copies of the paper (published in 2000-2004) to the Chief Editor, Indian Journal of Pharmacology at the following address on or before 31st March 2005.

E-mail : ijp@ijpmer.edu
Phone: 0413-2271969
Fax: 0413-2272067

Prof. R. Raveendran
Convener, PP Surya Kumari Prize,
The Chief Editor-IJP,
Department of Pharmacology,
JIPMER, Pondicherry - 605 006. India