

Inaccurate information about SciDev.net

I would be grateful if you could correct the inaccurate information about our website, SciDev.net, provided by K. R. Rao (*Curr. Sci.*, 2002, **82**, 246).

Rao has misread the description of our website as implying that the only material from *Science* and *Nature* to which we offer free access are book reviews, and that, as a result, the inputs from these two journals to our website 'do not touch any hard-core science information'. That is incorrect.

If he looks at the website itself, he will find that we frequently offer access to original scientific publications in both journals; indeed analysis of content available on the website since September 2001 shows that 21% of the individual items accessed from *Nature*, and 32% of those accessed from *Science*, are original scientific articles. Only about 5% in each case are book reviews.

I invite readers of *Current Science* to visit the website at www.sciDev.net and judge its content for themselves. We are happy to receive constructive comments and criticism. But we prefer these to be based on accurate information.

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Response:

David Dickson has observed that I have 'misread the description of the website'. Far from it, paragraphs 2 and 3 in my letter delineated in detail what the website contains. I stand corrected only to the extent that perhaps I should have stated that '...inputs... . Book Review section and News-like features (addition emphasized)' in the fourth paragraph. Dickson seems to have glossed over the meat of my letter contained in the last two paragraphs.

Be that as it may, the website SciDev.net contained on 20 February 2002 two articles each from *Nature* (a 'News' item and a 'Correspondence' item) and from *Science* (a 'News' item and a 'Perspective' item). One can see (in spite of good source citation statistics!) that only the 'News' item from *Science* is related to a hard-core (that is, primary research) article, which cannot be accessed unless one subscribes to *Science*; other articles are stand-alones and not of primary research category.

In fact, both *Science* and *Nature* make available free limited access only, to many sections of these journals to anyone who has access to the internet; there is no need for such readers to browse these limited access materials through SciDev.net. For example, full

texts of 'This week in Science', 'Editor's Choice', 'Letters', etc. in *Science* and first paragraphs or summaries of 'Brief communications', 'Review articles', 'Letters to Nature', etc. in *Nature* are available for free.

The Third World Academy of Sciences would be doing yeomen service to Third World countries, if it could catalyse free and unrestricted access through SciDev.net to full texts of primary research papers (for example, those like 'Reports', and 'Reviews' etc. in *Science*, 'Brief communications', 'Review-like articles' and 'Letters to Nature', etc. in *Nature*, and similar ones from other science journals) which one can otherwise access only through subscriptions. SciDev.net would then emerge as a robust and substantial website. Those in resource poor countries must be able to electronically 'access what is relevant, rather than what was provided, much of which was not relevant' (*Br. Med. J.*, 2000, **321**, 776).

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