



A day in the life of *a programme manager,* *publishing support* **Julie Walker**

I'm sure everyone starts this feature by saying that they don't have a typical day, but when you work for a development organization like INASP and your time could be spent in the office in Oxford or speaking to editors, researchers, government officials or vice-chancellors across Africa, Asia and Latin America, this is even more the case.

Although my time in our Oxford office and my time spent in other countries is equally rewarding, I have decided to write about a day I spent during a trip to Sri Lanka last year, which is about as typical as any day spent in another country can be.

The day starts with the intrusive clatter-clatter of a crowded passenger train running directly outside my hotel window. It's carrying commuters from along the coast into Colombo and makes me think briefly of my usual daily commute through the rolling Cotswold hills and makes me realize how lucky I am that I don't have to hang on for dear life to the outside of my train.

After a traditional Sri Lankan breakfast of sweet potato, coconut and fresh pineapple, I go to the lobby to wait for my transport for the morning. I'm picked up a little late by a senior researcher from the Medical Faculty at the University of Colombo. She's profusely apologetic and introduces me to her husband who has kindly offered to drop us off on his way to work. We just have time to exchange pleasantries and information about our families and respective organizations before we reach the magnificent setting of the University of Colombo's College House. This is the main administrative building for the University and we are here for a very important occasion – the signing of a collaborative agreement to embed research writing skills training within the medical faculty's newly established Research Promotion and Facilitation Centre. This agreement will ensure that research writing courses will be

"... breakfast of sweet potato, coconut and fresh pineapple ..."



Julie in the gardens outside the University of Colombo's ornate College House

held on a regular basis, equipping the faculty's researchers with the skills they need to get published in reputable journals. The signing ceremony goes well and afterwards we go outside and wait in the lush gardens of the College House for a taxi to take us to the Medical Faculty where I will deliver a presentation on Open Access Publishing and meet some of the researchers.

Before my presentation, I get the chance to meet some of the other faculty staff and to have lunch with the workshop participants in the student canteen. I love having this opportunity as I get to find out about the people our project, AuthorAID, is aimed at and to see what their personal motivations and frustrations are as well as finding out about their research. As we chat, I listen to a researcher talk about her work with snake bite victims and it reminds me how another part of INASP's work has a real impact on people. Our Journals Online Projects showcase research in local journals from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mongolia and Latin America. This research is not always of interest to academics in countries in the Global North, but it can be vital for researchers and practitioners in the Journals Online Project countries and to researchers working in similar environments or on similar issues across the world. For example, new findings on malaria in Bangladesh may not necessarily be of interest to the readers of the *British Medical Journal* but could be of high importance to malaria researchers in Honduras.

"This research ... can be vital for researchers and practitioners in the Journals Online Project countries ..."

My presentation is well received, particularly as only a handful of the researchers have previously published in an OA journal. My slides on ORCID (<http://orcid.org/>), a unique researcher identifier initiative, also create interest, especially with the head of the new Research Promotion and Facilitation Centre who sees their usefulness in tracking researcher publications, something which can be challenging.

The presentation over, I have to rush to get a taxi to the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka, where I am to give a different presentation, take part in another signing ceremony and join in discussions about setting up a new online course for researchers. I leave with a verbal commitment to the online course and a signed agreement which will hopefully secure the future of Sri Lanka Journals Online (www.sljol.info) as the National Science Foundation will be taking over long-term responsibility for running the service. They have appointed an excellent management team and I leave the meeting feeling very positive.

292 We battle the rush hour traffic of Colombo (which is actually moving quicker than rush hour traffic in Oxford) and I arrive back to the cheery welcome of the hotel owner and his staff. In my room, I attend to a few urgent e-mails, start packing my bag for my return flight the next day and go down to dinner where I meet a Swedish researcher who's over on holiday with her two-year-old son. We chat about her research, the AuthorAID project, our respective toddlers and the merits of lightweight pushchairs. We exchange business cards and I return to my room for a final pack and to write up my trip report before falling asleep to the sounds of crashing waves and the railway rattle.

As I stated at the beginning of this article, no day in my job is ever 'typical', but one thing remains constant: the satisfaction I get from working with passionate and committed country partners and an organization like INASP, which is actively contributing to development and raising the profile of Southern research.

"...falling asleep to the sounds of crashing waves and the railway rattle."



Raising the profile of Southern research at the UKSG Conference in Harrogate in April 2014. Julie is pictured with INASP colleague Sioux Cumming and a group of overseas colleagues whose attendance was sponsored by INASP