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# LENUS – providing a platform for Irish health research



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## A NEED IDENTIFIED

'The research that you sent me was great, but I was wondering if you had anything within an Irish context'; 'I'm writing a paper on best practice in the management of patients with Alzheimer's disease in Ireland. Has anybody in Ireland already published such a paper?'

These were two typical enquiries that the staff of the RLIS (regional library and information service), Dr Steevens Hospital, Dublin, received from users who were frustrated that their database or internet search hadn't retrieved the necessary Irish health information that they sought. The users were particularly frustrated because in most cases Irish research did exist to answer their queries but remained inaccessible and hidden. The staff of the RLIS resolved to create a facility where Irish health research could be identified, preserved and promoted. It was decided that an open-access online repository would provide the best means of delivering these goals.

## THE BIRTH OF LENUS

After an extensive process, which involved consultation with users in focus groups and an evaluation of software products, RLIS selected Biomed Central's open repository as the software for our repository. We opted to call our repository 'LENUS' after the Celtic god of healing. LENUS was not only created by the staff of the RLIS, but we are also responsible for the hosting, maintenance and development of LENUS. RLIS is a member of the Health Service Executive (HSE), which is the central national health organisation in the Republic of Ireland. However the decision was made that LENUS should not

be an institutional repository, but should seek to include all key Irish health research published in Ireland. To achieve this goal was very ambitious and a huge undertaking but, mainly through an ongoing marketing campaign, we have been able to build contacts within many non-HSE Irish health organisations, as well as directly contacting many Irish researchers. This has meant a regular stream of key research publications being added to LENUS. To date we have over 5,000 documents stored on the repository.

## HAS LENUS BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

Obviously, volume of content is no measurement of success; however, a more accurate gauge of LENUS's value has been the usage of LENUS by users. Using Google analytics software, we are able to note the fact that for the month of March 2010, there were over 6,000 visitors to LENUS, who performed 31,000 searches and downloaded 12,000 documents. All of the content contained in the repository is fully searchable while our simple user-friendly interface allows visitors to search or browse across a number of subjects and collections. The fact that the majority of the content on LENUS is in full-text, and in many cases is uniquely available on LENUS, has also obviously been an important selling point. The breadth of content available on LENUS, whilst creating a headache, does mean that we are relevant to all categories of health professional.

## DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED SO FAR?

Whilst the open-access movement has opened many doors in terms of making research freely available to users, obviously it does not exist in isolation from the costed publishing world. We are not obviously immune to publishers' embargoes and are not in a position to include all the research that we would like to. Our experience is that to develop a repository like LENUS, you need a strong, clear institutional mandate supporting research. It's also important to have policy documents that support the development of what is an ongoing and developing resource.

Done by a small library team of six people, a significant amount of time is devoted to the marketing of LENUS. As it's not possible for such a small team of people to reach all our users, the importance of building contacts within organisations who can become LENUS advocates cannot be overstated. Similarly, from a training perspective it's vital to build a clearly developed pro-

gramme that can be rolled out and delivered by non-library staff.

#### **FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

Open-source software is in the process of revolutionising the publishing model. Our goal in the RLIS team is to encourage our users to make greater use of the web 2.0 features available on LENUS that are employed so successfully on other websites. Ultimately we would like LENUS to operate as a forum for exchanging ideas as well as for submitting research content.

Although LENUS is a unique resource within Irish health information resources, due to the scope of its coverage and the fact that it offers high-quality digital content dating back to the mid 1960s, we recognise the importance of developing partnerships with organisations that can produce related content to what we are offering. Open access should be about developing synergies and partnerships rather than following a traditional adversarial publishing model. To this end the RLIS team has recently joined the WorldWideScience Alliance, which is an internet-based global science gateway. This will increase the profile and effectiveness of research in the Irish health services and is another significant step in the few months since LENUS's launch.

LENUS is available at <http://www.lenus.ie>.

WorldWideScience Alliance is available at <http://worldwidescience.org> .