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**SERBIA**

## **Libraries supporting economic development: access to international journals aids Serbian research**



*Access, support and visibility for Serbian researchers*

***“KoBSON is an oasis in the  
scientific desert.”***

***Mladen J. Kocica, M.D., Clinical  
Centre of Serbia***

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Innovation and technological progress have replaced production and other traditional growth factors in modern day economies contributing as much as 50% to a country's economic development, according to the European Commission. A 2005 UNESCO report on science, technology and economic development in south-eastern Europe reached a clear conclusion: investment in scientific and technical knowledge is critical to the region emerging from a decade of transition, disintegration and conflict. Decision-makers in this corner of Europe must take urgent steps to ensure that science, technology and research re-gain a leading role in national development strategies, integrating the new nations of the western Balkans into the international knowledge-based society.

Serbia is making great progress towards achieving this goal. Two simple indicators can be used to measure the presence of a country in world science. The first is to calculate the number of scientists who have had their research findings published in international peer-reviewed journals. Between 2001 and 2006, Serbian authors included in *ISI Web of Science*, which contains over 8,000 high impact journals, doubled. The second is the number of national journals selected for indexing by international journal aggregators. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of indexed Serbian journals rose from four to six titles spanning biology, chemistry, materials engineering and veterinary science.

The driving force behind this remarkable development is the Serbian Library Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition, known as KoBSON. As a result, the world benefits from unique research undertaken by Serbian scientists, while at the same time national standards improve with the application of qualitative and quantitative norms, such as better citation data and high quality editorial content.

The work of KoBSON supports a key finding of a UNESCO study (2006) on the use of scientific information in south eastern Europe: access to specialised international literature is essential to revitalise scientific infrastructure and to ensure that universities in the region can compete and attract academics from other countries to collaborate in joint research projects. With over 130 members in faculty, research and university libraries throughout Serbia,

KoBSON provides access to approximately 30,000 full-text journals across all disciplines, including a sizable number of open access titles.

"We recognised that before scientists and researchers can publish in prestigious international journals, they must have access", says Biljana Kosanovic, National Library of Serbia and country co-ordinator for eIFL.net. "So we concentrated our efforts on promoting our resources directly to the end-users. We have made presentations to scientists in every member institution in Serbia. We monitor Serbian-authored articles in international journals and link to the KoBSON website. This raises awareness of the resources in Serbia, and it creates a healthy and vibrant research community with national visibility for their work". The statistics back this up, as article downloads increase by an average 100,000 year on year.

The role of KoBSON in promoting Serbian science, both nationally and internationally, is recognised by the Ministry of Science who commissioned the library consortium to undertake an independent impact assessment of local scientific publications to modernise Serbian research output. "There is a strong link between science and technology and economic development", said Kosanovic. "Our figures show the correlation between the availability of current scientific journals and the international presence of Serbian research. This creates a new role for librarians as educators and facilitators, one which we in Serbia are embracing!"

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