

# Open Access to Institutional Publications: An Exploratory Study on Selected Indian Academic Regulatory Bodies\*

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## ABSTRACT

*The Indian academic regulatory bodies (IARBs) like UGC, NAAC, CSIR, AIU etc. are publishing books, periodicals, manuals, newsletters, reports etc. These institutional publications hold importance in terms of understanding the respective regulatory body's policies, plans, growth, achievements and their contribution to the field of study etc. But the moot point is that whether all such IARBs have given open access to their publications? The reach, awareness and further research activities are possible if the readers/researchers have access to IARB's institutional publications and their funded research works too. The paper attempts to discover the status of accessibility of institutional publications of IARBs. Out of 13 IARBs studied for this paper, only six IARBs give complete access to their institutional publications. But these IARBs neither have a formal open access policy nor guidelines set for their institutional publications. The paper portrays facts and issues related to the institutional publications of IARBs considering their importance in understanding the IARBs.*

**Keywords:** *Open Access, Institutional Publications, IARBs, Indian Academic Regulatory Bodies, India*

## 1. Introduction

There is a debate in the academics on the publicly funded research works' (open) accessibility. The sole contention of the matter is that the 'access' to any scholarly literature ought to be made available freely and openly to all. But we have two contradictory issues related to open access to publicly funded research publications. Firstly, some selected government departments, through their representing regulatory bodies (eg. Ministry of Human Resource Development's University Grants Commission (UGC)) have made their publicly funded literature (selected) open to all. For instance, theses and dissertations of doctoral degrees awarded by Indian universities are openly accessible through *Shodhganga* of UGC's INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network). But minor and major research projects funded by UGC are not available in the public domain. Secondly, some selected public institutions that support the open access to the publicly-funded research works, themselves do not give open access to their institutional publications. The reasons for this status may be varied but they hamper the possible use of those publications.

Taking up the second issue for discussion, this paper focuses specially on the status of accessibility to the institutional publications of IARBs. Out of 13 IARBs studied for this paper,

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only six IARBs give complete access to their institutional publications. But these IARBs neither have a formal open access policy nor the guidelines set for their institutional publications. The paper portrays facts and issues related to the institutional publications of IARBs considering the publications' importance in understanding the IARBs.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- a) find out the details of institutional publications of IARBs;
- b) prepare the list of form/type of publications of the IARBs;
- c) explore the accessibility modes, viz. fully open access, partially open access and closed access, of/to the institutional publications of IARBs and
- d) trace the availability of institutional publication policies and guidelines of the IARBs.

## 3. Methodology

The universe of the study is 161 IARBs as listed in the MHRD's official website (MHRD, 2014). The selection of 13 samples/IARBs (see Table-1) is purposive and selected from two categories viz. Higher Education and School Education and Literacy listed on to the MHRD's website (MHRD, 2014). Among the listed IARBs, the universities, IITs and the similar regulatory bodies are excluded for the study. The scope and meaning of 'institutional publication', in the paper's context, is that any literature of any form produced by the IARBs with or without ISBN/ISSN or any other standard numbers. For instance, annual report of UGC and CBSE's *CENBOSE-CBSE Quarterly Journal* are considered as types of publications. As far as accessibility of the publications is concerned, pay-based and openly accessible publications were checked on the official websites of the IARBs. However, some IARB's official sites have not provided any related information and some links did not take to the actual publication pages (eg. CSIR; see Table-4). Thus, documenting the status of their accessibility accurately was a problem.

Table-1: Selected samples of IARBs and their official websites

| Sr. No. | IARBs  | URLs  |
|---------|--|---|
| 1       | All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)               | <a href="http://www.aicte-india.org/">http://www.aicte-india.org/</a>                 |
| 2       | Association of Indian Universities (AIU)                       | <a href="http://www.aiuweb.org/">http://www.aiuweb.org/</a>                           |
| 3       | Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)                    | <a href="http://cbse.nic.in/">http://cbse.nic.in/</a>                                 |
| 4       | Central Institute of Education Technology (CIET)               | <a href="http://www.ciet.nic.in/">http://www.ciet.nic.in/</a>                         |
| 5       | Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)           | <a href="http://www.csir.res.in/">http://www.csir.res.in/</a>                         |
| 6       | Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) | <a href="http://www.cisce.org/">http://www.cisce.org/</a>                             |
| 7       | Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)                   | <a href="http://ichr.ac.in/">http://ichr.ac.in/</a>                                   |
| 8       | Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)                      | <a href="http://icmr.nic.in/">http://icmr.nic.in/</a>                                 |
| 9       | Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)              | <a href="http://www.icssr.org/">http://www.icssr.org/</a>                             |
| 10      | Indian Nursing Council (INC)                                   | <a href="http://www.indiannursingcouncil.org">http://www.indiannursingcouncil.org</a> |

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 11 | National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) | <a href="http://www.naac.gov.in/">http://www.naac.gov.in/</a> |
| 12 | National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)          | <a href="http://www.nios.ac.in/">http://www.nios.ac.in/</a>   |
| 13 | University Grants Commission (UGC)                   | <a href="http://www.ugc.ac.in/">http://www.ugc.ac.in/</a>     |

#### 4. Discussion

It is rightly said that “the open access initiatives are not aimed at competing with or replacing publishers. They constitute a parallel movement concerned with ‘access’ and not with publishing” (Harnad, 2003, p. 139). This applies to ‘access’ given to the publications of IARBs than what they are publishing. The following sub-headings discuss the issues related to ‘access’ and also the type of publications of IARBs.

**4.1. Type of IARBs’ publications:** The IARBs are publishing documents in the varied forms. The following table (2) lists out the type of documents published by the IARBs.

Table-2: Type of documents published by IARBs

| IARBs | Books | Periodicals | Newsletters | Reports | Course Material/ Textbooks | Manuals | Multi-media | Others |
|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|---------|----------------------------|---------|-------------|--------|
| AICTE | -     | -           | -           | ✓       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |
| AIU   | ✓     | ✓           | -           | -       | --                         | -       | -           | -      |
| CBSE  | -     | ✓           | -           | -       | ✓                          | -       | -           | ✓      |
| CIET  | -     | -           | -           | -       | --                         | -       | ✓           | -      |
| CISCE | -     | -           | -           | ✓       | -                          | ✓       | -           | ✓      |
| CSIR  | -     | ✓           | -           | ✓       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |
| ICHR  | ✓     | ✓           | -           | ✓       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |
| ICMR  | ✓     | ✓           | -           | -       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |
| ICSSR | -     | ✓           | -           | -       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |
| INC   | -     | -           | -           | ✓       | --                         | ✓       | -           | ✓      |
| NAAC  | ✓     | -           | ✓           | ✓       | --                         | ✓       | -           | ✓      |
| NIOS  | -     | -           | -           | ✓       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |
| UGC   | -     | -           | ✓           | ✓       | --                         | -       | -           | ✓      |

The reports are common publications among the above mentioned IARBs that include annual reports, committee reports etc. The ‘others’ category comprises pamphlets, brochures, handbooks, minutes, policies, guidelines etc. The selected IARBs viz. CBSE, CSIR, ICHR, ICMR, ICSSR and AIU are publishing the periodicals.

**4.2. Ease of access to institutional publications:** The visibility and accessibility of the publications of an institute is more when the web manager/institute prefers to put a separate and visible link for publications on their websites. Majority of the IARBs have given prominence to the publications by adding an icon/webpage on their websites (see Table-3) but easy and user friendly access are necessary. For instance: the following search interface (see Figure-1) given by the CSIR does not give proper selection options to search its

publications.

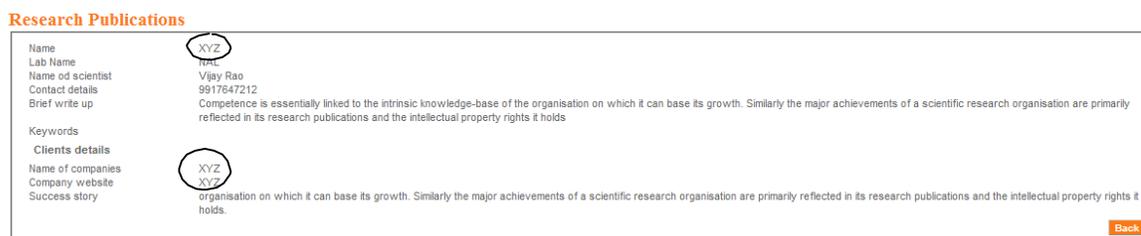
Figure-1: One of the webpages of CSIR giving access to its research publications



<http://www.csir.res.in/Home.aspx?MenuId=3>

The above search interface (marked in Figure-1) has got some options (pop-down menus). But they are not operable when selected. So it is not properly searchable and gives some fictitious metadata (eg: XYZ) of some entries (marked in Figure-2). Such entries may have some meaning but seem redundant for the reader/s.

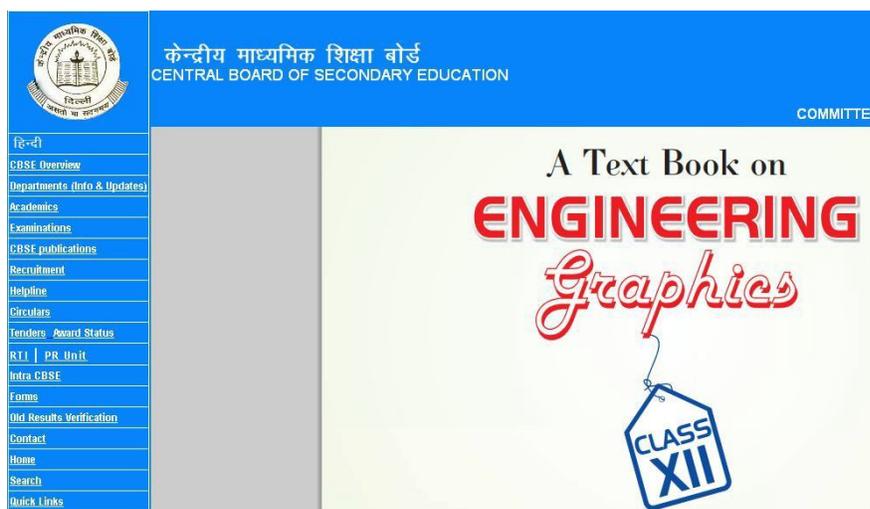
Figure-2: Some fictitious metadata of some entries in the CSIR webpage



<http://www.csir.res.in/Home.aspx?MenuId=3>

The following IARBs have given/created prominent page, means a special webpage, for publications. The CBSE's web interface that gives open, easy and user-friendly access to its collection is well designed (see Figure-3).

Figure-3: Open access to the documents published by CBSE



<http://cbse.nic.in/welcome.htm>

It is a good move that the following IARBs give a clearly visible and prominent links to their publications.

Table-3: Prominent link for publications given by IARBs

| IARBs | Link Name                            | URLs  |
|-------|--------------------------------------|---|
| AICTE | MIS/Reports                          | <a href="http://www.aicte-india.org/mis.htm">http://www.aicte-india.org/mis.htm</a>   |
| AIU   | Publications and Sales               | <a href="http://www.aiuweb.org/publication/publication.asp">http://www.aiuweb.org/publication/publication.asp</a>                         |
| CBSE  | CBSE Publications                    | <a href="http://cbse.nic.in/welcome.htm">http://cbse.nic.in/welcome.htm</a> .   |
| CIET  | Catalogue and Price List             | <a href="http://www.ciet.nic.in/docs/2010-2011.PDF">http://www.ciet.nic.in/docs/2010-2011.PDF</a>   |
| CISCE | Publications                         | <a href="http://www.cisce.org/publications.aspx">http://www.cisce.org/publications.aspx</a>   |
| CSIR  | Media Room                           | <a href="http://www.csir.res.in/Home.aspx?MenuId=3">http://www.csir.res.in/Home.aspx?MenuId=3</a>   |
| ICHR  | Publications, Annual Report, Archive | <a href="http://ichr.ac.in/publications.html">http://ichr.ac.in/publications.html</a>   |
| ICMR  | Publications                         | <a href="http://icmr.nic.in/Publications/Publications.html">http://icmr.nic.in/Publications/Publications.html</a>                         |
| ICSSR | List of Publications                 | <a href="http://www.icssr.org/rsp_main.htm">http://www.icssr.org/rsp_main.htm</a>   |
| INC   | Publications                         | <a href="http://www.indiannursingcouncil.org/publications.asp?show=pub">http://www.indiannursingcouncil.org/publications.asp?show=pub</a> |
| NAAC  | NAAC Publications                    | <a href="http://www.naac.gov.in/publications.asp">http://www.naac.gov.in/publications.asp</a>   |
| NIOS  | Publications                         | <a href="http://www.nios.ac.in/about-us/publication.aspx">http://www.nios.ac.in/about-us/publication.aspx</a>                             |
| UGC   | Publications                         | <a href="http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/Annual-Report.aspx">http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/Annual-Report.aspx</a>                                   |

**4.3. Details of IARBs' publications:** Publication details of the IARBs (see Table-4) help understand the type of documents they publish, importance given to the publications on their website (as a webpage), updating of records, status of the web-links, accessibility of

the documents etc.

Table-4: Details of IARBs' publications

| IARBs | Publication Details  |
|-------|--|
| AICTE | Prominent link: MIS/Reports. Under this page, links to various reports (annual report, Business Intelligence Report, Yashpal Committee Report, syllabus, circulars, etc.) are available in open access domain. AICTE's another webpage, has given facility to download some free and open source softwares (FOSS).   |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.aicte-india.org/mis.htm">http://www.aicte-india.org/mis.htm</a>   |
| AIU   | Prominent link: Publications and Sales. AIU has published 53 titles that are pay-based including its popular journal <i>University News</i> . Other downloadable webpages, 'Some Useful AIU Publications', listed 25 titles with prices and 'AIU Publications', listed 53 titles with price. The catalogue comprises titles and prices of handbooks, directories, reports, bibliographies. The 'Report' section comprises 'National Knowledge Commission Report' and 'Lyngdoh Committee' report.   |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.aiuweb.org/publication/publication.asp">http://www.aiuweb.org/publication/publication.asp</a>   |
| CBSE  | Prominent link: CBSE Publications. CBSE has listed four kinds of publications. a) books and support material i.e. text-books of XI and XII standards that are available openly (in PDF forms); b) <i>CENBOSE-CBSE Quarterly Journal</i> available openly from 2007-2011. No issues are available 2011 onwards; c) CBSE Annual Reports available openly from 2008-09 to 2012-13; and d) list of CBSE publications with their prices. CBSE has published 23 documents. Most of them are available openly. The best feature of the full-text documents is that the text-books open on the CBSE website itself (see Figure-3). |
|       | URL: <a href="http://cbse.nic.in/welcome.htm">http://cbse.nic.in/welcome.htm</a> .   |
| CIET  | Prominent link: Catalogue and Price List. CIET comprises catalogues of 2008-09 and 2010-11. It publishes mainly multi-media documents. Hundreds of audio CDs/video CDs/multi-media CDs are available with price tags. These documents are available in Hindi and English languages. Another link, 'Projects' comprises the bibliographic details of CIET projects.   |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.ciet.nic.in/docs/2010-2011.PDF">http://www.ciet.nic.in/docs/2010-2011.PDF</a>   |
| CISCE | Prominent link: Publication. The page comprises the documents related to laboratory requirements, internal assessment, regulations, syllabus, analysis of pupil performance and list of affiliated schools.  |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.cisce.org/publications.aspx">http://www.cisce.org/publications.aspx</a>   |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| CSIR  | <p>Though there is no direct web-link for publications, CSIR has given search interface for tracing it's research publications. Another link, 'TKDL', connects to the database of Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, a popular initiative of CSIR. The CSIR site has given links to 'Resources', 'Online Catalogue', 'Open Access Resources' but none of these lead to their actual webpages instead open up 'Knowledge Repository' page that is related to its library. Under 'Media Room' it has categorized 'CSIR News', 'CSIR Samachar' and 'E-journal Consortium', but these links give basic information about them. CSIR has given free and OA to its annual reports ranging from 2003-04 to 2011-12 but no reports from 2011-12 to 2013-14 are available. It has also listed out 'Networked Projects' but the links are not opening. One of the main links, 'ACSIR', gives access to 'Academic of Scientific and Innovative Research' (<a href="http://acsir.res.in/completed-ph-d-theses/">http://acsir.res.in/completed-ph-d-theses/</a>) that does not have any publication links on its site. ACSIR gives list of 'Completed Theses' (<a href="http://acsir.res.in/completed-ph-d-theses/">http://acsir.res.in/completed-ph-d-theses/</a>) but all 38 listed doctoral theses carry just bibliographic details and none of them are available in full-text form.</p> |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.csir.res.in/Home.aspx?MenuId=3">http://www.csir.res.in/Home.aspx?MenuId=3</a>  |
| ICHR  | <p>Prominent link: Publications. The publications of ICHR include a) research works commissioned by the Council; b) books on Indian History translated into various Indian languages; c) works for which financial subsidy awarded by the Council; d) journals/periodicals (ICHR, 2014). Annual reports from 2003-04 to 2005-06 are listed under 'Archives', however, a separate link, 'Annual Report,' is also placed. In this page, annual report of (only) 2009-10 and 2012-13 are available openly. So there is a lack of uniformity in archiving the reports under one relevant webpage. ICHR also publishes <i>The Indian Historical Review</i>, a subscription based publication and <i>Itihas</i>, a multi-volume work. ICHR has brought out around 900 published works in English and 15 Indian languages but none of them are available in public domain.</p>   |
|       | URL: <a href="http://ichr.ac.in/publications.html">http://ichr.ac.in/publications.html</a>  |
| ICMR  | <p>Prominent link: Publications. Selected publications of ICMR are in public domain. It publishes <i>Indian Journal of Medical Research</i> and <i>ICMR Bulletins</i>. Both are openly accessible including their back issues. Around 55 books are on pay and buy basis. It has also listed some documents brought out as part of ICMR's Centenary celebrations.</p>  |
|       | URL: <a href="http://icmr.nic.in/Publications/Publications.html">http://icmr.nic.in/Publications/Publications.html</a>  |
| ICSSR | <p>Prominent link: List of Publications. The Research Survey and Publication Division (RSP) takes care of the Council's Research Survey Programme and Publications (ICSSR, 2014). 'List of Publications' along with the other webpages viz. 'Journals', 'Newsletters', and 'databases/publications' are available. List of Publications comprises the list of published books arranged according to the subject with price details. Around 70 books have been enlisted. It publishes abstracts and review journals in different social science subjects. None of these sources are accessible openly. <i>Newsletter</i> comprises only one issue of Vol. XXXVIII (1V) Jan-March, 2008 and available openly. Moreover, the ICSSR grants funds for undertaking research works but there is no open repository of theses, dissertations and research proposals on its portal.</p>  |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.icssr.org/rsp_main.htm">http://www.icssr.org/rsp_main.htm</a>  |
| INC   | <p>Prominent link: Publications. It comprises the list of pay-based documents like syllabus, code of ethics and clinical conduct, guidelines for clinical assignments, laboratory equipments and articles and teaching materials. Another webpage, 'Other Publications,' comprises syllabus copies, training manuals etc. These are accessible openly. Some web links of the said documents are not functioning.</p>  |
|       | URL: <a href="http://www.indiannursingcouncil.org/publications.asp?show=pub">http://www.indiannursingcouncil.org/publications.asp?show=pub</a>  |

|      |   |
|------|---|
| NAAC | Prominent link: NAAC Publications. NAAC gives open access to promotional materials, manuals, guidelines, analysis of accreditation reports, best practices, books, posters, annual reports and <i>NAAC Newsletter</i> . |
|      | URL: <a href="http://www.naac.gov.in/publications.asp">http://www.naac.gov.in/publications.asp</a>  |
| NIOS | Prominent link: Publications. Its publications are openly accessible and related to a) administrative/accounts; b) student support services and c) general. Its publications are in public domain.                      |
|      | URL: <a href="http://www.nios.ac.in/about-us/publication.aspx">http://www.nios.ac.in/about-us/publication.aspx</a>  |
| UGC  | Prominent link: Publication. The documents openly available for access are: UGC guidelines, annual reports, reports, compendium, UGC Newsletters and Golden Jubilee Lectures.   |
|      | URL: <a href="http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/Annual-Report.aspx">http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/Annual-Report.aspx</a>  |

**4.4. Institutional publications in open (access) mode:** Accessibility to the institutional publications of 13 IARBs were checked individually and the findings were recorded in the following three categories (see Table-5) viz. a) fully open access; b) partially open access and c) closed access.

Table-5: Status of accessibility of IARBs' institutional publications

| IARBs | Fully Open Access | Partially Open Access | Closed Access |
|-------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| AICTE | ✓                 | -                     | -             |
| AIU   | -                 | ✓                     | -             |
| CBSE  | ✓                 | -                     | -             |
| CIET  | -                 | -                     | ✓             |
| CSIR  | -                 | ✓                     | -             |
| CISCE | ✓                 | -                     | -             |
| ICHR  | -                 | ✓                     | -             |
| ICMR  | -                 | ✓                     | -             |
| ICSSR | -                 | ✓                     | -             |
| INC   | -                 | ✓                     | -             |
| NAAC  | ✓                 | -                     | -             |
| NIOS  | ✓                 | -                     | -             |
| UGC   | ✓                 | -                     | -             |

It is clear from the above table (5) that only six IARBs give fully open access, six IARBs give partial open access and one IARB (i.e. CIET) gives closed access to their publications.

**4.5. Presence of institutional publication policy:** The attempts were made to find out the publication policies of the samples (IARBs). But it is found that none of the IARBs have drafted the formal publication policies.

## 5. Results and Suggestions

- a) All the IARBs are established by the Government and funded by the same (directly/indirectly). But some of the IARBs' publications are pay-based (eg. AIU, INC) as only six IARBs give fully open access, six IARBs give partially open access and one IARB gives (CIET) closed access to their publications. Therefore, the Government needs to bring uniformity in access by giving free and open access to all the publications of IARBs.
- b) There is no institutional open access policy found on any of the IARBs' websites. The IARBs need to have a uniformed and common open access policy in regard to opening their publications to all. Moreover, the IARBs do not even have formal guidelines for their institutional publications. To boost the institutional publication activities, IARBs should introduce guidelines for their own publications.
- c) All the surveyed IARBs have given importance to their publications and thus portrayed the publications' webpages on their websites (see Table-3). The names of such pages are different but all lead to the documents published by the IARBs. It would be feasible to access the documents/publications if the webpages are named clearly as 'publications' than 'price list' or 'catalogue'.
- d) Reports are the popular type of document among the IARBs' publications. Majority of the reports comprise annual reports of the respective IARBs. But many of the IARBs do not have latest annual reports. Therefore, the IARBs need to upload the latest annual reports on their websites and help readers know the developments of the IARBs. Moreover, some of the IARBs have not uploaded the reports of some (ad-hoc) commissions/committees constituted for policy making and guidelines.
- e) There is no central archive or repository to access all the IARBs' publications. Therefore, the MHRD/ Government needs to develop a central archive comprising all the publications of IARBs accessible openly on one platform. Or the INFLIBNET can take up the lead in archiving the digital collections of publications of all IARBs and keep them in public domain. The central archive not only saves the time of the readers as well harnesses the accessibility and active participation of all stakeholders of IARBs.
- f) The IARBs do not have any third party reports. For instance: IARBs can also link certain doctoral studies which are based on the respective IARBs. This helps the readers understand the role, contribution and status of such respective regulatory body.
- g) With the intention of keeping the publicly funded research works open, the Protection and Utilization of Publicly Funded Intellectual Property Bill, 2008 was initiated by Government of India. But this bill is still pending (IPRS, 2014) and distant to become an act. The bill needs to mention the common policy for all IARBs to keep the institutional publications open. But this "bill now covers only patents and plant varieties" (Sharma, 2010, p. 255). Therefore, all forms of intellectual property including the institutional publications need to be incorporated in this bill.

## 6. Conclusion

The IARBs are best known for policy making and supporting teaching, research and publication activities. They impact all their stakeholders if their publications are accessible

openly. However, there is a strong criticism for the open access to intellectual property documented in any form/s. If it is accessible openly, "then there are chances that research will be driven by market rather than necessity. While the industry works on the principle of profit making and operates in an environment of competition, the industry- academic association might deviate the latter from the path of knowledge dissemination to revenue generation." (Sharma, 2010, p. 256). But there are certain cases where in intellectual property is made open for all by some selected government bodies/departments. For instance: the open access policy of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST), (the constituent Departments within the Ministry of Science and Technology) Government of India (DBT, Government of India, 2014, p. 1). It/they state/s that "the DBT/DST believe/s that maximizing the distribution of (their) publications by providing free online access by depositing them in a gratis open access repository is the most effective way of ensuring that the research it funds can be accessed, read and built upon. This, in turn, will foster a richer research culture" (DBT, Government of India,2014,p.1).Therefore, the IARBs need to keep their publications open and also their publication activities should be guided by the formal guidelines as well as open access policy (of their publications). This move can transform the sharing of intellectual property openly and thus revolutionalise the open access movement in India. Hopefully, the IARBs put efforts in reaching out to its stakeholders/readers more openly.

**Note:** The URLs of IARBs (listed in Table-1 and 3) were accessed individually between 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2014 and 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

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