

Opening up by Closing the Circle: Strengthening Open Access in India

National Conference

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi | 21 October, 2013

Organisers



Conference Report

by

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1 INTRODUCTION

UNESCO, in partnership with Central Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) organised a national Conference on *Opening up by Closing the Circle: Strengthening Open Access in India*. The event was organised at JNU, New Delhi on 21st October, 2013 to mark the Open Access Week.

The organisers intended to focus on the need to create an enabling environment for open access (OA) in India, promote and upscale existing OA initiatives, and encourage the development of new OA programmes. This was planned to do by '*closing the circle*' or linking multiple stakeholder groups, viz. researchers, librarians, archivists, publishers, technologists, authors and policymakers, taking into account their concerns and views and providing a platform to advocate for a common cause.

To address the above concerns, the specific objectives of the Conference were devised. They were:

- a) Build awareness among the stakeholder groups and student community about the importance of OA to scientific research
- b) Facilitate the exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices of various institutions in the OA domain
- c) Contribute towards the creation of an advocacy group that would promote OA at institutional and national levels
- d) Analyse current trends and pitfalls with regard to the OA landscape in India
- e) Develop policy recommendations for the creation of a national mandate to promote OA and
- f) Promote partnerships and collaborations among interested stakeholders.

The Conference provided a unique opportunity to the stakeholders to pool their insights, identify and discuss key OA related issues, and create a roadmap for strengthening OA in India.

The Conference was structured into Keynote Address and followed by two Panel discussions and a Round Table (RT) meeting. The two panel discussions were on the themes *Why open access?* and *The Open Access Environment in India*. The RT discussion was on the theme *Towards a National OA Policy: Forging the Missing Links*.

2 INAUGURAL SESSION

Beginning with Saraswati Vandana and lighting of lamp, Prof Sudha Pai, Rector, JNU, welcomed the guests and the delegates. Being a supporter of OA movement, she appreciated the efforts of UNESCO, JNU's Central Library and CEMCA in celebrating Open Access Week with two Panel discussions and Round Table meeting on relevant issues of OA.

Prof S K Sopory, Vice-Chancellor, JNU said "OA has become a buzz word and this was possible due to revolutionary growth in Internet and communication technology". Speaking about the profit-oriented OA publishers, he said, "There is sheer need of such models where submission and access to OA journals are free for authors as well as readers".

Representing UNESCO, Mr Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka, addressed the gathering explaining the UNESCO's objectives and initiatives in holding the Conference. He specifically highlighted the UNESCO's path-breaking initiatives to make the OA movement more popular. Quoting various OA initiatives, he said "USA, United Kingdom and European Commission are ready to devise and implement a policy in their countries to make the publicly-funded research projects openly accessible to the public. So, such policy-initiative is need of the hour for India". He also hoped that the event would discuss and analyse all such issues and challenges related to OA movement. He said that the deliberation would make UNESCO's OA Guidelines more reachable and help build consensus among the stakeholders (of OA movement) for making the scholarly information freely accessible for teaching, research and publication.

Representing CEMCA, Dr Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA shared his ideas about the intentions and expectations about organising the Conference. He highlighted how OA movement had changed the publishing trend, paving the way for open learning with no economic and social obligations.

Dr Ramesh C. Gaur, University Librarian, Central Library, JNU shared the OA initiatives of JNU's Central Library, especially in digitising 5000 theses and dissertations. He applauded the utility and popularity of INFLIBNET's (Information and Library Network) *Shodhganga*. To

mark the Open Access Week, JNU's Central Library presented the package of 5000 ETDs (Electronic Theses and Dissertations) of JNU research scholars to INFLIBNET. Dr Sopory handed over the ETDs to Dr Jagdish Arora, Director, INFLIBNET, Ahmedabad and the delegates applauded with cheers.

The Inaugural Session ended with proposing vote of thanks by Dr Ramesh C. Gaur.

3 FORMAL DISCUSSIONS

The formal discussions were held with a Keynote Address followed by two Panel discussions and a Round Table meeting wherein the eminent experts threw light upon the theme-based issues of the Conference.

3.1 Keynote Address

The Conference began with Keynote Address on *The Importance of Being Open* by Prof Ramakrishna Ramaswamy, Vice-Chancellor, University of Hyderabad. Dr Ramaswamy said "...though OA movement has a global devoted following, in recent times, the debate has gotten complicated". Sharing his views and ideas as a practicing academician, academic administrator and editor of scientific journals, he said, "Almost all the research that is typically done at the University is publicly funded, through the Government of India via various ministries, or by other public funds. Should the results of such research not be made available to as many as possible?" He expressed his displeasure over poor peer-review processes, growing trend of plagiarism and poor adoption of initiatives such as *Vidyanidhi* and *Shodhganga*. He said "an unreviewed (or poorly reviewed) work is potentially dangerous".

He was of the view that the research that is publicly funded should be publicly accessible. Quoting the example of the Right to Information Act (RTI) he said, "RTI has had a very similar effect – information on one aspect of public life can have consequences on other aspects. Scholars should see that their work reaches the largest number of people and should make all efforts to ensure this". Speaking about the ways to tackle such issues, he said, "Academic administrators should see that scholarly work is supported in a manner to have this wide reach. In the long run, inclusivity is clearly more in the public interest than exclusion in any form, especially in a globalised world, and the OA movement can help us along this path".

3.2 Panel Discussion-I: *Why Open Access?*

The first Panel discussion on *Why Open Access* was chaired by Dr Usha Mujoo Munshi, Librarian, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi. The purpose of the discussion was to explore the benefits and advantages of OA for researchers, academics and scientists. It aimed to assess the relative merits and demerits of the 'green' and 'gold' approaches to OA publishing. There were four speakers invited to the Panel who expressed their views on the theme and the allied issues.

The first Panel discussion began with Mr Sanjiv Goswami's presentation on *Open Access and Its Positive Impacts*. Mr Goswami, Managing Director of Springer India Pvt. Ltd. highlighted the importance of publication units and their relation with the authors, librarians and readers. Mr Goswami said, "OA has emerged as a viable, fully developed alternative to traditional subscription publishing. The benefits of OA publishing for its stakeholders as well as academic institutions, societies and funders are numerous and far-reaching". Speaking about the initiatives of Springer in OA domain, Mr Goswami said "Authors and academic societies alike should evaluate their publishing partners to understand their approach to OA and to ensure that they have an integrated, forward-looking digital strategy; one that expands access to content, and does so with minimal restrictions and limitations for the user".

Dr Hirwani, Head, CSIR Unit for Research and Development of Information Products, Pune said, "Good ideas are widely distributed today due to growth of ICT (Information and Communication Technology). No one has a monopoly on useful knowledge anymore. We need to access external knowledge to fuel our innovation model. We need to utilise our internal knowledge for social and economic good. Not all of the smart people in the world work for us". Assuring CSIR's readiness in making OA popular in India, he said, "CSIR will lead the OA movement within the country and take on board other scientific agencies to form a National Open Access Policy, including legislation, if necessary to mandate the availability of output of publicly-funded research in public domain".

Dr A R D Prasad, Professor and Head, Documentation, Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Bangalore presented his ideas on *Open Data Repositories* (ODRs). Dr Prasad said, "Many publications use data, but the actual article may not have complete data. It could be for lack of space or an author overlooks the data or deliberately does not present data, so that others can not verify the data or others may draw different conclusions contradictory to that of the author". Speaking about the importance of data

transparency, Dr Prasad said, “Data transparency supplements the objectivity and self-corrective characteristics of Science”. He also talked about the features the technology required for ODR and also some initiatives.

Another invited speaker, Dr Nehaa Chaudhari, Programme Officer, The Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore shared her thoughts on *Pondering Copyright and Recasting Openness*. She underscored the value of open licensing in view of the IPR issues. She drew attention to an author’s rights in comparison between moral and economic issues. She also spoke on alternatives to copyright and ways to recast openness. Terming limited access to information is a multi-faceted problem; she said, “There is a need to redefine openness in view of arguments related to OA”.

Dr Usha Mujoo Munshi, Chairperson of the first Panel discussion, presented her ideas on *Open Data, Open Licensing, and Open Data Policy* before sharing her remarks. After discussing about the OA as a concept, its initiatives and trends, she expressed that there was a need of a robust data policy. She opined, “It took almost a decade to promote OA to intellectual outputs in institutions through voluntary initiatives or mandates. So efforts are required to bring in changes by addressing the critical issues and promoting Open Data culture, whether for academic research (science) or government”. “If this is achieved”, she said, “It will ensure (by and large) greater accountability, transparency and will facilitate re-use/re-purpose/, thus avoid re-inventing the wheel. So there is a need to create the environment in which OA will become the norm for distributing research and in governance”. Dr Munshi further said, “The popularity of open source is highest among academia due to underlying philosophy based on sharing. So there is a need to sustain and nurture– through a sustained cycle of human resources and efforts to help it continue what it has been able to do so far”.

In her concluding remarks, as a Chairperson of the Panel, Dr Munshi highlighted the need of a robust policy for OA resources and sustaining and nurturing OA initiatives.

3.3 Panel Discussion-II: *The Open Access Environment in India*

The second Panel discussion on the theme *The Open Access Environment in India* was chaired by Dr N V Satyanarayana, Chairman and Managing Director, Informatics India Ltd., Bangalore. He presented a detailed overview of the OA environment in India, with a focus on the impediments to the widespread acceptance of OA.

There were five invited speakers who shared their views on the theme of the Panel discussion. The prime issues highlighted in the discussion were: inclusion of a national OA mandate; sound institutional publishing and archiving policies; the lack of awareness, human and technical capacity; and the need for intensive advocacy and skill-building within the Library and Information Science (LIS) community. The potential efficacy of the self-directed learning tools being developed by UNESCO and CEMCA were also discussed.

Prof Uma Kanjilal, Director in-Charge, Advanced Centre of Informatics and Innovative Learning (ACIIL), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi speaking on *Open Educational Resources: Indian Perspectives*, introduced the concept of OER, its advantages, some popular OER initiatives and OER search engines. She was of the view that the OER could be highly successful in disseminating knowledge. Emphasising the culture of sharing, she said, “There is a need of developing a culture of sharing and re-using – through awareness building activities, contextualizing and mapping to curriculum – implications for teaching/ learning and new methods of assessment and accreditation, user-friendly tools to locate and retrieve OER, Formats and Interoperability”.

Speaking on *Open Access Initiatives in India*, Dr Pratapanand Jha, Director (Cultural Informatics), Indira Gandhi National Council for Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi highlighted the major initiatives of IGNCA. The IGNCA, that digitised over two lakh images including Ganjfa Cards and rare books, has been archiving various types of documents online. The OA to the digitised cultural documents are accessed under OA platform at IGNCA. He assured that majority of the digitised resources would be made available openly online.

Another invited speaker, Dr Rameshwar Singh, Project Director of Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi shared his experiences of OA and the policy implemented at ICAR. Speaking about the OA policy of ICAR, which was formulated and adopted in August 2013, Dr Singh said. “The prime aim of ICAR was to achieve enhanced OA of its knowledge and information to public so as to enhance the economic and societal return of its efforts and investments”. He, while discussing the various initiatives, specified how the OA initiatives like *e-Granth: KRISHI Kosh* and *Krishi Prabha* became popular among scientists. He also shared the ICAR’s aim of setting-up of centralized meta-data harvesting system for unified search.

Dr Sukhdev Singh, Technical Director, National Informatics Centre (NIC) spoke on *Open Access to Indian Bio-Medical Literature*. He gave an overview of online access to OA data of pre-Internet and post-Internet phases of India. He said “There are 64 registered Indian OA repositories available in OpenDOAR and among them 12.5% of OA repositories belong to health sciences and medicine”. Sharing his results of a bibliometric study on top twenty

Indian OA journals in the said domain, Dr Singh said, “80% of the bio-medical OA journals are already Green (self-archiving OA model). Hence the impact of the journals is directly related to ‘Greenness’ and thus ‘open’ ensures popularity of the journals”. Concluding his presentation, he said that there was a need to promote OA repositories and self-archiving of research papers among the authors.

Representing an International publication unit, Mr Vivek Mehra, MD and CEO, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. expressed his concern over the rise of predatory publishers in the OA domain. He said that though proprietary publishers do work for profit making there are some involved in OA publications too.

Another distinguished speaker, Dr Satyanarayana, quoting an article published in *Nature* (16 October 2013) said that more than 5,000 OA journals had been launched globally since October, 2010. He was speaking on *OA Publishing in India: Need for Quality Benchmarking*. He appreciated India’s contributions to such a steady growth of scholarly OA journals. However, expressing his concern over key quality problems with OA journals, he said, “The problems like publisher’s credibility, lack of infrastructure, poor editorial, peer-reviewing and production, static websites with missing of few back issues of journals, currency of content, counterfeiting are leading to poor image of the OA journals”. In view of such issues, he said “A global quality policy is an urgent need to keep the OA movement clean and relevant.”

3.4 ROUND TABLE: Towards a National OA Policy: Forging the Missing Links

The deliberations of the RT meeting, on the above theme, was preceded by Rapporteur’s brief summary of the key issues emerged from the two Panel discussions. Dr Parveen Babbar, Deputy Librarian, JNU presented the Report before the delegates. On the basis of these points, the RT revisited in view of updating the recommendations made by the National Knowledge Commission in 2007 on the formulation of a national OA mandate and to develop a template for national OA policy framework.

Dr Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA chaired the RT with the participants viz. Dr Gautam Bose, Head (Social Development), NIC, Dr. N V Sathyanarayana, Dr Ramesh C. Gaur and Mr Vivek Mehra. The participants of the RT recapped and addressed the selected issues discussed in the Panel discussions. Applauding the efforts of IGNCA for digitizing and archiving the cultural heritage of our country, Dr Ramesh C. Gaur said “There is a need of digitization and archiving of cultural heritage like manuscripts, letters, folk art etc. To address this issue, there should be a policy that deals with sustaining the cultural heritage”.

Dr Mishra highlighting the issues discussed in both the Panel discussions and the participants' remarks made in RT, requested the floor to give their suggestions too.

Dr Devika P. Madalli, Associate Professor, DRTC suggested that the authors are in real need of training or awareness building programmes specifically tailored for them. She quoted few examples how the authors gave positive response to such training sessions organized in the past. In this view, she said, "The OA movement needs to involve authors to make the OA publishing more popular and thus achieve sharing of scholarly information with full passion". Mr Santosh C. Hulagabali, Librarian, Nagindas Khandwala College, Mumbai gave two suggestions, directed to UGC through the event. He said "The University Grants Commission (UGC) should put efforts in creating awareness about OA among the faculties, of Indian universities and colleges, by introducing short-term courses in its sixty six Academic Staff Colleges". Secondly, "UGC has made it mandatory for registered PhD research scholars to undertake Course Work. But hardly any Course Work has the component on OA. The UGC should introduce the OA tools and the allied OA issues in the Course Work of every university". He said "If implemented by UGC, they not only support the OA movement in India, but will also make the faculties and students produce scholarly information through research and publications".

4 CLOSING SESSION

Ms Iskra Panevska, Adviser for Communication and Information for South Asia, UNESCO, New Delhi gave concluding remarks. She hoped that the Panel discussions and RT would enhance the momentum of OA in India through bringing out OA mandate.

After a day-long successful deliberation, the event ended with proposing vote of thanks. Dr Ramesh C. Gaur thanked profusely the co-hosts, UNESCO and CEMCA for their determination to make OA popular in India through the Conference. He assured that such events would be organised in future to make a strong podium for OA movement in India. He also thanked his team, authorities of JNU, experts, participants and media representatives.

5 KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key issues and recommendations emerged from the Panel discussions and RT. These recommendations would be considered for preparing the OA mandate.

- a) **OA Policy:** There is an urgent need to develop policy for the creation of a national mandate to promote OA in India. Many Indian organisations have been going for institutional repositories (IRs). But it demands sound institutional publishing and archiving policies too. So the institutes which run their IRs actively should have sound institutional publishing and archiving policies.
- b) **Economic Issues:** There is an absence of a model where both authors and readers are not charged by any price-tag from any OA publisher. The information professional and the publishing units need to work in this direction.
- c) **OA Publications:** The academic domain needs to emphasise more on publications with OA platforms. So the scholars should try to reach the largest number of people and should make all efforts to ensure this by publishing their research work on OA platforms. The more the free access to knowledge, the better the spread and reach of knowledge.
- d) **Sustaining Quality:** The proliferation of OA journals and OA publishers are growing rampantly. This may lead to a poor-review or moderate peer-review process, plagiarism, profit making etc. The OA policy should throw light on these adverse issues and devise a policy to promote and safeguard quality publication activities.
- e) **Building Learning Tools:** The potential efficacy of the self-directed learning tools is being developed by UNESCO and CEMCA. This should be one of the practices of every research institute and the hosts of the IRs to create self-directed learning tools.
- f) **Awareness Building:** The lack of awareness, among the OA stakeholders, about the OA benefits, IR utilities, open licensing, embargo and IPR is a serious issue. These issues need an extensive training module/s. The training needs to be two dimensional including authors and the readers in the training ambit and facilitators to cater to the required support.
- g) **Capacity Building:** Human and technical capacity building and the need for intensive advocacy and skill-building within the LIS community shall make OA movement more popular. To achieve this, the OA movement needs a pool of talented professionals who can handle and experiment with the technicalities associated in implementing OA platform. So

the information professionals need to fill this vacuum by working in OA domain more passionately.

h) **Training:** The OA movement is in need of the training modules designed specifically for authors. The authors can join OA movement by publishing or self-archiving their pre-print or post-print work in any OA repositories.

i) **Resource Sharing Culture:** There is a need of developing a culture of sharing and re-using through awareness building activities, contextualizing and mapping to curriculum, implications for teaching- learning and new methods of assessment and accreditation, user-friendly tools to locate and retrieve OER formats and Interoperability.

j) **Sustaining Cultural Heritage:** There is need of digitization and archiving of cultural heritage like manuscripts, letters, folk art etc. To address this issue, there should be a policy that deals with sustaining the cultural heritage.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The celebration of Open Access Week by UNESCO, JNU and CEMCA provided a unique platform to discuss on the pertinent issues associated with Indian OA movement. The experts and the participants focused on the key policy and publication medium of OA in detail. The deliberation, through the Conference, helped introspect the Indian position and contribution in the OA domain globally. The event also gave a chance to address the growing issues like devising a national mandate on OA, strengthening quality of the OA journals, popularizing the IRs, building self-learning OA tools and devising training modules and user awareness programmes for all the stakeholders of OA movement. All participants felt that the event would succeed in drafting a success story of Indian OA movement by considering the above key issues and recommendations.

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