OPEN ACCESS INITIATIVES HAS BRIDGED THE GAP BETWEEN “INFORMATION RICH AND “INFORMATION POOR”
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Abstract
A paper deals with open access movement at international and National level to overcome the serial crisis and availability of scholarly communications. DOAJ, PloS, In India UGC, NKC, CSIR developed CSIR Exploration, cultural heritage digital library by IGNCA, C-DAC Noida developed Digital e-library, Digital Library of India by IISC Banglore, UGC-Infonet by INFLIBNET, INDEST-AICTE, Kalasampada, developed IGNCA, TKDL by NISCAIR, Open access initiatives in India to bridge the gap between Information Rich and Information Poor.

1. INTRODUCTION

The open access movement is one of the more notable developments to have emerged in the library world in the last few years. It has implications for all types’ libraries and librarians. Open access has since become the subject of much discussion among researchers, academics, librarians, university administrators, funding agencies, government officials, commercial publishers, and learned-society publishers. Although there is substantial (if not universal) agreement concerning the concept of OA, there is considerable debate about the economics of funding peer review in open-access publishing, and about the reliability and economic effects of self-archiving.

The focus of the OA movement is scholarly, peer-reviewed research articles, which authors have traditionally given away, although the concept can apply to other types of resources such as theses, dissertations, and grey literature. Open access is free availability immediately on publication.

2. DEFINITIONS OF OPEN ACCESS

“its free availability on public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the full-texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data
to software or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial legal or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself”.

Budapest Initiative

“Open access to scientific article means online access without charge to readers or libraries. Committing to open access means dispensing with the financial technical and legal barriers that are designed to limit access to scientific research articles to paying customers”.

Peter Suber

“Open access is a cost effective way to disseminate and use information. It is an alternative to the traditional subscription-based publishing modal possible by new digital technologies and networked communication”

American Research Libraries Association (ARLA)

3. SERIAL CRISIS

The present scenario of shrinking budget of libraries and increasing cost of journals forced libraries to harness various other options to satisfy the information needs of scholars. Resource sharing, consortia subscription and Open Access to scholarly information have been the most crucial topics of debate among the librarians, scholars, and publishers over the last few years. The Association of Research Libraries promotes, “Open Access to quality information in support of learning and scholarship.” A key component of this effort is educating members of research and academic communities about the open access and its potential, and how its application in research institutes can provide a cost-effective way to disseminate and use information. With the use of state-of-the art technology, libraries started exploring new domains of scholarly publishing. Building of digital libraries and institutional repositories landscaped the concept of access to scholarly literature. Open Access is no longer a national issue but it is an international issue where all nations have to play an important role.

4. INFORMATION RICH AND INFORMATION POOR

The concept of Rich & Poor does not apply only to money. As little as ten years ago, information was not the commodity that is has become in today’s world. Back then, books, magazines, TV,
radio and newspapers were still the predominant forms of media that were used to communicate, not only news and current events, but everything from academic research to mainstream advertising. The problem with those forms of communication was that full access was not available to everyone. And, as a result, those with more time and money became The Information Rich, while those with fewer resources became The Information Poor.

But times have changed and a wealth of information is now freely available to all with just the click of a mouse button. No more rich versus poor. Information has been democratized by the Internet, and The Information Superhighway may be freely travelled by all.

Empowered with this information, as consumers, we are now becoming more and more discriminating. For example, we will spend as much as 90% of our online, internet surfing time just looking for information before making a purchase decision.

In recent years researchers have pointed out that there are huge differences in people’s ability to obtain and act on information. This is causing concern, with experts arguing that a fundamental split is developing between the information haves and have not throughout the world. The information rich have good access to information — especially online, but also through more traditional media such as newspapers, radio, television, and books — and can plan their lives and react to changes in circumstances on the basis of what they know or can find out. The information poor don’t have such access and are vulnerable to all kinds of pressures. Though the information rich are mainly in the industrialized countries and the information poor are mostly in the developing world, similar splits are obvious between prosperous and disadvantaged groups inside industrialized countries.

Information-rich and information-poor are a new classification of rich and poor

If you keep people ignorant, they’re more likely to do what they’re told.

( Tony Benn, in the Daily Telegraph, June 1998)

You are, by didn’t of reading this newspaper, information rich. You belong to the knowledge class, for the purchase of a paper such as this also implies you are more likely to have access at home or work to the internet with all its wealth of information.
5. INFORMATION RICH ERA

The signs of change are:
Email efficiently and rapidly links researchers from around the globe. A growing range of other network-based technologies further enhances informal communication.

In nearly every discipline, some scholarship is digital-only or can be fully understood only in digital form.

Most scholarly literature is now created in digital form and online editions of journals are the norm. Back issues of an increasing number of journals and editions of older monographs are being digitized.

Google offers a search for scholars and has cataloged more than eight billion web pages and a billion images, and now is undertaking to digitize books on a scale that previously seemed unthinkable.

Many of yesterday’s limitations on research and learning are being swept away by the Internet. It presents an opportunity for unlimited dissemination of information at virtually no cost beyond that of providing it to the first reader.

As a result, the ways researchers study complex questions and share their data and findings are adapting. For example:

5.1 **Open digital archives** such as arXiv.org, PubMed Central, and hundreds of institution-based repositories enable authors to ensure their works are available on the Internet to a universe of potential users.

5.2 Social scientists are developing and sharing research databases such as the Atlas of Inequality using digital data that they and others have amassed.

5.3 Humanities scholars are experimenting with reinventing the book, building digital collections, using digital analysis tools, and generating new kinds of intellectual products.
By seamlessly linking data, knowledge, and scholars, the emerging research environment promises to stimulate and accelerate discovery — and ultimately to fuel advances beyond the realm of scholarship.

The new digital scholarship gives scholars the potential to collaborate in dynamic new ways:

A) It enables researchers located across multiple time zones to easily share information and work effectively as teams.

B) It allows the rapid development of new or ad hoc communities of scholars to respond to pressing questions and challenges.

6. INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

Though most of the countries had initiated various programs to facilitate the user with access to Scholarly literature, but all were separately for their own country only. But some of the initiatives have revolutionized the access to scholarly literature around the globe. Few of the major initiatives are given below:

6.1 Budapest Open Access Initiative (2001) had given the way to make scholarly literature accessible free of cost over the Internet. After that various projects have been started in the world to facilitate with open access to scholarly literature

6.2 Open Archive Initiative (OAI): OAI develops and promotes interoperability standards that aim to facilitate the efficient dissemination of content.

6.3 The Scholarly Publishing and Academic R Libraries, and it is an international alliance of academic and research libraries working to streamline the scholarly publishing system. It is focusing to expand the dissemination base of scholarly research and reduce financial pressures on libraries.

6.4 The Public Library of Science (PLoS): It’s a non-profit organization of scientists and physicians committed to making the world’s scientific and medical literature for public use on the Internet.

6.5 Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): At Copenhagen, during the First Nordic Conference on scholarly communication in 2002 creation of a directory of open access journals was conceived. Today this source has become one of the largest bases to provide platform to open access journals.
6.6 Million Book Project: The Million Book Project is initiated by Carnegie Mellon University, School of Computer Science and University Libraries. It is on the mission to create a Universal Library which will foster creativity and free access to all human knowledge. It has been expected that the access 10 million books are already being made available through this project.

7. OPEN ACCESS MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Indian educational system is one of the largest educational systems of this world. If we will talk about higher educational system alone, it comprises of around 425 universities and 18000 colleges, which is accommodating 0.5 million teachers and around 1.4 millions students who are pursuing their higher academic degrees and research in different streams of knowledge. Around 14000 Doctoral degrees are being awarded every year. Scholarly information is the main ingredient to incorporate quality in their academic and research output. Almost a decade back academicians and researchers of India found it difficult to access scholarly literature published in other countries due to high cost. Average number of journals subscribed by Indian universities, were around 250 and number of foreign journals amongst these were almost nil in many of the universities. With reference to scholarly literature accessibility Government of India has taken various steps through its bona fide bodies, like University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and other various agencies. To bridge the digital divide amongst Indian universities, UGC has been developing ICT infrastructure of the universities with the objective of free flow of information across all the universities. UGC has initiated consortia based subscription through Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre as UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium as one of the major programs in the country, wherein Government is bearing subscription cost and free access is being given to the privileged users. All universities coming under the purview of UGC are the privileged users to the scholarly literature which is being subscribed from across the world. Now this program has been opened for associate membership but one has to pay the membership as well as subscription charges. Now, many of the public and private institutions are coming up with new projects to facilitate free flow of information. They are creating, documenting and making available their contents through digital library or institutional repository initiatives, like Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), OpenMED, DLI etc. The detail of the few international accorded repositories in India is given below.
7.1 Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL): The TKDL is a collaborative project of CSIR, Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This project involves documentation of the knowledge available in public domain on traditional knowledge from the existing literature related to Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Yoga. It is being digitized in five international languages which are English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.

7.2 OpenMED@NIC: OpenMED is an open access archive of National Informatics Centre for medical and allied sciences. Its aim is to provide free service to academics, researchers and students working in the area of medical and allied sciences.

7.3 Digital Library of India (DLI): DLI aims at creating a portal of information for free access to all human knowledge over the Internet with free to read, searchable collection of one million books, predominantly in Indian languages. This portal is also aiming at working like an aggregator of all the knowledge and digital contents created by other digital library initiatives in India. It is a part of the Million Book Project in India.

7.8 Kalasampada: Digital Library-Resource for Indian Cultural Heritage (DL-RICH): The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) in collaboration with Ministry of Communication and Information Technology initiated a project ‘Kalasampada’ for the development of databank of cultural heritage. It facilitates the scholars to access and view the materials including couple of lakhs of manuscripts and other rare documents.

7.9 Muktabodha Digital Library: It is an online digital library of rare Sanskrit texts and other texts, focusing on Kashmir Shaivism, Trika-Kaula Saiva-Siddhanta, Pancaratra, Natha Yoga and other tantric works, in addition to manuscripts on Vedic Shrauta ritual.

7.10 Archive of Indian Labour: The ‘archive of Indian Labour’ is a collaborative project of V V Giri National Labour Institute and the Association of Indian Labour Historians. It was started in the year 1998. The core activities of the archive are maintaining digital collection and providing public interface to interactive dissemination.

7.11 National Knowledge Commission (NKC): NKC of India was constituted in the year 2005 as a high-level advisory body to the Prime Minister of India to prepare a blueprint for excellence in the education system to meet the knowledge challenges of the 21st Century and to enhance India’s competitive advantage in the field of knowledge with the objective to transform India into a vibrant knowledge based society. Working Group on Open Access and Open Educational
Resources and Working Group on Libraries have strongly recommended open access to public-funded research literature. NKC through its recommendations involved whole public system in systematic flow of information from grassroots Panchayat system to highly researched oriented organizations. NKC has also recommended creating knowledge portals for basic sectors like water, energy, education, food, agriculture and employment etc.

7.12 University Grants Commission (UGC): For universities and colleges, UGC with the help of Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre, initiated an ambitious program called UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium. 171 Universities, 6000 colleges and various institutions of national importance are the members under different access structure. Apart from this UGC through its national policy framework (2005) proposed and made mandatory for submission of Doctoral theses in electronic form and creation of Indian National Theses Database for enabling free access to research theses. Though, various issues are needed to be addressed before uploading these theses in public domains.

CONCLUSION

In this way we can bridge the gap between information rich and information poor, Government of India has taken various steps through its bona fide bodies, like UGC, AICTE, CSIR) and other various agencies. To bridge the digital divide amongst Indian universities, UGC has been developing ICT infrastructure of the universities with the objective of free flow of information across all the universities. UGC has initiated consortia based subscription through INFLIBNET Centre as UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium as one of the major programs in the country, wherein Government is bearing subscription cost and free access is being given to the privileged users. All universities coming under the purview of UGC are the privileged users to the scholarly literature which is being subscribed from across the world. Now this program has been opened for associate membership but one has to pay the membership as well as subscription charges. Now, many of the public and private institutions are coming up with new projects to facilitate free flow of information. They are creating, documenting and making available their contents through digital library or institutional repository initiatives.
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