

# Open Access and Institutional Repositories

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*The research fraternity in India faces a number of problems with regard to infrastructure, be it in IT and communication, scholarly information or laboratory*

facilities. Weakly endowed most of our campuses are, barring exceptions like the IISc, IITs, IIMs, few other MHRD Institutions and the laboratories which are part of the central research councils and central research bodies such as the CSIR, ICAR, ICMR, DBT, DAE, DRDO etc. Few of the Indian Universities are also fortunate enough. Rest of the whole big lot are suffering from acute information poverty, which is to be addressed proactively at the earliest. Access to world class scholarly literature, nascent as well as retrospective, is a prerequisite for state-of-art research and development, whereas the ground reality in most of our research centers and academic institutions is really lamentable and panicking. Thanks to the Open Access movement catching up the world over. Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions (<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>). It is all about democratizing the scientific intellectual capital, which often draws its energy from publicly or privately funded research. It is not against proprietary or peer reviewed scholarly journals. According to Stevan Harnad, the world renowned proponent of Open Access, it is just self-archiving the articles the author has published in (peer-reviewed) non-OA journals. Hence it neither bypasses nor replaces peer-review. It has nothing to do with changing peer review. Self-archiving is a way of supplementing non-OA journal access with an OA version for those would-be users whose institutions cannot afford the non-OA journal. India has been responding to the OA movement quite proactively, and the efforts are on its way to bearing fruits. Here are a few laudable initiatives :

## Open Access Archives

1. Two workshops were organized by the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore during March 2002 on Open Access Journals in which over 40 professionals were trained in ePublishing. The proceedings of the workshop is available at "<http://www.ias.ac.in/epubworkshop/>".
2. The Indian National Science Academy (INSA) devoted a whole day for a seminar on open access at its annual meeting held at the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, in December 2003.
3. During May 2004, for the first time in India, under the stewardship of Prof. Subbiah Arunachalam with the support of a few funding agencies (such as IDRC, CSIR, British Council and OSI), two full-fledged workshops on open access and institutional archiving were organized by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation at Chennai with a view to developing a cadre of open access experts in Indian higher educational and research institutions. The primary purpose of the workshops was to provide Indian scientists and librarians with (i) a thorough understanding of the global scientific and scholarly communication issues that open access addresses; (ii) the technical knowledge of how to set up and maintain an open access institutional archive, and (iii) an awareness of the local institutional policy and organizational requirements for a successful, sustainable open access institutional archive. In all, 48 participants representing general and

agricultural universities and government laboratories under the various councils and departments, were trained in the two workshops. Some of them were scientists and others librarians, drawn from different parts of India and from different disciplines. The proceedings of the workshops are available at "<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~chan/oaindia/>".

4. INSA held a symposium on open access and institutional repositories on 13 May 2004, as a direct result of the Chennai workshops.
5. During July 2004 the NCSI of IISc under the captaincy of Dr. T.B. Rajashekar in association with the Old Dominion University, USA and sponsored by the INDEST Consortium of MHRD, conducted a 3-day workshop on Institutional Repositories, for the benefit of the INDEST Member Institutions. The workshop was a successful one in which 21 participants comprising librarians and computer/system professionals were trained. The proceedings of the workshop is available at "<http://www.ncsi.iisc.ernet.in/indest-ncsi-ir/>".
6. The Institutional Repository set up by IISc is a role model for others to emulate and it is available at "<http://eprints.iisc.ernet.in>". Similarly, there is another repository operational at DRTC of ISI Bangalore and it is available at "[drtc.isibang.ac.in/DRTC/testbeds.html](http://drtc.isibang.ac.in/DRTC/testbeds.html)". While IISc uses Eprints software, the DRTC uses DSpace, and both are open source institutional repository software. Over a dozen of open archives are in the making in different parts of the country and it is believed that they will all come out soon with meaningful content.
7. The Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIMK) conducted a three-day workshop on ePublishing during September 6-8, 2004 and Institutional Repositories was one of the components and the participants were trained in setting up "Eprints" based institutional repositories in their respective institutions (<http://intranet.iimk.ac.in/epublishing.htm>).

### **Open Access Publishing**

1. The Indian Medlars Centre of NIC provides free full-text access to 26 Biomedical Journals (<http://medind.nic.in/>).
2. The Indian Academy of Sciences has put all its 11 journals in the public domain (<http://www.ias.ac.in/journals.html>).
3. The Indian National Science Academy's all 4 journals are available in the public domain (<http://www.insa.ac.in/html/journals.asp>).
4. Dr. Sahu of MedKnow publications has, within the past two years, brought 20 Indian Biomedical Journals into the Open Access domain (<http://www.medknow.com/>).

### **Conclusion**

Both Open Access Archiving (OAA) and Open Access Publishing (OAP) are central and crucial to a country like India as far as its scientific agenda for the coming years are concerned. Thanks to the selfless efforts of a few, the initiatives on training and workshops are good models for creating open access experts but somehow it is felt that they are not just good

enough unless the policy makers' whole hearted support is ensured for the successful implementation of repositories in the respective institutes from where the professionals were rigorously trained. Similarly the country's major journal publishing organizations should come up with open access models of publishing. CSIR, ICAR, ICMR, DRDO are just few examples. Incidentally in India, scientific journals are all being published by public funded institutions. What is more important is the involvement of the University system in the Open Access movement, which is unfortunately yet to be seen. UGC should take the lead and involve Institutions like the INFLIBNET in capturing the invaluable intellectual capital being unattended and untapped in our universities and put them together into Open Access Archives. Similarly the national level research councils, viz., CSIR, ICAR, ICMR, DRDO, ICSSR etc. could consider collecting and archiving their research papers into a central archive which could be accessed by all, while individual institutional repositories which are interoperable, could be attempted simultaneously. Ultimately it's not technology but lack of proactive policies which pulls us back from success in most cases. It is strongly felt that a national level Task Force on Open Access (encompassing open archiving and open publishing) is high time to be formed for meeting the above objectives involving policy makers, scientists, information scientists, library / information professionals, computer / systems professionals.