

## Open access journals in library and information science: a study

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Open access spurred by the Internet has brought in new vistas for dissemination of scholarly content in almost all the disciplines. It has enabled agencies, publishers and individuals to distribute scholarly content online, free from licensing restrictions and cost. Like other fields, the growth of open access has also benefited the field of library and information science (LIS). In this paper an attempt has been made to assess the current status of open access journals in LIS covered in Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) based on various parameters.

**Keywords:** Open Access; DOAJ; Library and Information Science

### Introduction

Open access has brought in new vistas for dissemination of scholarly content. Today, world over scholarly content in various forms is distributed online on the internet, free of charge and free from copyright and licensing restrictions by publishers, institutions and individuals. There has been a rapid growth of scholarly journals, repositories, distributed catalogues, preprint archives and others. According to Morrison's report (June, 2014) on growth of open access, the size of content in some of the initiatives such as Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE) stands at 62 million items, Internet Archive 416 billion web pages, Electronic Journals library 45 thousand free journals, PubMedCentral over 3 million articles and searchable articles in Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is over 1.6 million<sup>1</sup>.

Many scholarly journals have embraced open access model in a big way and their acceptance among authors for publishing articles has also steadily increased. Owing to its potential features, even the leading publishers like Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, Springer and others have introduced open access journals<sup>2</sup>. As listed in DOAJ, open access journals now account for 9919 titles across disciplines<sup>3</sup>. Their number stands still higher, if such journals listed or indexed in other directories and search engines are

also taken into consideration. Like in other fields, the number of open access journals in the field of library and information science has steadily increased, which now accounts for 147 titles<sup>3</sup>. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the status of these 147 LIS journals to assess their continuity, licensing of content, language/s of publication, platform for hosting, indexing of content by abstracting and indexing journals, etc.

### Review of literature

Open access (OA) movement gained momentum from 'Budapest Open Access Initiative' in 2002 (<http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org>). It was followed by series of studies by promoters of open access movement such as Peter Suber, Alma Swan and others. Further, institutions like Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) have led to the dramatic growth of open access through various initiatives in the form of repositories, open access journals, open courseware, Open Educational Resources (OERs) etc. The open access initiatives considerably influenced scholarly communities and also forced governments, funding agencies, universities and research councils to change their policies to ensure that scholarly content of any research funded by them should be publicly accessible. Influence of information and

communication technology is another important factor, especially the Internet, made it possible for open access to change the face of publishing and distribution from pure print to online only.

Numerous studies have been undertaken by researchers to study the growth of open access journals. Falk in his study observed that there were 1200 open access journals in 2004 as compared to 5 journals in 1992<sup>4</sup>. McVeigh pointed out growing coverage of number of open access journals in the citation indexes provided by Thomson Reuters<sup>5</sup>. Morris explored the status of openness of journals included in DOAJ<sup>6</sup>. Gul, Vani and Majeed elaborated the growth of open access journals covered in *Scopus* citation database<sup>7</sup>. The study of Laakso et al on the development of open access publishing between 1993 and 2009 found rapid growth in open access journals<sup>8</sup>. The growth of open access journals in the field of LIS was explored in a few studies. Rufai, Gul & Shah found substantial growth of open access journals in LIS<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, a study by Sivakumaren et al explored the growth of LIS journals covered in DOAJ and found more open access journals were published during the period 1996-2005<sup>9</sup>.

### Objectives of study

The objectives of this study are:

- i) To reveal the present status of open access journals in LIS;
- ii) To ascertain the coverage of open access journals by abstracting and indexing databases;
- iii) To check impact factor (IF) of the OA journals;
- iv) To find out the use of open source platform 'Open Journal Systems';
- v) To examine the 'Licensing' model used for distribution of content;
- vi) To trace the year from which open access to articles is provided; and
- vii) To have an idea of fee charged for publishing articles

### Scope and limitations

The scope of the study is limited to LIS journals covered in 'Directory of Open Access Journals' (DOAJ). The study does not include journals covered

by any other directories, search engines or individual titles available on the Internet.

### Methodology

Journals related to the field of LIS were identified by undertaking a subject search on 'Library Science' using downloaded metadata of journals from DOAJ. From the extracted data in a spreadsheet, it is found that total 147 titles are related to the field of LIS. Websites of each of the journals were visited to check the current status of the journals. Impact factor of the journals were obtained from *Journal Citation Reports* 2012.

### Analysis

#### Country-wise distribution of journals

While looking at countrywise distribution of these LIS journals, it was found that out of 147 titles, 37 (25.17%) titles were published from USA, 14 (9.52%) from Brazil, 13 (8.84%) from Spain, 7 (4.76%) from India and 6 (4.08%) from UK. On the other hand, 5 (3.40%) titles each published from Canada, Germany and Taiwan followed by 4 (2.72%) titles each from Croatia and Iran. Further, 3 (2.04%) titles each published by four countries, 2 (1.36%) titles each by 9 countries and 1 (11.56%) title each by 17 countries. The detailed countrywise distribution of journals has been given in Table 1.

#### Languages of publication

OA journals in LIS depicts 71 (48.30%) journals are being published in English language, followed by 45 (30.61%) in multiple languages (same journal titles publishing in more than one language), 9 (6.12%) in Spanish, 7 (4.76%) in Portuguese, 3 (2.04%) each in French, German and Polish, 2 (1.36%) in Croatian and rest 1 each in different languages (Table 2).

#### Currency of open access publication

Out of 147 titles published in the field of LIS, 134 (91.16%) have maintained their current publishing trends. However, there is a delay in publication of 11 (7.48%) journals for a year or more and details of 2 (1.36%) journals could not be ascertained as there was no response from their websites. It is interesting to observe that, open access journals have sustained themselves in spite of competition from titles published by commercial publishers and harsh

Table 1—Countrywise distribution of journals

Country	No. of journals	Percentage
USA	37	25.17
Brazil	14	9.52
Spain	13	8.84
India	7	4.76
UK	6	4.08
Canada	5	3.40
Germany	5	3.40
Taiwan	5	3.40
Croatia	4	2.72
Iran	4	2.72
France	3	2.04
Netherlands	3	2.04
Poland	3	2.04
Switzerland	3	2.04
Cuba	2	1.36
Italy	2	1.36
Lithuania	2	1.36
Romania	2	1.36
South Korea	2	1.36
Australia	2	1.36
Denmark	2	1.36
Argentina	2	1.36
Turkey	2	1.36
Other Countries (1 Journal each)	17	11.56

economic trends. This may be credited to the efforts of publishers and support of authors in publishing their articles in open access journals.

#### Coverage in abstracting and indexing databases

Abstracting and indexing databases play a pivotal role in indexing and distributing research works published in journals and other scholarly resources to end users. Out of 147 titles, 98 (66.67%) have been indexed in various abstracting and indexing databases such as *Library and Information Science Abstract (LISA)*, *Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA)*, *SCOPUS*, *LATINDEX* etc. Apart from that they have been covered by scholarly search engines like Google Scholar and full text databases such as EBSCO, ABI/INFORM etc. Leaving apart 2

Table 2—Language of publication of journals

Language	No. of journals	Percentage
English	71	48.30
Spanish	9	6.12
Portuguese	7	4.76
French	3	2.04
German	3	2.04
Polish	3	2.04
Croatian	2	1.36
Bulgarian	1	0.68
Farsi	1	0.68
Persian	1	0.68
Slovene	1	0.68
Multiple languages (same journal titles publishing in more than one language)	45	30.61

(1.36%) titles for which data could not be accessed; remaining 47 titles have been covered only in DOAJ.

#### Impact Factor (IF)

Impact factor (IF) of a journal is a measure to assess the importance and weigh the quality of a journal in comparison to other journals. While referring to '*Journal Citation Reports (JCR)* of Thomson Reuters', it was found that JCR has provided IF only for 6 (4.08%) journals.

#### Open source journals platform

Open source and open access are bound by the same principle of distribution of source material at no cost. While analyzing the platform on which LIS journals have been hosted, it is found that out of 147 titles, 68 (46.26%) have been hosted on Open Journal System (OJS) a popular open source platform used for journal publishing. However, still 78 (53.06%) titles are using their own platform to host and publish journals on the Internet. The platform could not be assessed in case 2 (1.36%) journals.

#### Licensing model

In true spirit of open access, LIS journals have started adopting Creative Commons (CC) license (<http://www.creativecommons.org>) for distributing content and allowing users to modify and distribute content. However, in some cases certain rights are reserved such as no derivative works to be generated, not to be used for commercial purposes etc. From the

study, it was found, out of 147 titles, 71 (48.30%) have adopted Creative Commons license to distribute the content. Such a rate of high adoption of CC license is a welcome sign to free the content from complex copyright regulations.

#### Year of publication v/s open access

In order to ascertain, whether LIS journals provide open access from their first year of publication, it was found that in case of 111 (75.50%) journals, their year of publication is same as year of open access and only in case of 34 (23.13%) journals it was different and data for 2 (1.36%) journals could not be found. It was also observed that some of the journals increased their open access content over a period of time, may be owing to digitization of content of previous volumes.

#### Publication fee

One of the models followed to sustain open access publishing is 'Article Processing Charges' (APC) levied on authors to publish articles in open access journals. However, from the analysis it was found that, 138 (93.88%) LIS journals are not charging any fee to authors and only 6 (4.08%) titles are currently charging APC, 1 (0.68%) title is levying conditional charges and no data could be obtained for 2 (1.36%) titles.

#### Conclusion

Sustainability of open access journals in LIS is evident from the study. Even though developing countries are lagging behind in publishing open access LIS journals, but a few countries have taken a lead in publishing OA journals such as Brazil and India. For the further growth of open access journals in LIS, researchers and organizations need to embrace

these in a big way. Publishers of journals in LIS, if adopt certain Web 2.0 tools to promote and measure content may lead to wider dissemination of research and bring in popularity. Quality of content and unethical practices of publishing followed by some journals is a worrying factor for the sustainable growth of open access journals.

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