

## Open Access Journals in Library and Information Science: The Story so Far

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Internet has triggered the growth of scholarly publications and every discipline is witnessing an unremitting growth in the scholarly market. Open access, the product of Internet has also captured the global disciplines. Library and Information Science, is also witnessing a dramatic growth in the open access field. The study explores the status of open access titles in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS). Various characteristics highlighting open access titles in the field of LIS are featured in the study.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A systematic method for characterizing the open access titles in the field of Library and Information Science was carried out by extracting the data from Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Open J-Gate, and Ulrichsweb.com.

**Findings:** The results clearly reveal an expounding growth of open access titles in the field of Library and Information Science. Commercial publishers have also joined hands as open access market players. Indexing policies of OA titles in LIS need to be restructured and low income nations have to evolve in the field of OA bazaar.

**Research Implications:** The study will be helpful for the researchers in exploring the open access titles in the field of LIS. Furthermore, it can act as an eye opener to the scholarly world to know about the real status of open access titles in the field of LIS.

**Future Research:** Future research can be carried out to expedite the innovative trends in the LIS open journals.

**Keywords:** Open Access; Library and Information Science; Open Access Journals; Open Access-Growth-Development

**Paper Type:** Research

### Introduction

Scientific publishing is undergoing significant changes due to the growth of online publications and increases in the number of open access journals (Voronin, Myrzahmetov & Bernstein, 2011). The concept of open access (OA) that opened new dimensions in the information communication cycle has been widely accepted all over the world. Open access, which provides free access to the information content, is widely expanding its domain because of enormous benefits

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accrued from it. It is a blessing for everyone involved with the information communication process. Their growth and development has been one of the success stories over World Wide Web. With only five journals offering open access mode to their contents in 1992 and 1200 in 2004 (**Falk, 2004**), the number has reached to more than 7000 as on December 01, 2010 (**Directory of Open Access Journals, 2010**). Different authorities on open access have highlighted this budding concept in different ways. One of the lucid definitions on open access has been provided by Budapest open access initiative which states that open access is the free availability of articles on the 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 Open Access Initiative, 2002**). However, Association of Research Libraries (**ARL, 2007**) define open access as any dissemination model created with no expectation of direct monetary return and which makes works available online at no cost to the readers. An important and well renowned authority, **Suber (2003)** on open access, defines open access as free online availability of scholarly literature. **Lynch (2006)** also comments on open access as an increased elimination of barriers to the use of the scholarly literature by anyone interested in making such use. **McCulloch (2006)** visualizes that open access movement attempts to reassert control over publicly funded research in order to achieve “*the best value*” and make such research output transparent and freely accessible. **Nicholas, Huntington and Rowlands (2005)** elaborate on the value of such activity by stressing that it is possible to “read, download, copy, distribute and print articles and other materials freely”. The free availability of research is tempting the researchers to embrace the open access revolution with warm welcome. Number of advantages ranging from wider visibility to high citation have made open access so popular among the researchers that the heat of open access publishing is accelerating day by day. Highly ranked journals like *Nature*, *Wall Street Journal* and *The Scientist* all ranked open access among their top stories in 2003 (**Willinsky, 2006**). Initially a strong resentment was seen from the publishing industry, that open scholarship was a great threat to their business venture. But with the passage of time, leading publishers also joined the open access bandwagon because of innumerable potentialities that are adhered to it. Leading publishers like *Elsevier*, *Oxford*, *Taylor and Francis*, *Sage*, *Springer* and many more made some of their content freely available to the readers. Projects like *HINARI*, *AGORA*, and *OARE* etc that made the scholarly content freely available to developing economies also helped to propagate the cause of

open access, i.e. *information for all*. Scholarly and scientific journals are now enjoying flavours of open access and are growing at an escalating rate day by day. Open access journals have in this relatively shorter span of time won the hearts of the elements associated with the rim of open access. With leading publishers and reputed universities their count is growing at a very fast rate. The serial crisis that was the outcome of spurting economy has also been solved by open access platform. However, open access is gaining popularity day by day and every subject has been positively affected by it. Social Sciences, which deal with the various facets of society in relation to man, are also embracing this concept with open arms. Scholars in the various fields of Social Sciences, including Library and Information Science are contributing to open access journal revolution because of innumerable benefits adhered to it.

### Review of Literature

A number of studies have been carried that highlight various facets of open access. **Falk (2004)** studied that 1200 open access journals were available on the Web as compared to a total of only five in 1992.

Deals between publishers can be one of the catalytic forces in the increase of open access journals. Development of open access journal publishing has also been researched by **Laakso, Welling, Bukvova, Nyman, Björk & Hedlund, 2011**). A steady rate of increase of the open access journals has also been witnessed by number of authorities. Many carry on studies were also conducted to trace the growth and development of open access journals (**Wells, 1999; Crawford, 2002; Gustaffson 2002 (as cited in Laakso, Welling, Bukvova, Nyman, Björk & Hedlund, 2011; Morris, 2006; Dramatic Growth of Open, 2007; Gul, Wani & Majeed, 2008; Ware & Mabe, 2009)**

A study by **McVeigh (2004)** documents that the number of open access journals in the citation indexes provided by ISI Thomson™ is growing, both in terms of creating new titles and conversion of established titles. Open access journal publishing in different fields is also studied by **Borgman (2007)**.

The open access platform provided by publishers has also been studied by **Dallmeier-Tiessen, et al, (2010)**. Recent studies have explored a dramatic growth of open access journals (**Happy, 2012..., 2011; Provençal, 2011; The challenges of success..., 2011; Illustrations of the global..., 2012**).

### Problem

Millions of scholarly articles are appearing on the Web but due to number of restrictions, access to them can't be availed every time. Out of them, a large number of articles are useful for LIS research and

development that appear in different journals from time to time. Open access journals that provide free access to the research have made their debut to provide ease in access to the research. Day by day, these journals increase at a very fast rate on the Web. The study will encompass the development of open access journals in the field of LIS.

### Objectives

The main objective was to study how open access journals in the field of LIS are experimenting with features like *publishing origin, publishing models, language usage, visibility, article processing, and status concerns*.

### Scope

The study was undertaken to visualize the position of LIS field in this epoch of open access which has revolutionized the entire world in a short duration of time, as it got started with a meeting conveyed by Open Society Institute held at Budapest, Hungary in the month of December 2001 (**Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002**).

### Methodology

In order to ascertain the no. of OA journals published in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), three authoritative and authentic databases were consulted, i.e., Lund University's *Directory of Open Access Journals* (DOAJ), Serials Solution's *Ulrichsweb.com*, and *Informatics India Private limited, Open J-Gate*. As on **June 10, 2011**, DOAJ indexed 117 titles in the field of LIS, 93 by Ulrichsweb.com and 66 peer reviewed journals by Open J-Gate. The titles from the three databases were clubbed together and repeated titles were removed in order to avoid the risk of duplication and to achieve an accurate and realistic number. Each title was further manually checked on their respective websites and a no. of discrepancies were found in the list of Open J-Gate & Ulrichsweb.com, like:

#### ➤ Wrong Classification

Journals that belong to field of Computers and Education were tagged by Open J-Gate under the field of LIS, like

Title	Original Subject/s
International Journal of Peer to Peer Networks Transformations: Liberal Arts in the Digital Age	Computers Computers
International Journal of Educational Technology	Computers & Education
Journal of Research on Technology in Education	Computers & Education
Current Issues in Education	Education
Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education	Education

### ➤ Trade Journal instead of Scholarly

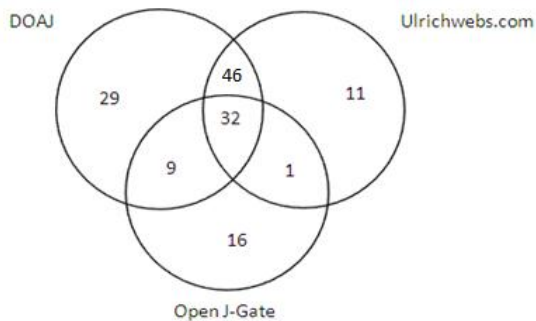
By open access we mean scholarly and peer reviewed publications and not the trade journals. Open J-Gate tagged a journal - *Idaho Librarian* (ISSN: 2151-7738) – as OA when its contents were supporting trade instead of scholarly nature.

### ➤ Embargo Period/ Access to select issues only

Embargo period which denotes a time lag between the most current issue/volume published and the content of the journal freely available on the public web is against the very spirit of open access movement. OA journals provide free access not only to the current issue or current volume but also to back issues. However, in case of *Journal of University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka* (ISSN: 13914081), it provides free access to back issues only; current issue is available up to abstract level only. *Tushu Zixun Xuekan* (parallel title: Bulletin of Library and Information Science, ISSN: 10232125) which is tagged by Ulrichsweb.com as Open Access journal also provides free access to back issues only. Besides, *Law Library Journal* (ISSN: 10246444) does not provide free access to all the issues, users are supposed to subscribe to access its archive.

When all these doubtful titles were removed, a total of 144 OA journals in the field of Library and Information Science were obtained. Among these, 32 journals are indexed by all databases while 29 titles are indexed only by DOAJ, 11 only by Ulrichsweb.com & 16 by Open J-gate (**Fig. 1**).

**Fig 1: Comparative Strength of LIS titles**



## Results & Discussion

### ➤ Country of Publication

144 OA LIS journals are published from 37 countries. Among these, a maximum of 45 titles are published in United States (31.25%), followed respectively by 12 in Brazil (8.33%) and 10 in Spain (6.95%). On the other

extreme, five countries publish two journals each while 20 countries including India publish single journal each.

If the countries are classified according to four economic zones of The World Bank, i.e., *High income, Upper-Middle-income, Lower-Middle-income & Low-income (Country and Lending Groups, 2011)*, 20 countries that published OA journals fall under *High-income* economic zone, 12 countries under *Upper-Middle-income* economic zone and 5 countries from *Lower-Middle-income* zone while countries from *Low-income* economic zone have yet to publish any OA journal in the field of Library and Information Science.

#### ➤ **Publisher Account**

129 publishers take active part in the publication of OA LIS journals. *Informing Science Institute*, USA publishes a maximum of 7 titles followed by *American Library Association* (USA) which publishes 5 titles while 2 titles are published each by *National Taiwan University* (Taiwan), *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* (Spain), *Australian Library and Information Association* (Australia), *Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals* (UK), and *International Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publication* (Canada). Rest of 122 publishers publishes one title each.

When it comes to the nature of publishing body, it is found that *universities* are the leading publishers of OA Journals which publish 55 titles, accounting to 38.19 per cent of the total, followed by *library associations* and *research centers & institutes* with 32 (22.22%) and 22 (15.28%) titles respectively. Commercial publishers also offer 9 (6.25%) journals while 5 (3.47%) titles are result of individual efforts. Rest of 21 (14.58%) titles is an endeavour of *societies, consortia* and others.

#### ➤ **Lingual Assessment**

When it comes to the content language(s), 72.92 per cent of journals (105) are unilingual, 19.44 per cent as bilingual (28), 4.17 titles (6) in three languages, 2.78 per cent titles (4) in four languages and a single title (0.69%) is published in a maximum of four languages. Overall, OA LIS journals are represented in 22 different languages. English is the content language preferred by majority of journals (114, 79.17%), followed respectively 23 in Spanish (15.97%) and 15 in Portuguese (10.42%). On the other hand, 2 journals are published each in *Catalan, Danish, Romanian, and Swedish* languages. One journal each is published in *Arabic, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Indonesian, Lithuanian, Polish, Norwegian Slovak, and Slovene (Table 1)*.

**Table 2: Lingual Assessment of OA LIS journals**

Rank	Language	No. of Journals	Percentage
1	English	114	79.17
2	Spanish	23	15.97
3	Portuguese	15	10.42
4	French	11	7.64
5	German	7	4.86
6	Italian	6	4.17
7	Turkish	3	2.08
7	Chinese	3	2.08

### ➤ Visibility

DOAJ not only indexes OA journals but also archives material of about 45 per cent of indexed titles. In case of OA LIS journals, 33 per cent of them i.e. 47 titles are searchable to article level in DOAJ. For rest of titles, one has to access them individually at their respective websites. Besides, **Seadle (2011)** argues that most of the open access titles listed in DOAJ currently have no effective long-term digital archiving. So far as Scopus is concerned, one of the largest indexing and abstracting services in the world; also indexes a few OA LIS journals, i.e. 15.3 per cent (22). This represents a very poor visibility of them.

### ➤ Article Processing Charges / Handling Fee

By OA we mean that the journal is freely available to the user on the public web, but the publisher may charge its authors to pay in the form of *article processing charges* or *handling charges*. Since managing a journal is a costly affair and the studies have shown that the process of peer review costs on an average 400USD per article (**Rowland, 2002**).

Of 144 journals, only 6 journals charge their authors to pay article processing charges or handling fee. Authors have to pay 1900 USD to get their article published in *Journal of Medical Internet Research* (ISSN: 14388871), 550USD to published in *International Journal of Library and Information Science* (ISSN: 21412537) and 50 USD for *South African Journal of Information Management* (ISSN: 1560683X). However, the fee charged by *Anales de Documentación* (ISSN: 15752437), *Hipertext.net* (ISSN: 16955498), and *Infodiversidad* (ISSN: 1514514X) could not be traced out.

### ➤ Status

Managing a journal is not an easy task. Like other ventures, it too requires the active participation of experts (human expertise), *material* (research contribution) and *money* (finance). 134 journals (93 %) have

sustained their existence and are regularly being published. The remaining 10 titles had ceased their publication and among these, four titles are continued by some other journal name (**Table 2**).

**Table 2**

Ceased Title	Continued by
Journal of Southern Academic and Special Librarianship	Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship
Medizin-Bibliothek-Information	GMS Medizin-Bibliothek-Information
Journal of Library Science	Journal of Library and Information Studies
Bulletin of the Medical Library Association	Journal of the Medical Library Association

### Conclusion and Discussion

The sustainability of open access journals in the field of LIS is evident from the study. Countries falling in the *low-income* economic zones have to come on open access canvas. Use of open journal systems (OJS's) can be one of the best solutions in the times of economic crisis and especially for those nations which are endemically short of adequate financial resources to cope up with the changing technologies (**Gul & Shah, 2011**). Though commercial publishers have joined hands in open access market, yet there need to be lots of efforts on their side to remove the economic barrier that has always hindered the researchers from quality research in the LIS field. Not only universities should be the pioneers in highlighting the research in LIS but research institutes and centers, societies and other elements associated with research should actively take part in the research output. The journals offering hybrid or fee based mode should try to slash down the author processing charges so that the article publication can become an affordable job. Assigning the job of article processing on volunteer basis and reduced costs can help in the elevation of OA articles which in turn can benefit the readers to a greater extent. Content availability in more languages with English as one of the languages can help to remove the language barrier between the two ends of information communication process. Indexing the journals in more sources can help to increase the content visibility of OA journals in the field of OA. Even a proper archiving policy in indexing sources can help in long term preservation of the open digital content. To achieve long term sustainability the elements associated with the scholarly publication need to work in a more coordinated manner as researched by Legace (**as cited in Gul & Shah, 2010**). Marketing the scholarly content in a more organized and coordinated manner can also help in long term sustainability of the journals. Application of Web 2.0 tools for the content promotion and inclusion in different subjective forums and boards can also help in the sustenance of the journals in the present dynamic and ever changing digital environment.



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