

# Use of Open Access Journals among the Research Scholars: A Case Study of Gauhati University

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## Abstract

*The process of delivering information is changing with the advent of World Wide Web. The cost of subscription journals is increasing at a rapid pace and it becomes impossible for any library to purchase all the document of the users need. So the open access is the only solution to solve this problem. It ensures the dissemination of information to all level of people without any price and permission barrier. This study is an attempt to find out the use of open access journals among the scholars of Gauhati University, the problems that are faced by the research scholars in accessing journals, importance of open access journals, their support for the open access movement and their satisfaction level on the availability of the open access journals over the internet. The study aims to help in establishing open access policy for the library to educate their researcher.*

**Keywords:** Open Access, Open Access Journals, Repositories

## 1. Introduction

The way of delivering information is changing with the time. With the advent of information technology, the traditional way of delivering information has been changing and as a information disseminator, the library also had a paradigm shift in the way the information technology is being applied to disseminate information to a new generation of technologically savvy users.

The mode of publication undergoing changes from print to electronic. Because of this electronic environment, more and more articles have been published over the web because of its wide audience and easy accessibility. This result an abrupt growth of information and it has become impossible to find out the relevant document for the users. To bridge

the gap between information rich and poor community we need peer reviewed, scholarly content which can ensure about the authentic information. The high pricing policy of the academic journals by the publishers has posed a major threat to the library. For a single library, it is impossible to purchase all the documents for their users. This will hamper the libraries specially those which have independent research activities. To solve this problem to some extent, some of the academicians demanded that research work should be made available through public domain. The open access initiative emerged as a revolutionary movement that promotes free access to the scholarly publication over internet. Open access literature is digital, free of charge, online and free of most copyright and licensing restriction. It exists where there is a free, immediate and unrestricted availability of digital content. Because of its accessibility it is expected to be read more than the subscribed journals and thus having higher



impact rates. Open access not only provided free access to the entire citizen, but also helps to bridge the community gap of the society by providing free access to knowledge for the unprivileged communities.

- ❖ **Open Access**-‘Open Access’ is a free access to knowledge at no charge to the user. Open access deals with free access and reuse of scholarly work in a digital environment. According to Peter suber (2012), “Open access literature is digital, online, free of charge and free of most copyright and licensing restriction”. It helps to remove the barriers that hinder us from knowledge that is high price and copyright.

Depending upon the access barriers, the open access can be of two types-

- ❖ **Gratis Open access**- It means that one has not to pay any fee for the resources, even though the resources have value.
- ❖ **Libre Open Access**- Libre open access is the access that is free from the copyright restriction.
- ❖ **Open Access Journals**- Open access journals are scholarly journals in which the scholar publishes without expectation of payment. These are available to the reader without financial or other barrier other than access to the internet itself. They are much like conventional journals, some are highly reputed and some are not. Some of these journals are subsidized and some require payment on behalf of the author. Some of the established journal like BioMED Central charges ‘Article Processing Fees (APC)’ for publishing author’s article in the journal. The subsidized ones are financed by an academic institution, government or

independent funding agency; those requiring payment are typically financed by money made available to researcher for the purpose from a public or private funding agency, as part of a research grant.

## 2. Objectives of the study

- ❖ To study the awareness of open access among the research scholars;
- ❖ To find out the purpose of using open access journals;
- ❖ To study the research scholars satisfaction level about the availability of open access journals over internet; and
- ❖ To study the willingness of the research scholars to publish their research articles on open access journals.

## 3. Scope and Limitation

The scope of the study is to find out the uses of open access journals by the research scholars. The study shows the overall use of open access journals by the various faculties of Gauhati University in a brief way. The study is limited to Gauhati University only. By going through the study one can conduct this type of similar study covering the various universities of the North East region or the use of open access among specific professionals like law professionals, medical professionals, etc.

## 4. Methodology

A survey has been conducted through questionnaire that was distributed to the research scholars personally. A structured questionnaire was designed after a comprehensive literature search to access the usages of open access journals and satisfaction

level of using this journal among the research scholar. The survey was conducted among the research scholars of three faculties- arts, science and commerce of Gauhati University.

## 5. Literature Review

For this study, various forms of literature like, journal articles, book, thesis and dissertation, seminar and conference proceedings, online resources has been consulted. Kane (1997) in his article "Access vs. ownership: do we have to make a choice?" thoroughly described the conflict between the ownership and access of information. He tried to find a way out regarding the access vs. ownership problem and proposed library as middle way to solve this conflict in his article "Success factor of open access" tried to find out the success factor in the field of medicine. The author proposes an incentive model to foster the implementation of the initiatives such as Budapest Open Access Initiatives. Ghosh and Das (2006) in their paper "Open access and institutional repositories- a developing perspective: a case study of India" discussed about the than present status of open access literature of various institution of India. The paper consist a comprehensive list of institutional repositories of India with their total item number, types of document and the software used to make them digitized and accessible. It also includes major publishers of Indian open access journals with their subject of interest. Bhat (2010) in his article "Open access repositories: a review" revealed the literature reviews that includes open access advocacy, apprehension, authors attitude, operation, deployment and copyright and prevention issues. Suber (2012) in his book "Open access" has discussed each and every aspects of open access from the definition to pricing policy, types, scopes,

future, etc. The book tries to highlight the points that how open access can be a sustainable model for disseminating information, the pricing policy for open access, how it is economical, copyright issues, policies of making open access etc. Thandavamoorthy and Manjunatha (2011) in their paper "A study on researcher attitudes towards depositing institutional repositories of university in Karnataka (India)" tried to explore researchers' attitude for deposit to open access repositories as a mode of scholarly publishing in Karnataka state. The study found that science, technology and medicine scholars are aware of and positive towards depositing in institutional repositories while the social science and humanities researcher have a lower awareness of institutional repositories.

## 6. Analysis and Findings

### 6.1 Faculty Wise Response of the Respondent

105 questionnaires were distributed among the research scholars of Gauhati University and 98 questionnaires were received, the response rate being 93.33%. Among all, the response rate of faculty of commerce is recorded highest (100%) followed by faculty of science (96%).

### 6.2 Familiarity with the term Open Access

The research scholars' familiarities with the term Open Access were evaluated with the help of question having four options. Among all the faculties, science faculty has the highest number of people who had knowledge about open access (25%).

### 6.3 Sources of Information about Open Access

Since most of the researchers are familiar with the term open access, they must have come to know

about the idea of open access from any of the available sources. From the survey it is seen that the highest number of people (45) came to know about open access through internet for the first time. While 22 each came to know about it through journals and from their colleagues/friends.

#### **6.4 Meaning of Open Access Journal**

Since the researcher are aware of open access journals they also posed some meaning that what does these journals really mean to them. The majority of respondents (45.45%), open access means free access. For 37.19% respondents open access means online/electronic format. 16.53% responded for full text. Only 1 response (0.83%) is recorded for peer review.

#### **6.5 Purpose of using Open Access Journals**

Open access journals can be used for research work, to update subject knowledge or for anyone to enhance their knowledge in various fields. Most of the researcher (44%) used open access journals for their research work. The second most purpose for using open access journals is to update their subject knowledge (35%). The researcher responded that they used open access journals less for writing their papers (18.52%) and for any other work (5.63%).

#### **6.6 Frequency of using Open Access Journals**

Since the open access journals are free of subscription cost so it can be accessed anywhere and in any time. According to the response given by the researcher it can be seen that most of the research scholars (55) used open access journals on a daily basis. 24 scholars used it 2-4 times a week and 14 research scholars responded that they are using open access journals occasionally.

#### **6.7 Place of Access to Open Access Journals**

Open access journals can be accessed from any place since it doesn't need any permission as required in the subscription journals. Most of the users (40.28%) accessed open access journals from their home. 33.81% responded that they are using open access journals from their respective department. Approximately 19% are using open access journals through mobile.

#### **6.8 Way of Accessing Article in Open Access Journals**

Article in the open access journals can be accessed from open access directories, repositories of the various institutes or using search engine like Google, Yahoo or Bing. Most of the research scholars are using search engines (67.35%) for accessing open access journals. Approximately 21% are using direct links to the journals. There are a very few researchers that use repositories in accessing open access literature. The researcher seems to have a lack of knowledge about the other sources of availing open access journals.

#### **6.9 Importance of Open Access Journals**

The importance of open access journals to the research scholars was accessed by providing statements and then asking them to rank those statements from 1 to 7 according to a 7-point Likert scale. Here, 1 means not at all important and 7 means extremely important.

According to most of the researchers (73.47%) open access journals are important because they can be accessed from anywhere. The second most important factor is that there is no subscription cost for open access journals. The researcher responded

that publication delay is the least important factor for open access journals (71.43%). Again, the second least important factor is that publication is made free for authors.

#### **6.10 Problem of Accessing Open Access Journals**

The major problem faced by the researcher in accessing open access journals is that there is less number of journals available in their subject (29.75%) especially for the research scholar of the literature subject. The researcher responded as lack of knowledge about open access journals is the second most problem faced by them (25.62%). Since most of the researcher simply used general search engine for searching open access journals, hence there is a huge amount of irrelevant information retrieved cautioned the third most problem (23.97%) faced in accessing open access journals.

#### **6.11 Level of Satisfaction about the Availability of Open Access Journals**

There are many open access journals that are available in internet, but there is a variance in the number of open access journals subject wise. 67.35% of researchers are satisfied about the availability, while 29.59% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied about the availability of journals in the internet. 2% of the researchers are dissatisfied and 1% are strongly dissatisfied about the availability of open access journals over internet.

#### **6.12 Support to Open Access Movement**

Open access movement supports free dissemination of knowledge to everyone without any access barrier i.e. price or permission. This will lead to all round development of each and every individual of the society. Most of the researcher (86.73%) supports

open access movement i.e. the idea of free availability of information in public domain. Again, 13.26% research scholars are not sure about whether the research work should be available in the public domain or not.

#### **6.13 Willingness to Publish Articles in Open Access Journals**

Study revealed that most of the researchers (65.31%) are willing to publish their article in open access journals, while 34.70% research scholar responded that they are not sure about publishing their articles in the open access journals. Among the entire faculties, commerce faculty responded the highest for their willingness to publish their articles in open access journals.

#### **6.14 Knowledge of Open Access Journals**

There is an open ended question in the questionnaire seeking name of three directory or journals that the research scholars are using. There were only 30 responses were recorded for this question. The research scholar of the science faculty had named 35 journals out of which 20 are actually OA journals. The research scholars in the faculty of arts named only 10 journals out of which 7 are OA and the research scholars of faculty of commerce named 3 journals only out of which 2 are OA journals.

From the survey it is quite clear that, though the majority of the research scholars responded that they are knowledgeable about open access but in real sense they are having lack of knowledge about open access journals. However, the research scholars showed their interest in publishing their articles in open access journals.

## 7. Conclusion

From the study it is found that the awareness of OA among the research scholar is below average. Though, most of the researcher responded that they are familiar about open access resources but from the analysis of the results it is seen that they seem to have confusion about the actual meaning of open access. Most of the research scholars are using open access journals for their research purpose but they are accessing it through the search engines. That's why they are failing to have the relevant results and ends up having so much of irrelevant information. Most of the researchers have shown their interest to publish their articles in open access journals showing their support for open access movement.

This study will might be useful for the information professional and the librarian to design some strategies to disseminate information to the professionals in a minimum of cost. The increasing cost of the journals creates problem for the libraries and it hinders the information dissemination process. Open access can be a solution for this problem. There are lot of open access resources that the scholars are unaware of. So educate themselves about these open access sources will surely helps them in their research work.

To sum up, open access initiatives has evolved a lot in past few decade and will hope to continue its growth. More and more researcher in the world are now are interested in making their article open access. Some of the reputed publishers are also showing their support to open access movement by making their articles open access after some amount of time. So, it is the responsibility of the LIS professionals as well as the scientific community to

create more awareness and help the user to enable open access journals and try to create institutional repositories and archives for their institute to disseminate information to the scholar community. This will help to fulfill the main goal of the library to provide maximum facilities to the readers and serve the user with right information at right time in a right way without wasting much of their time.

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## Further Reading

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**Note:**

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