Understanding and Perceptions of Institutional Repositories among the Academic Community in Rayalaseema Region, Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and awareness of research scholars and faculty members about Institutional Repositories at higher education institutions in Rayalaseema region, Andhra Pradesh, it is important to conduct a thorough study that encompasses various aspects. This study should aim to identify the level of awareness, attitudes, perceptions among research scholars and faculty members regarding the importance of institutional repositories, funding opportunities, and the latest developments in their respective fields. This study can be used to develop strategies that promote a culture of IR in higher education institutions in Rayalaseema region, Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives

The investigation explores perceptions, contributions, attitudes, and awareness regarding Institutional Repositories at Higher Educational Institutions in Rayalaseema region, Andhra Pradesh.

Methods

The research was facilitated by conducting a survey with a sample size of 192 respondents, which comprised 311 teaching staff, library professionals, and research scholars of HEIs of Rayalaseema region in Andhra Pradesh. This high response rate indicates that the participants were willing to engage with the research and provide their opinions and experiences. The online Google forms questionnaire was well-designed and easy to understand. The large sample size also increases the reliability and generalizability of the findings, as it provides a representative sample of the population being studied.

Results

The findings of this study reveal that there is a moderate level of awareness about IRs among the respondents, with only 53% indicating that they were aware of the existence of IRs in

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their institution. However, among those who were aware, there was a positive attitude towards IRs, with 76% agreeing that IRs are important for disseminating research output and increasing visibility.

Conclusion

In terms of willingness to contribute to an IR, the study found that only a smaller number of the respondents had deposited their research output in an IR. The reasons cited for not contributing included lack of time, lack of knowledge about the process, and concerns about copyright issues. The study also examined the perception towards IRs among the respondents, indicating that they believed that depositing their research output in an IR would increase its visibility and impact.

Keywords: Access, Attitude, Awareness, Faculty, Institutional Repositories, Library Professionals, Research Scholars, Scholarly Resources

1. Introduction

Earlier in almost all the institutions, materials like publications, lecture notes, projects, theses and previous question papers like any other materials are making bound and stored in the library and it occupies more space. With the advancement of ICT in libraries, all the materials were digitized and stored in computer server and provide access to the end users.

Institutions have proactively embraced the concept of IRs, signaling their commitment to upload and share a comprehensive array of institutional materials. These materials span lecture notes, scholarly articles, book chapters, theses, educational resources, past question papers, multimedia content like audio and video lessons, as well as records of symposia and seminars. The repository's role is to seamlessly provide access to these resources for end users.

Evolution of Institutional Repositories: Changing Scope and Enhanced Services

Institutional repositories (IRs) have undergone a gradual transformation over time, adapting their scope and nomenclature to enhance the quality of their services. A fundamental objective remains central the effective storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information to end users. Through the integration of emerging information and communication technology applications, IRs have assumed a role in preserving valuable information, bridging the gap between historical records, present contributions, and future endeavors.

In this context, institutional repositories have emerged as pivotal solutions, seamlessly adapting to these evolving demands. By harnessing innovative tools and techniques, IRs ensure the safeguarding of information legacy and the seamless transmission of knowledge across temporal boundaries. The subsequent sections delve deeper into these critical aspects, showcasing the enduring relevance and transformative potential of institutional repositories in the contemporary information landscape.

Exploring Institutional Repositories in Rayalaseema Region

The scope of this study centres on higher educational institutions within the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. Within this context, each institution is mandated to establish and maintain an Institutional Repository, facilitating the deposition and retrieval of pertinent academic and research-related information. This practice contributes to the seamless and efficient functioning of these educational establishments.

The study seeks to delve into these distinct patterns of utilization, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which various institutions harness the potential of their Institutional Repositories. Through this examination, a comprehensive understanding of the diverse impact and utility of these repositories within the Rayalaseema region's higher education landscape will be attained.

2. Literature Review

Lynch (2003) provided a definition of Information Repositories (IRs) as a service offered by institutions to effectively manage and disseminate the digital content generated by their organizations and intellectual contributors.

Nevertheless, Nicholas et al. (2012) described institutional repositories, regardless of their type, as having become familiar over the past decade. Correspondingly, Rafiq (2008) disclosed that universities in developing countries have been initiating Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) implementations since the late 1990s.

Allen (2005) brought to light that academics spanning various disciplines recognize the significance of repositories, and there exists an inclination among users to contribute their research outputs to digital repositories.

Goh et al. (2006) outlined how digital libraries play a pivotal role in the creation and organization of digital information. The author also contends that digital libraries play a pivotal role in reshaping users' approaches to retrieving informational content.

Pappalardo et al. (2007) deduced that there is global backing for open access, underscoring the importance of logically managing research materials to ensure easy accessibility. Bailey (2005) argued that reference librarians hold substantial potential in effectively contributing to the growth and support of digital repositories.

Van Der Graaf and van Eijndhoven (2008) found that certain European institutions had implemented multiple digital repositories, although the majority maintained a single repository. Moreover,

Halder and Chandra (2012) brought to light that repositories serve as reservoirs of research emanating from institutions. Similarly, Graaf (2008) detailed the diverse array of research materials found within institutional repositories, encompassing research papers, theses, working papers, and proceedings.

Despite the current developmental stage of digital repositories, particularly in developing nations, and the relatively modest awareness of the concept among users, the targeted audience demonstrates a strong interest in institutional repositories. These repositories hold substantial importance for fostering a culture of research promotion.

3. Objectives of the study

1. To ascertain the level of awareness among users regarding IR in HEI of AP.

2. To examine user intentions and frequency of interactions with IR

3. To investigate into user satisfaction levels derived from their experience with IR

4. To pinpoint challenges associated with accessing IR

5. To provide recommendations aimed at enhancing the IR experience.

4. Methodology

Using insights from the reviewed literature, a partially structured google form questionnaire was formulated for data collection purposes. The data acquisition process was facilitated by the author and co-authors through an online survey, email and WhatsApp. The target population for this study consisted of users of Institutional Repositories situated in HEI, Rayalaseema region, AP.

In order to mitigate potential errors, a representative sample of 300 individuals, comprising both Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals as well as library users, was conveniently selected from 19 educational institutions across Rayalaseema region, Andhra Pradesh. To ensure a good response rate, the author took proactive measures such as personally contacting respondents through phone calls, WhatsApp chat and sending emails. This effort resulted in a noteworthy usable response rate of 64% (192 participants).

The employment of convenience sampling was necessitated by the unavailability of a comprehensive list of IR users. The researcher aimed to encompass a comprehensive cross-section of the population, encompassing diverse demographics including gender, student and faculty status, and LIS professionals.

5. Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis was carried out utilizing SPSS software. Following the comprehensive review of the gathered data, a subset of responses from the 192 participants was chosen for in-depth analysis.

The findings presented in Table 1 indicated that male participants constituted 72% of the total, whereas female respondents accounted for 28%. Among the participants, 50% identified as students (research scholars), 38% professionals in the field of Library Science, and a smaller percentage, and 12% faculty members. In terms of educational qualifications, 41% of the respondents held a master's degree, 37% pursuing PhD (research scholars), and 21% possessed either or both PhD or NET/SLET qualification (refer to Table 1 for details).

Table1 : Demographic Profile of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	138	72%
	Female	54	28%
	Total	192	100
Status	Research Scholars	113	50%
	LIS Professional	55	38%
	Faculty	24	12%
	Total	192	100
Qualification	Master	78	40.62%
	PhD pursuing	72	37.5%
	PhD/NET/SET	42	21.87%
	Total	192	100

5.1 Assessing Users' Awareness of IR

Furthermore, the researchers explored into the initial sources through which the participants became acquainted with the presence of IR. As indicated in the outcomes presented in Table 2, the primary channels of awareness were library personnel, workshops, and seminar references.

Table.2: Source of Awareness about Institutional Repositories

Source of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Library Professionals	85	44
colleagues	14	7
Websites	9	4.7
Email	11	5.7
Flyer	9	4.7
Workshop	39	20.3
Seminar	25	13

5.2 Users' Intent and Frequency of IR Utilization

The data presented in Table 3 revealed that a significant proportion of users engaged with the IR primarily to access materials. Notably, considering that the IR primarily caters to the archiving of PhD/MPhil thesis, the number of users accessing the repository for the purpose of depositing material remained relatively limited.

5.3 Exploring Users' Purpose of IR Access

Participants were queried regarding their motivations for accessing the IR. A substantial majority (71%) of respondents indicated that their primary objective for visiting the IR was to retrieve documents from the Repository. A smaller fraction (22%) accessed the repository with a dual purpose, encompassing both deposition and retrieval. In contrast, a minor proportion (7%) of respondents exclusively visited the repository for depositing content (refer to Table 3 for comprehensive details).

Table 3: Respondents' Purpose of IR's Access

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
To Retrieving Material	136	71
To Upload & retrieving Material	42	22
To Upload Material	14	7

5.4 Variation in Frequency of IR Utilization among Users

Usage frequency of the IR exhibited diversity among users. The outcomes depicted in Table 4 illuminated that a significant majority (53%) of respondents accessed the IR on an intermittent basis, described as "sometimes." Meanwhile, 20% of respondents reported infrequent utilization, falling under the category of "rarely." A noteworthy portion (19%) of participants engaged with the IR at a notably high frequency, characterized as "very often." Similarly, a considerable subset (8%) of respondents within the study indicated a consistent pattern of accessing the IR, denoted as "always." (Please refer to Table 4 for detailed findings.)

Table 4: Frequency of Institutional Repository's Access

Frequency of IR's Access	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	102	53
Rarely	39	20
Very Often	36	19
Always	15	8

5.5 Availability of Desired Material among Respondents

Participants were queried about the availability of the material they wished to access within the IR. The outcomes presented in Table 5 underscored that a substantial majority (76%) of respondents expressed contentment with the existing content within the IR. A notable subset (24%) of respondents, (Please refer to Table 5 for a comprehensive representation of these findings.)

Table 5: Status of availability

Availability	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	146	76
No	46	24

5.6 Challenges Encountered in Accessing IR

Respondents were invited to delineate the challenges they encountered while attempting to access the IR. The outcomes, as depicted in Table 6, highlighted the most conspicuous obstacle, lack of awareness, accounting for 38% of the responses. Subsequently, both the absence of electricity and sluggish internet speeds emerged as significant hindrances, each accounting for 23% of the reported problems in accessing the IR. Conversely, a smaller proportion (16%) of respondents acknowledged that insufficient IT skills posed a challenge in accessing the IR. (For a comprehensive depiction of these findings, please refer to Table 6.)

Table 6: Challenges Encountered in Accessing IR

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of Awareness	73	38
Lack of IT knowledge	45	23
Internet Speed	44	23
Power supply	30	16

5.7 Users' Satisfaction Level with Institutional Repository

The researchers also delved into the extent of user satisfaction concerning the IR. Respondents indicated a favourable level of satisfaction with various aspects of the IR. They expressed agreement with statements such as the utility of the IR, its significance, its contribution to staying informed with the latest knowledge, the compatibility of displayed materials with their personal computers, and the IR's efficacy in facilitating timely access to knowledge. Moreover, respondents found the IR user-friendly, enabling swift information retrieval, facilitating quick file downloads, and acknowledging the need for training to effectively utilize the IR.

However, there were reservations among respondents regarding certain aspects. They did not concur with statements suggesting the IR's difficulty of use, presence of non-useful content and perception of the IR as a wasteful use of time.

5.8 Gender Impact on User Satisfaction with IR

Employing an Independent Sample t-test, the authors conducted an analysis to discern potential variations in satisfaction levels between male and female respondents. The outcomes of the analysis indicated that

both gender groups exhibited a lack of significant difference in their satisfaction levels with the IR. Correspondingly, no substantial disparity was observed between the groups concerning their perception of the importance of the IR.

5.9 Gathering Suggestions for Enhanced IR Utilization

Participants were invited to provide recommendations, if any, for optimizing the utilization of the IR. Several respondents highlighted the necessity for effective marketing strategies to fully capitalize on the potential benefits offered by the repository. Additionally, a substantial number of participants expressed appreciation for the accessibility of the IR.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a notable level of satisfaction among IR users, with a strong acknowledgment of the repository's significance. Respondents concurred that the presence of an IR holds substantial utility for research pursuits. Therefore, it can be confidently concluded that the IR plays a meaningful and undisputable role. The current study's results further underscore a significant trend where a majority of users actively accessed the digital contents of the repository. This observation resonates with the findings of a prior research endeavour (Warraich, 2008), lending additional support to our assertions.

7. Implications and Recommendations

Considering the perceptions shared by respondents, a robust marketing strategy is essential to ensure heightened visibility and utilization of the IR. The study's outcomes underscore that all user groups, including Students, Faculty, and LIS Professionals, share a common perspective regarding the significance and utility of the IR. Similarly, no notable divergence in opinion emerged between the gender groups (male and female) concerning the application of the IR. However, it is noteworthy that Faculty and LIS Professionals exhibited a higher level of satisfaction with the IR in comparison to the student group.

8. Conclusion

In essence, these findings provide a comprehensive overview of users' perceptions, behaviours, and satisfaction levels in relation to the IR, shedding light on areas of agreement and variation among user groups. In conclusion, based on the insights garnered from the respondents' feedback and supported by previous research, it is recommended to enhance the repository's content diversity, facilitate user-contributed content, and implement a comprehensive marketing approach to fully leverage the potential advantages of the IR.

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