

Awareness of Open Access Resources among the Researchers of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the use of open access resources (OARs) by researchers of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the researchers. The findings of the study shows that research articles, theses and e-books are extensively used open access resources for course and research work. Training and online tutorials can be helpful in overcoming the problems faced by researchers in using OARs.

Keywords: Open access resources, Open access, PAU, Researchers

1. Introduction

Open Access Resources (OARs) have proved to be a boon for the researchers and academicians in this era when the libraries are undergoing a financial crunch. Moreover, the prices of the resources are also increasing day by day. Oren (2008) jotted down that the system of scholarly publishing is not sustainable; consequently the libraries are not able to keep up with the annual price increments. However, the university libraries are not able to procure most of the important contents for their users which especially affect the researchers as the research is based on the investigations already done or published. Though, this is a point of consideration whether the open access resources fulfil the requirements of the researchers or the plethora of information distracts them from their target research.

2. Open access resources

In general, the open access resources are open to all and are freely available. The users can download, use and share the required information for non-commercial purposes. Open

access resources have no financial or legal barriers to access for members of our user community. The following factors must be in evidence (Parfrey, 2017):

1. The publication must be available online at no charge to readers or institutions. No subscription can be required for online access.
2. Readers must be permitted to use the material for any lawful purpose, including downloading, copying, making derivative works, distributing, printing, searching, or linking to the full texts of works, crawling for indexing, or passing as data to software.
3. No licensor/licensee relationship shall exist between the publisher or provider of the online publication and the individual user or institution.
4. The publication must not be a free trial, complimentary access with subscription, part of an open access pilot project, or an “opt-in” title.
5. The publication must not be part of a mass digitization project (e.g., Google books, Open Content Alliance, etc.).

3. Literature review

Botswana and Nsala (2015) in a study entitled ‘The Awareness of Academic Librarians towards Open Access Resources to Support Reference Services: A case of private institutions of higher learning in Gaborone, Botswana’ reported that out of 12 academic librarians, only 4 were aware of the open access sources. About 50% respondents updated their awareness on open access by reading current professional literature. Authors recommended that Botswana Library Association and Botswana Consortium can improve academic librarian’s awareness and knowledge of open access through continuous advocacy programs and training.

Kaba and Said (2015) in their study found that faculty members possess a good knowledge and a positive perception of OA resources. They frequently use OA resources for teaching, learning and research activities. Faculty members with a high level of awareness or use are found to have a highly positive perception of OA resources.

Beard (2012) conducted a survey titled ‘An Investigation of Graduate Student Knowledge and Usage of Open-Access Journals’ to elicit student interest in open-access publishing.

Okoye and Ejikeme (2011) in their study titled ‘Open Access, Institutional Repositories and Scholarly Publishing: The Role of Librarians in South Eastern Nigeria’ found that majority (88.89%) of the respondents were aware of open access journals and their benefits, only 13.33% have published articles on open access journals. Study advocated the need of more awareness programs to sensitize librarians of the advantages of open access.

4. Objectives

- To explore the preferred open access resources used by the researchers.
- To ascertain the purpose and benefits of using open access resources by users.
- To find out the problems faced by researchers in using open access resources.

5. Methodology

One hundred questionnaires were physically distributed to the researchers of various streams of the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, out of which 87 questionnaires were returned. However, only 83 questionnaires were considered relevant to carry on the study further.

6. Results and discussion

6.1. Usage of various types of Open Access Resources

Table 1

Type of Open Access Resources Used

Type of Open Access Resources	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Research Reports	16 (19.28)	33 (39.76)	20 (24.10)	12 (14.45)	2 (2.41)
Conference papers	8 (9.64)	12 (14.46)	26 (31.32)	29 (34.94)	8 (9.64)
Research Articles	44 (53.01)	23 (27.71)	18 (21.69)	0	0
E-Books	21 (25.30)	28 (33.73)	27 (32.54)	4 (4.82)	3 (3.61)
Theses	30 (36.14)	29 (34.94)	22 (26.51)	2 (2.41)	0
Audio/Video Lectures	6 (7.23)	12 (14.46)	17 (20.48)	31 (37.35)	17 (20.48)
E-Newspapers	42 (50.60)	28 (33.74)	8 (9.64)	3 (3.61)	0

Table 1 shows that majority of the researchers access research articles. About 50.60% users use e-newspapers and 36.14% of the respondents use theses. E-books and research reports are used by 25.30% and 19.28% respondents, respectively.

6.2. Frequency of usage of the Open access resources

Table 2

Usage of OAR

	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	39	46.99
Weekly	30	36.14
Rarely	14	16.87
Never	0	0

The above table reveals that 46.99% researchers make use of OARs on daily basis and 36.14% on weekly basis. Nearly 16.87% users rarely use OARs. It clearly shows that trend of using OARs is at higher side among the researchers.

6.3. Purpose of Using Open Access Resources

Table 3

Purpose of Using Open Access Resources

Reasons	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
For course work	33 (39.76)	41 (49.40)	9 (10.84)	0	0
For research work	33 (39.76)	47 (56.63)	3 (3.61)	0	0
To update my knowledge	29 (34.94)	36 (43.37)	15 (18.08)	3 (3.61)	0
Other Educational purposes	8 (9.64)	18 (21.69)	37 (44.58)	14 (16.86)	6 (7.23)

This table indicates that OARs are widely used for course work and research work (39.76%). About 34.94% use open access resources to update their knowledge and 9.64% for other educational purposes.

6.4. Researchers' knowledge source of OAR

It was important to know that how the open access resources are gaining popularity among the PAU researchers. The study clearly showed the role of mandatory one semester credit course 'Library and Information Services and Technical Writing' in making researchers aware of OARs.

Table 4

Sources of Awareness of Open Access Resources

Sources of Awareness	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Conference/Seminar/Workshop	6	7.23
Interaction with Library Staff	11	13.25
Friends/Colleagues	7	8.44
Library course (PGS-501)	35	42.17
Internet	21	25.30
Library Website	3	3.61

About 25.30% respondents came to know about OARs from the Internet and 13.25% from the library staff. Conference/Seminar/Workshop made 7.23% users aware of the OARs.

6.5 Benefits of Using Open Access Resources

Table 5

Benefits of Using Open Access Resources

Reasons	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Available Free of cost	42 (50.60)	38 (45.78)	3 (3.61)	0	0
Saves time	26 (31.32)	38 (45.78)	9 (10.84)	2 (2.41)	8 (9.64)
Ease of access	38 (45.78)	51 (61.45)	2 (2.41)	0	2 (2.41)
Able to get all information at one place	27 (32.53)	29 (34.94)	1 (1.21)	5 (6.02)	21 (25.30)

Table 5 depicts that nearly half of the researchers use open access resources because these are available free of cost. About 45.78% use OARs because of ease of access and 32.53% use these to get the whole information at one place instead of collecting the information from various sources at different places.

6.6 Inconvenience while using OAR

Table 6

Problems faced while using Open Access Resources

Problems	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Non-availability of the internet facilities	0	0	0	71 (85.54)	12 (14.46)
Lack of technical skills	0	1 (1.21)	8 (9.64)	54 (65.06)	20 (24.09)
Information overload on the internet	25 (30.11)	39 (46.99)	1 (1.21)	11 (13.25)	7 (8.44)
Difficulty in finding relevant information	31 (37.34)	27 (32.53)	0	7 (8.44)	18 (21.69)
Frequent power cuts	0	3 (3.61)	0	54 (65.07)	26 (31.32)
Open Access Resources are not always authoritative	17 (20.48)	47 (56.63)	9 (10.84)	6 (7.23)	4 (4.82)
Unable to ensure the quality of OAR	26 (31.33)	44 (53.01)	5 (6.02)	4 (4.82)	4 (4.82)
Slow downloading speed	19 (22.89)	39 (46.99)	6 (7.23)	7 (8.44)	12 (14.45)

From the above table it is clear that 37.34% respondents face difficulty in finding relevant information and 31.33% are unable to ensure the quality of these resources. More than 70% of the researchers agreed that the information obtained from these resources is not always verifiable.

Information overload on the internet, slow downloading speed are some other factors that causes inconvenience to the researchers while accessing OARs.

6.7 Knowledge of referring the documents

Lawal (2015) is of the view that ‘in using open access resources, it is important that users duly acknowledge and appropriately cite the authors and publishers of these publications’. This study also unveiled that 86.75% of the researchers were aware of citing the used information from the open access resources.

Table 7

Citing OAR

	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	72	86.75
No	3	3.62
I don't think it is required	8	9.63

7. Conclusion

No doubt, the use of open access resources is boosting up due to the easy availability and convenience on the part of the users. Keeping in view, the benefits of the open access resources for the users and shortage of the funds in the libraries to procure and subscribe the library resources, it is suggested that open access publishing should be given more importance. In addition to it, the researchers should be technically trained to get more out of OARs and to handle the vast amount of information.

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