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## **Strengthening South-South Cooperation for Advancing Open Access in India & South Asia**

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A year after the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) was released in 2002, the seeds of the Open Access movement were sown in India. However, the momentum had not gained as it should have been in the country and in the region, South Asia when compared to Europe and Latin America. In the recent past, with the initiatives of the individuals, communities of practice, institutes and the funding agencies (both private and public) there was an acceleration in the progress of Open Access. The countries, especially in South Asia viz., Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc., have now communities of practice advocating for Open Access to the public funded research. And this region now has policies and infrastructures in place for opening up access to the public funded research. For example, in India, the Department of Biotechnology and Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Council of Agricultural Research has adopted policies for Open Access and had also made available suitable infrastructure. It is now mandatory for all the doctoral degree scholars to deposit their thesis as per the directive of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India. Efforts are also being made to deliver all the openly available resources through a single platform called National Digital Library of India. However, there is no mandatory national policy formulated by any of the countries in South Asia.

While there is no problem in deposition of the whole or part of the thesis by the scholars in a publicly available repository, the deposition of journal articles along with or without data in public repositories has had some conflict. Still, researchers and the research managers of the institutes or universities are not clear about the legal issues of sharing the research outputs immediately. There is a very low filling of the repositories with full-texts in India even when there is a policy and infrastructure in place. The possible reasons for the low populating rate of articles in the repositories is that though the policies are in place, there are no rewarding/incentive mechanisms for openly sharing the research outputs and due to copyright transfer agreements. And the research, evaluation and monitoring committees in the universities or institutes solely depend upon publications in the journal impact factors.

As availability of the relevant journals with higher impact factors from the South Asian countries are limited in numbers and also have a high rejection rate. By publicizing fake metrics, large number of questionable journals are coming up and are luring the scholars to submit articles to their publications. These journals are questionable journals which

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[https://www.clacso.org.ar/conferencia2018/foros\\_actividades.php?s=2&idioma=en&foro=49](https://www.clacso.org.ar/conferencia2018/foros_actividades.php?s=2&idioma=en&foro=49)

publish without any review, but for a charge. The scholars are taking this road in order to publish in numbers and in no time. Though the availability of quality articles via repositories is less, the availability of same via open access journals is much more.

The scholarly societies in India, though trying to catch up with the technology due to the traditional character of publication in print journals, there is a huge time lag from submission to publication. Some of the societies are collaborating with the commercial for profit publishers for online publications and are not able to provide immediate free access to the published articles due to embargo.

The efforts by the University Grants Commission for building a white list of journals and the rating of the journals by another academy can be seen as quality control mechanisms in scholarly publications. But more efforts are needed for making Open Access as default by 2030. The DOAJ ambassadors in India are also working with the applications for indexing and are also raising the awareness on Quality Open Access Journals.

To put forth the alternate pathway for sharing the research outputs for public to read and review it as soon as possible and also to cut short the long time gap in the publication process while giving the priority of work published, preprint repositories are becoming popular and gaining importance in the scholarly communication process across all the disciplines which was earlier confined to physics only. The Open Access India a community of practice advocating for Open Access, Open Data and Open Education, had launched a preprint repository exclusively for agriculture and allied sciences, AgriXiv with the help of the Centre for Open Science. Now similar to SciELO Preprints and other regional preprint, the Open Access India is planning to launch IndiaRxiv for all the disciplines and for all the scholarly outputs in preprint stage in the country, India.

Recently the advocates and practitioners of Open Access in India had pounced 'Delhi Declaration on Open Access' to commemorate the BOAI which was adopted sixteen years ago. The signatories of the declaration were not only of India, but the other countries in the South. This shows the concern and solidarity for the Open Access initiatives by the Global South constituents. The communities of practice in South Asia under the initiative of Open Access India are planning for the formation of the regional Open Access forum on the similar lines of Latin America.

The South Asian region has more lessons to learn from the Open Access movement in Latin America. The success stories and the strategies from Latin America along with the successful research sharing, evaluation, monitoring and rewarding mechanisms are very crucial learning resources for the development of a regional cooperation for Open Access policy and infrastructure development in South Asia.

**Slides:** <https://www.slideshare.net/CLACSOredbiblio/strengthening-southsouth-cooperation-for-advancing-open-access-in-india-south-asia>

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