



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Academic Libraries In The Context Of Open Educational Resources

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ABSTRACT: The relation between the academic libraries and the Open Educational Resources (OERs) has been dealt with. The academic libraries can provide the various services like preservation, search and discovery, metadata description, information service, Digital or Information Literacy, integration of OERs with the library resources and the like to the institutions, teachers and the students. The term “Open Educational Resources” has been defined. The OER Movement has been discussed. Some of the major OERs like Swayam, Swayamprabha, NCERT, e-PG Pathshala, eGyankosh, NPTEL, Shodhganga, Shodhgangotri, E-Shodhsindhu, DOAB, DOAJ, NDLI have been highlighted. The advantages and the challenges of the OERs have been pointed out.

KEYWORDS: OER, Academic Libraries, Swayam, Swayamprabha, NCERT, e-PG Pathshala, eGyankosh, NPTEL, Shodhganga, Shodhgangotri, E-Shodhsindhu, DOAB, DOAJ, NDLI

INTRODUCTION

The academic libraries are bound to provide quality access to various resources to the faculties and the students. These libraries need to upgrade themselves continuously regarding the educational resources. The technological age has equipped the libraries to upgrade and strengthen up their information depository in the form of what is known as Open Educational Resources (OER) available online free of access cost. The academic libraries and the librarians can coordinate with the faculties and the students in organizing the OERs. Their capacities will alter with regard to the necessities of the faculties and the students in different campuses. The reference librarians can guide the faculties to locate the OERs related to their course contents and help to become trained in the technology related to OERs. This calls upon a need for the academic librarians to gain knowledge regarding the OERs. But not only the academic librarians, the open access resources are also required by the public and the school libraries as has been made evident by the recent

coronavirus pandemic. In the developing countries, the huge number of students has become habituated in using subscribed e-resources and demand more new information resources. But the library budget instead of increasing has been curtailed. Thus it becomes difficult for the libraries and the institutions to satisfy the increased demand of the students. The open access movement is not the only viable solution to the problem that the libraries face in the traditional scholarly communication system but it has struck a sympathetic cord in the library community. It has contributed partially to fix the hindrances which the libraries deal with due to serial crisis and budget cuts.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND OERs

Discovery of resources is central to the work of reference librarians, so it seems a natural fit for them to work with faculty to assist in locating suitable OER (Doan, 2017). Some of the basic functions of the libraries like “collection development” can be helpful in the inclusion of OERs within the library collection. The libraries have their policies and procedures for purchasing print and non-print resources. These policies can be adapted by the faculties and the faculty development centres for selecting and including the OERs instead of traditional print resources. In this way, the libraries and the librarians can develop campus partnerships and collaborations with the faculties. “...libraries can provide guides, webinars, one-to-one searching assistance (similar to a reference interview session) with faculty to promote the use and knowledge of OER across the campus. Establishing guidelines for evaluation and selection of OER would be ideal.”(Clobridge, 2019)

“While some institutions have opted to create their own version of an OER repository, focused on their curriculum, some are focused on using what others have created in an effort to embrace open scholarship and communication as well as establishing financial grants and stipends to help encourage development of an OER program. The funding for this may be a part of the library’s operating budget or the management and hosting of a repository may be a part of the library’s normal operations. Libraries have an inherent structure suitable for hosting, managing and marketing an institution’s OER program. Development of library faculty and professional staff is key for implementing this type of program which may be more easily achievable at a larger institution. A small or medium sized school may have to explore other options along with distributing the workload across several departments.” (Jensen & West, 2015; Clobridge, 2019)

“Along with education about OER, libraries can take an active role in helping faculty gain an understanding of copyright, Creative Commons licenses and other vendor licensing issues that they may encounter and equip them to make informed decisions about course content and resources.” (Jensen & West, 2015; Seibat et al., 2019)

“Libraries were among the first OER producers, digitizing and sharing digital content even before the arrival of public internet.” (Kleymeer, Kleiman and Hanss, 2010) The libraries are the hub of any academic institution even after the advent of the digital era. Thus the librarians are adept in giving instructional support and developing curriculum that are beneficial to the “Open Educational Resources” programmes. As Robertson (2010) suggests, “libraries can best offer advice and engage in meaningful relationships with Open Education in relation to: metadata and resource description; information management and resource dissemination; information literacy (finding and evaluating OERs); subject guides; and managing and clearing Intellectual Property Rights.”

With the help of web-surfing as the vehicle of scholarly communication, the libraries are instrumental in the teaching-learning process. So the academic libraries are nowadays regarded as Learning Resource Centres (LRCs). The LRCs have the obligations of developing educational repositories. In this regard, OERs play a pivotal position.

The number of OERs and their prospective users are increasing as the government and the institutions are boosting up the “Open Educational Resources” movement.

The academic libraries are understanding the merit of the statements of Belliston (2009) which states: “Librarians can help by contributing their own OERs to the commons; screening for indexing and archiving quality OERs; using OERs in their own teaching and participating in discussions leading toward responsible intellectual property policies and useful standards.”

The academic libraries can serve the institutions, teachers and the students regarding the open access resources in the arenas like:

- Preservation of created OERs
- Lending of specialized search and discovery service
- Description of metadata and the resources
- Management of information and dissemination of resources
- Digital or Information Literacy , i.e., locating and analyzing the OERs
- Serve as subject-based guides for locating resources
- Intellectual Property Rights management and promotion of open licensing
- Merging of OERs with the other library resources

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

UNESCO conceived the term “Open Educational Resources” at “Forum on Open Courseware” in 2002. It stressed upon the term in its published ‘Paris OER Declaration (UNESCO, 2012)’.

The definition of “Open Educational Resources” (OER) by UNESCO is as follows: “teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work.” The OERs can be retrieved in the World Wide Web or are licensed under an open copyright license like Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org>) to become available in open access mode. In this way, the people can utilize the 5Rs of Openness: retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute.

THE OER MOVEMENT

The OER Movement followed the movements dealing with participatory learning, innovation and open access to scholarly contents like Open Access (OA) Movement, the Open Source Software (OSS) Movement or the Open Content Movement.

The “Creative Commons Licenses” upheld the matter of “openness” possible and it is interested in education related contents. The best example of it is “Open Course Ware” from MIT. The MIT OCW launched in 2001 and the international OCW Consortium created in 2005 were the main initiators of the OER. Besides these two, many others dealing with open textbooks, instructional videos, materials preserved in repositories and the digital libraries depend on CC Licensing. The Creative Commons is also collaborating with the academic publishers. The Cape Town Open Education Declaration of 2008 stressed and insisted on the government and the publishers to release the publicly funded educational resources at free of cost through the Internet. This step was taken to strengthen the OER Movement.

Endeavours have been made to attenuate the digital divide between the global north and the global south through the OERs. It is hoped that the OERs will contribute to the development of the less developed economies. The European countries, USA, South Korea, India and other developing countries have brought out the text books of Classes 1 to 12 in digital format through the OERs. The launch of National Digital Library (NDL) project by the Government of India is a major development in the OER Movement.

SOME MAJOR OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

- 1) **SWAYAM:** A project of Government of India. It is outlined to convey the three mottos of the Education Policy –“access, equity and quality”. It endeavours to reconcile the technology gap between the tech-savvy students and the students who were outside the arena of the cyber movement. URL: <https://swayam.gov.in/>
- 2) **SWAYAMPRAKASH:** It is a package of 40 DTH Channels which telecast various educational programmes. The broadcast continues on 24X7 basis with the help of GSAT-15 satellite. The new contents are telecast for a minimum period of four hours daily. These telecasts are repeated five times a day. So, a student can choose his or her convenient time to watch these programmes. The contents are supplied by IITs, UGC, CEC, IGNOU. The channels are uplinked from BISAG-Nat least four hours which are repeated five more times in a day. Thus the students can choose their convenient time

for watching these programmes. The channels are uplinked from BISAG-N, Gandhinagar. The web-portal is maintained by the INFLIBNET Centre.

URL: <https://swayamprabha.gov.in/>

- 3) **NCERT:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training is an autonomous body constituted by the Government of India in 1961. Its main function is to provide with suggestions to the Central Government and the State Governments in the matter of development of school education. Its other areas of work are – research in school education, preparation and publication of model textbooks, arrangement of pre-service and in-service training of teachers, acting as a clearing house, i.e., mediator, for the dissemination of school education related information and resources and playing the role of nodal agency for the Universalization of Elementary Education.
URL: <https://ncert.nic.in/>
- 4) **e-PG Pathshala:** A project of Ministry of Education (MoE) within the purview of its National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT) regulated by UGC. It provides with e-resources in 70 subjects and the disciplines covered are social sciences, arts, fine arts and humanities, natural and mathematical sciences, linguistics and languages. Its resources are prepared by the subject specialists of Universities of India and the research institutes. URL: <https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in>
- 5) **eGyankosh:** A National Digital Repository of the e-resources prepared by the different Open and Distance Learning Institutions of the country. Its function is to store, index, preserve and disseminate the e-contents. The contents are protected by the copyright. The copyrights are mostly reserved by IGNOU. URL: <https://egyankosh.ac.in>
- 6) **National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL):** It is a jointly operated by the IITs and IISc. Its foundation was laid in 2003 by Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India. Its aim is to disseminate quality education to all the parts of the country. It provides with nearly 600+ courses with the facility of certification every semester in about 22 disciplines URL: <https://nptel.ac.in/>
- 7) **Shodhganga:** It is INFLIBNET'S repository of research theses. The researchers submit their theses in this repository to make them available to the entire research community of the country through the open access mode. URL: <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/>
- 8) **Shodhgangotri:** It is a repository of approved synopses and research proposals that the researchers from all over the Indian Universities submit while registering for Ph.D. The Universities should make it mandatory to submit the synopses and research proposals so that everyone can be abreast of the different research going on in various fields in the country. URL: <https://shodhgangotri.inflibnet.ac.in>
- 9) **E-Shodhsindhu:** It has been formed as a result of merging of the three consortia, namely, UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, N-LIST and INDEST_AICTE Consortium. It provides access to more than 72000+ current and archival core and peer-reviewed journals and number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases.
URL: <https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/>
- 10) **DOAB:** The Directory of Open Access Books provides open access to academic books in various subjects published with open access license. It resources include high quality contents. URL: <https://www.doabooks.org/>
- 11) **DOAJ:** The Directory of Open Access Journals indexes and provides open access to peer-reviewed and high-quality journals in diverse subjects and languages. It serves several purposes such as increasing the visibility, providing open access to the scientific research and supplying data for research. URL: <https://doaj.org/>
- 12) **NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY OF INDIA (NDLI):** A project of MHRD, now MoE, under National Mission on Education through ICT. It has been developed at IIT Kharagpur. It is a depository of virtual learning resources. It provides contents in different languages. It has interface support for the leading vernacular languages. Both the filtered and the federated modes of searches are possible through it. URL: <https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/>

ADVANTAGES OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OERs)

- 1) OER can provide open access to resources in an equitable manner irrespective of one's income level.
- 2) The high costs of textbooks sometimes deprive the needy students from getting access to the knowledge properly.
- 3) OERs provide information from various sources and thus are of advanced level than the traditional textbooks.
- 4) The opportunity of reviewing a work and making corrections allows for the enhancement of the quality of the resources.
- 5) The creators of the contents put better effort so that the visibility of their resource increases and thus the high quality of the contents is ensured.

CHALLENGES OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- 1) The use of OER may lead to different legal questions. When OERs use copyrighted materials like newspaper articles, pictures, etc., the matter of licensing must be understood properly by the developers and the users.
- 2) The platforms hosting OERs may also face legal issues as a consequence of the improper uploading of the uploaders. Further, the users must stay alert that some OERs may lead to leakage of data and thus raise privacy concerns.
- 3) Some think that as OERs remain outside the purview of the conventional editorial process, their quality is inferior. But OERs can also be peer reviewed with the help of open methods.
- 4) Sometimes there are technological barriers. Many people do not have access to ICT and cannot use them. So to access the huge number of OERs available online, digital literacy is needed and the digital technologies should be made available.

CONCLUSION

The Open Educational Resources (OERs) have contributed towards the advancement of education considerably by providing open access to high-quality contents. By providing free access to materials, customization, flexibility and greater visibility, OERs contribute much to the research activities and teaching-learning process. The Librarians can contribute much by providing digital literacy, giving instructions regarding the copyright issues and open license, encouraging accessibility and greater visibility. They need to keep themselves abreast with the latest development in the digital world. Otherwise, they will not be able to meet the challenges of providing information services in the changing ICT scenario.

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