

How India can provide immediate open access now

Balaram's editorial¹ devotes most of its space to the problem on research accessibility and usage being restricted by costs and copyright. It briefly mentions, but does not clearly explain the simple, proven solution: mandated self-archiving. There are plenty of institutional repositories (IRs) in India, and they are cheap to create, because the software is free. But they are mostly empty, because self-archiving has not been mandated.

Universities, research institutions and research funders the world over are at last beginning to require researchers to deposit on-line drafts of their peer-reviewed journal articles in their IRs. Deposit itself is neither a cost nor a copyright issue, nor is it complicated. All institutions and funders need to mandate deposit of the final refereed electronic draft, the 'postprint', immediately upon acceptance for publication.

Sixty-two per cent of journals are already 'green': they have already formally endorsed making the postprints open access (OA) immediately upon deposit. For the remaining 38% of journals that embargo access, the postprints can be deposited as closed access, and the IRs have a button that allows users worldwide to semi-automatically request a postprint and authors to semi-automatically provide a single copy to the requester with one keystroke. This means a self-archiving mandate immediately ensures 62% OA and 38% almost-OA. This is not only

enough to fulfil 100% of research usage needs immediately, but as it grows it will almost certainly force all publishers to become green.

All of India's universities, research institutions and funders need to mandate immediate deposit. Journal cost-recovery models and copyright policy are irrelevant, although it is likely that mounting pressure from mandated green OA will eventually make subscriptions unsustainable and journals will have to cut costs, abandon unnecessary services (such as the print edition and even the on-line edition), offload all access provision and archiving onto the IRs, and convert to the 'Gold' OA journal cost-recovery model. But since their only remaining costs will be those of implementing peer review – and peers review for free – the minimal costs per paper to the author's institution will be easily covered by only a small portion of the institution's windfall subscription cancellation savings. In addition, copyright will be retained by authors instead of having to be transferred to journals.

But there is no need to speculate about costs and copyright, because mandated self-archiving in India is sufficient to ensure the provision of OA (and almost-OA) immediately to all of India's research output, for the rest of the world, and, in exchange, India will have OA (and almost-OA) to the research output of the rest of the world.

Some relevant documents are listed here²⁻¹⁰.

1. Balaram, P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2008, **94**, 837–838.
2. Harnad, S. and Swan, A., *DESIDOC Bull. Inf. Technol.*, 2008, **28**; <http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/14432/>
3. American Scientist Open Access Forum; <http://amsci-forum.amsci.org/archives/American-Scientist-Open-Access-Forum.html>
4. Bibliography of Findings on the Open Access Impact Advantage; <http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>
5. BOAI Self-Archiving FAQ; <http://www.eprints.org/self-faq/>
6. EPrints Free Open Access Repository Software; <http://www.eprints.org/>
7. Optimizing OA Self-Archiving Mandates: What? Where? When? Why? How?; <http://openaccess.eprints.org/index.php/archives/136-guid.html>
8. ROAR Registry of Open Access Repositories; <http://roar.eprints.org/>
9. ROARMAP Registry of Open Access Mandates; <http://www.eprints.org/open-access/policysignup/>
10. ROMEO Registry of Publishers' Policies on Open Access Self-Archiving; <http://romeo.eprints.org/>

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NKC recommendations 2007 – Are they really going to change the scenario?

Before I quote from the NKC (National Knowledge Commission) report¹, let me mention a few lines from the archives of *Current Science*. In fact these are the few lines that stirred the Editor (who is also attached to NKC) to initiate a debate which subsequently resulted in exposing the ills plaguing our academic and administrative institutes: 'The scientific establishment is managed by a few extremely powerful people who: (a) control

most of the money, (b) are on all important job, promotion, and national committees, and (c) decide what are the important scientific areas and directions to explore. This coterie of science managers must travel ceaselessly to carry out its numerous commitments and therefore those who control science have neither the time to visit laboratories nor read scientific papers, not to speak, of course of doing experiments or themselves writing

papers. Yet it is essential for them to give the appearance of being India's leading scientists. They must thus go about creating myths to give substance to their pretensions. To do so they engage in a very egregious form of gimmickry, including distributing scientific honours and laurels amongst themselves².

In subsequent debates, no one tried to refute the above opinions, although many expressed opinions that differed on other