

BOOK REVIEW

Open Access: The Road to Freedom; edited by Narayan Chandra Ghosh, Parthasarathi Mukhopadhyay, Bhaskar Mukherjee, and Jiban K. Pal; Prova Prakashani, Kolkata, 2018, hardcover, 350 pages, ISBN 9789383658206.

The book titled “Open Access: The Road to Freedom”, edited by Narayan Chandra Ghosh, et al., is a collection of 27 essays written by open access (OA) practitioners, advocates, and researchers. The book is the outcome of the 33rd annual conference of the Society of Information Science (SIS), held at CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB) in Kolkata during 7-8 April 2017. The book includes keynote addresses and other important papers presented in the SIS Conference. A national forum for the information scientists lent its platform at a ripe moment for getting enriched with the discourses on the current development of open science, open access and open research data in the country and beyond. The majority of the essayists portray their respective OA initiatives at their institutional, national and regional levels, while other essayists analyse India’s global position in respect of open science adaptation and implementation.

The first five chapters belong to Section 1 titled “Open Access – the Context”. This Section sets the contextual tone for the OA movement in Asia. Chapter 1 titled “Open Access Infrastructure”, by M. Madhan & S.S. Kimidi, appraises the global OA infrastructure, OA infrastructure created by funding agencies, and the commercial publishers. The authors mentioned the fruitful Indian OA policies of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Department of Science & Technology (DST), and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). It can be mentioned here that an OA institutional repositories harvester for DST and DBT was launched, named ScienceCentral.in, and its collection is growing gradually (however, not as fast as the National Digital Library of India, NDLI).

Chapter 2, written by Jagdish Arora, deals with OA initiatives at the INFLIBNET Centre that include Shodhganga (e-theses repository), ShodhGangotri

(synopses of approved doctoral research proposals), institutional repository at INFLIBNET, open learning platforms, ICSSR Data Service: Indian social science repository, etc. The able leadership at INFLIBNET Centre made so many initiatives, which need to be sustained and upscaled in the near future.

Chapter 3, by P.S. Mukhopadhyay, highlights the development of a library discovery system integrating external OA resources. There is a possibility of integrating resources from three different distinct external sources, namely, licensed access resources (LAR), OA resources (OAR), and guerilla OA resources (GOAR). Here the author elucidates cases of such library discovery systems from the different countries. Chapter 4 highlights open science movement in the Global South and more particularly in the BRICS nations.

In Chapter 5, Anasua Ghosh Bag discusses the delayed OA in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences (HSS). Due to having an embargo period, some active researchers are forced to delay opening up their research papers. HSS papers traditionally receive less amount of sponsorship due to the skewed pattern of APC (article processing charge) funding support. Moreover, they don’t get into the rush for higher journal impact factor (JIF). This delay is justified, and practiced quite often by the active researchers for sharing their research publications after the embargo period is over.

The next five chapters belong to Section 2 titled “Open Access Evaluation”. The Section begins with a Chapter by Bhaskar Mukherjee titled “Evaluating impact of open access scholarly publishing through new measures: the state-of-the-art”, where the author highlights the ‘predatory impact factor’ that gets circulated by the predatory journal publishers. He also enlightens the readers with a new technique ‘Journal Quality Indicator of India’ (JQII), which he developed. This model is analysed with 32 physics, 43 chemistry and 60 biology (PCB) journals published from India. He presented interesting insights from this analysis and compared the findings with a global perspective. The author brings out a set

of five recommendations. He suggested to have a system of Accreditation of Academic Journals, and the accrediting body will be entrusted to grade all publications according to score and levels. Here he denotes Level 1: Developing Journal, Level 2: Developed Journal, and Level 3: Advanced Journal.

The next five chapters belong to Section 3 titled “Open Access Repositories”. The Section begins with a Chapter by J.K. Pal, N.C. Ghosh & S. Kar titled “Mapping the global registry of open access repositories: Current status and future prospects”, where the authors analysed the 4056 records of the Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR) and presented the findings with a set of concluding remarks. Here the sustained growth of OA repositories, particularly the OAI-PMH compliant ones, is noticed. However, we need to strengthen institutional capability in the developing nations, so that countries from the Global South can contribute more to the OA scholarship. The authors observed the existence of 113 OA repositories on ROAR from India, whereas the country has 800+ universities and about 1000+ public R&D institutions. Thus, the level of participation in OA scholarship is very low, which comes from less than 7% of academic and research institutions.

The other three sections titled “Open Access Policies”, “Open Access Publishing”, and “Open Learning” contain 12 essays. Chapter 20 titled “WikiJournal: A new form of open access publishing”, by D. Das, et al., highlights the academia-Wikipedia collaboration model that makes way to the launching of the WikiJournals in different disciplines, hosted on Wikiversity platform. Wikipedia also launched the Wikidata platform in 2012 that hosts an array of open research datasets.

The Book makes a significant contribution by highlighting the important open access initiatives emanating from the Global South. Some chapters also have the potential to become advocacy and awareness raising tools for the budding researchers and public policymakers. It is recommended that an OA copy of this book should be made available with a suitable Creative Commons license for making this important work accessible to the researchers, information professionals, and other stakeholders across the world.

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