OPEN ACCESS MOVEMENT IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Open Access is a vital trend for developing countries like Pakistan. Open Access (OA) has made its place in Information world like a blessing for scholarly community to learn, search, write and share freely and timely. In this paper an effort has been made to explore the Open Access efforts in Pakistan on existing OA sources and to make recommendations for further developments in this regard. Open Access movements have been started in Pakistan on personal or institutional levels. There is no single source in Pakistan which shed light on the availability of open access sources, which results ignorance of their presence. If Government plays its due role, then OA in Pakistan would be able to bridge digital divide.

KEYWORDS

Open Access, Pakistan, journals, repositories, Urdu language

INTRODUCTION

Internationally, Open access is not a new concept but in Pakistan it is a latest trend in the field of research and Information sharing. Both are basic requirements for the development of any nation. Reserahers conduct research to share it with their world wide community and publishers publish it in the form of scholarly journals. A decade ago when OA was not a familiar approach, the scholarly publications were dependent on publishers, literary and scientific societies. These publishers had authority to make terms and conditions of publishing research and monopolized the commercial aspects with high subscription prices of journals with limited circulation options. Publishing frequency

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of these journals also varied from monthly to annual. Due to these limitations knowledge seekers often were not able to learn about new research results and trends in time. Open Access appears as an escape by providing open access to research literature and other reading materials for every one having access to internet.

Budapest Open Access Initiative (2003) states that "By Open Access to literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited".

There are two main approaches in Open Access Movement: OA self-archiving known as "Green Open Access" and OA publishing known as "Gold Open Access". *OA Self-archiving (Green)* is an approach of OA where authors publish their articles in subscription based journals but this research is also available freely online. This type of archiving appears in many forms i.e. institutional repositories or subject based repositories (Morrison). On the other hand in *OA publishing (Gold)* approach is used for such literature that is open access from the start. **(Bjork, 2008)**

Budapest initiative by the Open Society Institute (OSI) in 2001 was the ever first effort to support OA, later than that many institutions, societies and associations appeared to support open access. Some of them are Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2003, Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and

Humanities in 2003, UN World Summit on the Information Society Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action in 2003, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Declaration on Access to Research Data From Public Funding in 2004, IFLA Statement on Open Access to Scholarly Literature and Research Documentation in 2004.

Today, Open Access has gained a valuable status in the field of higher education and scientific research worldwide. *Berlin Declaration on Open Access (2003) defined open access as a comprehensive source of human knowledge and cultural heritage that has been approved by the scientific community.*

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Internet came to Pakistan in late 90's. Later on institutions and persons felt need of cyber presence. This led to creations of websites. Rapid growth of Information Technology changed meanings of lot of terms, i.e. journals, newspapers, newsletters, book etc. All these things are considered necessary to be online and further more to be freely accessible. As the rapid sharing of information, especially the scientific research is very much important in this age of digital divide. OA can play an important role in converting Pakistan into a developed country. Unfortunately, OA has not been promoted on governmental level in Pakistan. All efforts, excluding few are by volunteers or by institutions.

In the light of above mentioned definition of OA by Budapest Open Access Initiative; the institutional repositories, newspapers, magazines and books along with scientific journals have been included in following lines.

Pakistan Research Repository

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) was set up by the Government of Pakistan to facilitate the development of indigenous universities to be world-class centers of education, research and development. Through facilitating this process, HEC started different service oriented projects. Pakistan Research Repository is one of these. (http://www.hec.gov.pk/main/abouthec.htm)

This is an ongoing project of the Higher Education Commission to promote the International visibility of research originating out of institutes of higher education in Pakistan. The aim of this service is to maintain a digital archive of all PhD theses produced indigenously to promote the intellectual output of Pakistani institutions. It provides a free, single-entry access point to view the manuscript of research executed, and distribute this information as widely as possible. **(HEC, 2008)**

This repository covers the PhD theses since 1934 to 2007 submitted to different universities of Pakistan including 63 unspecified date theses. At the moment there are 1820 high-quality full text PhD theses available. Theses on Physical Sciences are (588) in major number followed by Biological Sciences with 517 **(Complete Subject list Table 1).**

Table 1 (*Source:http://eprints.hec.gov.pk/view/subjects/subjects.html*)

Subject	Number
Physical Sciences ·	588
Biological & Medical Sciences	517
Social Sciences	370
Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences	180
Arts & Humanities	114
Engineering & Technology	44
Business Administration & Management	7
Total	**1820**

The repository also provides the information about location of theses. Biggest collection of PhD theses lies in University of Karachi (676), second big collection is in University of the Punjab (437) and third collection is of University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (161). This data also shows the most doctorate degree awarding institutions of Pakistan.

One can browse this repository by subject, year, type and institution search terms. HEC aims to hold approximately 3000 PhD theses by the end of 2008 in its repository.

➢ Newspapers

Newspapers are symbol of any nation's intellectual growth and liberty. History of newspapers is somehow doubted about its origin and starting date, but today newspapers seem essential part of any man's life. Newspapers appear as dailies and weeklies with different geographical coverage.

Besides the print version of newspapers, today online versions of newspapers are very much popular. Pakistani newspapers appear mostly in Urdu and English from different big and small cities of Pakistan. Researcher finds out that nearly all newspapers having big circulation have their own websites and provide open access to their full text versions with multiple search options. Other than their personal websites, there are many websites that provide open access to a number of newspapers as open access directories of newspapers.

• The Pakistantani Newspaper provides, open access to 14 newspapers, 8 in Urdu and 6 in English including Dawn, The News, Nations, Daily Times, Business Recorder, The Post, Jang, Nawa-i-Waqat, Express, Aaj Kal, Pakistan, Daily Jinnah and Ummat. http://www.thepakistaninewspaper.com/

- **The Paper Boy** is not a Pakistani website but provides a good number list with hyperlinks of 79 newspapers of English and Urdu language.
http://www.thepaperboy.com/country1.cfm?PaperCountry=Pakistan)

- **Online Newspapers** is another website that caught researcher's attention. This is also not a Pakistani website, but provides access to about 200 Pakistani newspapers, magazines and online news websites.
http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/

➢ **Open Access Sources in Urdu Language**

Urdu is national language of Pakistan. Unfortunately it is not being nourished like a developed language and unable to claim its true status. One of the biggest factors of less Open Access Urdu sources is ignorance to use of Information Technology. Researcher finds out a number of websites in Urdu but often these websites' sources are unable to fulfill the definition of Open Access. Few notable websites are discussed as under:

- **Iqbal Cyber Library** is most remarkable Urdu website providing Open Access. Iqbal Cyber Library inaugurated by the President of Pakistan on 21st April 2003 is the first digital library of Urdu also known as virtual library of Urdu language. Iqbal Academy's motivation to start this project was Gutenberg project for English books. Iqbal Academy states that *"Urdu can not be a rich language in cyber space until and unless a great work is done by Urdu community. We have made this start to as our share in this long journey"*.

This virtual library provides access to Iqbal studies (Iqbaliyat) including works of Iqbal and on Iqbal by different authors. This also includes Urdu literature, Poetry, Fiction (Short stories, novels), Islam and Pakistan Studies by different classical authors of Urdu language. At the moment there are more than 552 books with 250,634 downloadable pages. There are 39,000 members of this library world wide. This site also provides facility of text conversion free of cost.

http://www.iqbalcyberlibrary.net/index.html

• **Urdu Point** is another website providing a good Open Access collection of Urdu Poetry. Specialty of this website is that it covers the remarkable Urdu poetry since 1100 to 1980. Other than this poetic collection there is also Urdu literature, fiction, essay and satire. Few famous Urdu poems are also available in English.

http://www.urdupoint.com/home/

• **Urdu Street** is another website with comprehensive features and OA literature in forms of books. Specialty of this website is that one can read Urdu books on Religions, Logic, Physiology, Philosophy, Biological Sciences, Mathematics, Astrology, Environmental & Earth Sciences, History, Economics, Computer, Geometry, Physics, Chemistry and literature as well. Although it is not fully uploaded yet it is a very good OA source of Urdu text.

http://www.urdustreet.com/

Other than these significant websites there are many other websites providing Open Access to Urdu literature, but due to overlapping of data on these websites, researcher do not enlist them. Another notable feature

is the availability of open access literature on Islam, poetry and fiction is in urdu language

> ### Pakistani Scholarly Journals

Scholarly journals have a significant role in progress of Science and Scientific researches. According to a survey there are about 20-25,000 peer-reviewed journals across all disciplines, countries and languages, 10 - 15% of them are OA journals **(Wikipedia, 2008)**. Pakistan is far behind in research field than her neighbor countries. Research activities and production in form of scholarly journals is very low than it should be. HEC states that in year 2007 total 2,415 articles by Pakistani scholars were published in International research journals.

Open Access Pakistani scholarly journals through different search terms from Google and Yahoo directory can be searched. A general exploration of private and public sector University websites were also made to find out existence of any online Pakistani journal because there is no directory or list available for such OA Pakistani journals. Researcher finds out that 135 Open Access full text journals of Pakistan are available. Most of these journals belong to medical sciences.

• Pakmedinet

PakMediNet - comprehensive website aims to promote Pakistani Based Medical Research and Pakistani Medical Journals on the Internet. The journal index, lists 58 Pakistani medical full text Open Access journals. In addition, this website also provides author, keyword and drug index. This is a unique non funded voluntary effort to share latest research free of cost. There is also a weekly newsletter service available to give quick information regarding selected area of interests.

http://www.pakmedinet.com/journal.php ·

- **University Journals**

A number of journals of different universities (public and private) are available. University of the Punjab, Government College University Lahore, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, University of Karachi, and Lahore School of Economics are some of prominent universities providing open access to their journals. Subject range of these journals are Management Sciences, History, Political Science, Islam, Literature, Social Sciences, Humanities, Languages, Mathematics & Statistics, Environmental Sciences and other inter-related disciplines.

- **Urdu Journals & Magazines**

Out of 135 OA journals, it was found that 97% are in English language, while only 3% are in Urdu. These Urdu journals are mostly on Islam or on Urdu literature. Almas, Turjmuan-a-Quran, Tazkeer, Ishraq, Suayharam, Nida-e-Khilafat, Meesaq, Hikmat-e-Quran, Al-Sharia, Toluislam, Minhaj-ul-Quran, Dukhtran-e-Islam, Al-Ulama, Eeqaz and Jadeed Adab, are prominent Open Access Urdu journals. All these journals are on different aspects of Islam except Almas that is on Urdu Literature.

➤ **Islamic Websites**

Pakistan is an Islamic state and many movements are operating for spreading Islam. Fortunately, a number of them have developed their websites and uploaded their publications as open access. Some important websites are:

- **Minhaj-ul-Quran** is a movement by an Islamic scholar of Pakistan. This website provides open access to about 180 books published by Minhaj-ul-Quran. These books are in Urdu and Arabic covering Quran, commentary of Quran and other related topics of Islam. http://www.minhajbooks.com/books/index.php?lang=en

- **QuranSunnah**

This website provides open access to 124 books under 63 categories. This website also provides the video lectures delivered by different scholars.

http://www.quransunnah.com/modules.php?name=Books

- **Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan** is an Islamic political party of Pakistan. This organization also publishes literature for the promotion of Islam in the form of books, magazines, audio & video cassettes. All this literature is open access to any user across the globe.

http://jamaaturdu.org/index/default.php

- **Darse Quran-o-Hadees** provides open access to translations and commentaries of Quran and Hadees. Specialty of this website is that it provides access to the publications and lectures in English, Urdu, Bengali, Spanish, Chinese, French and Arabic languages.

http://www.darsequran.com/homeenglish.php

Other than these significant Islamic open access sources, there are some other very good websites freely available on internet. Few names are: Ghamadi.org, arrahman-arraheem.com, understanding-islam.com, dar-ut-tazkeer, al-mawrid, and many more.

➢ **Newsletters**

Newsletter is a source of sharing news and views with persons on a same topic or area of interest. In this age of IT newsletters are sources of immediate news circulation without any deep scholarly efforts. Most newsletters are published in both, print and electronic versions. While some come in electronic version only. During exploring cyber world of Pakistan, it was noticed that newsletters (print, electronic or both) are a common feature of many institutions (public or private). In general, nearly all Universities and institutions of Pakistan provide Open Access Newsletters on their websites.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research identifies that some Pakistani literature like newspapers, medical journals, Urdu poetry, Islam is freely online available.

It is notable that most of educational and research institutions and Universities publish reading materials in the form of books, journals, magazines and newsletters. It is apparent that funding is not an issue for not providing Open Access to their publications; rather it seems they still do not consider the need of cyber space. There is a need of time to create awareness about the development of Open Access and other sources as well as the identification and consolidation of existing ones. Some recommendations are made as under:

➢ There should be initiative by Governmental and by professional associations to develop a directory of Open Access sources of Pakistan, besides initiatives by universities.

➢ A National Open Access Repository should be developed.

➢ A National Knowledge Commission should be developed by Government of Pakistan that may officially control National

Open Access Repository and encourage Open Access movement in Pakistan.

Thus, Open Access movement in Pakistan on personal and institutional basis lack national level support and Governmental initiatives as in many developed countries of the world. However, if Government takes some interest and seriously Open Access in Pakistan it can help in bridging digital divide to a larger extent.

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