

Open Access: An India Based Model One Nation One Subscription

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Abstract

The paper examines the potential impact of the "One Nation, One Subscription" (ONOS) initiative on the landscape of scholarly content access in India. The ONOS initiative is posited to revolutionize the library consortia journal subscription model in India by providing a centralized subscription that simplifies access to a vast array of electronic resources at a reasonable cost and under more favorable licensing terms. The paper also addresses the uncertain sustainability of libraries under this new model, emphasizing the need for adaptability in response to evolving member requirements in the digital age.

Keywords: centralized subscription, journal subscription model, library consortia, one nation one subscription, scholarly content access, sustainability of libraries

Introduction

Access to electronic resources is deemed more significant than mere physical ownership, particularly when such access is continuous. The primary inquiry is: what motivates India to invest significantly in a subscription-based model at a time when the global research landscape is progressively shifting towards Open-Access (OA) publishing? In the subscription model, journals receive manuscripts from researchers detailing their studies, which are then subjected to a peer review process for evaluation and acceptance or rejection. Upon acceptance, the journal publishes the paper and generates revenue by charging individuals and institutions for access. Open-Access refers to research papers that are made available for free. There are various forms of OA, with gold OA being a prevalent type, where journals generate income by imposing an article processing charge (APC) on authors for publishing their work. The APC for a single article can reach several thousand dollars; for instance,

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Nature Communications charges \$6,790 per article(Hindu, n.d.).

The proposed start date is April 2023. There exist numerous examples of such policies being followed mostly at institute, regional level or publisher level to enable researchers and policy makers to scale hefty pay walls erected by many publishers world over. However, if successful, India will become the largest country to give free access to otherwise pay walled articles to anyone present within its geographic bounds. Many countries will then be expected to follow the Indian policy (Sekhon, 2022).

The Office of Scientific Adviser to the Indian government, in its fifth draft on Science Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) 2020 projected the One Nation One Subscription proposal to enact as a national level program to enhance the research visibility of Indian intellectual output while strengthening the capacity accessibility of the published content (Chari & Nagaiah, 2023)

Concept Development

Numerous initiatives in various countries seek to enhance access to scholarly content while minimizing the costs associated with journal subscriptions. In the United States, several programs are dedicated to advancing open access to academic materials. Notably, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has implemented a Public Access Policy mandating that all research funded by the NIH be made publicly accessible. Furthermore, numerous universities and academic consortia across the US have created open access repositories to facilitate free access to research outputs. The US government has also announced that by the end of 2025, the general public will have access to all research funded by taxpayer dollars. Additional efforts in the US include initiatives from institutions such as the University of California and the American Mathematical Society.

In the European Union, the Plan S initiative is designed to promote open access to scholarly content by stipulating that all research funded by the EU must be accessible through open access repositories. This initiative has garnered support from various research funders and universities throughout Europe, potentially leading to a significant increase in access to scholarly materials. Similarly, in China, access to a broad array of scholarly journals and databases is provided to over 1,500 universities and research institutions through the National Science and Technology Library (NSTL) consortium. The NSTL consortium negotiates

advantageous subscription rates with publishers, thereby ensuring access to a diverse range of content across multiple academic disciplines (Chari & Nagaiah, 2023).

One Nation One Subscription

Access to electronic resources is deemed more significant than mere physical ownership, particularly when such access is continuous. The One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) initiative can leverage nationwide access to a greater array of electronic resources at a reasonable cost and under more favorable licensing terms. Proposed by the Government of India (GoI), ONOS seeks to facilitate nationwide access to both national and international scientific and academic materials. The initiative plans to establish national licenses with leading publishers and database providers globally, thereby promoting seamless access to high-quality academic information. This, in turn, is anticipated to foster scientific research and innovation throughout the country. The initiative is expected to benefit a wide range of research and educational institutions, including universities, colleges, and research organizations, as well as the general public through public libraries.

One Nation One Subscription features:

Some of the key features of the ONOS mention here:

- **Extensive Access:** ONOS will provide access to nearly 13,000 e-journals from 30 major international publishers, ensuring a wide range of academic resources for users.
- **Target Institutions:** The scheme will benefit over 6,300 higher education institutions and central government research and development institutions, covering both state run entities.
- **Digital Platform:** The initiative will operate through a fully digital and user-friendly process, making it easier for institutions to access the resources.
- **Central Coordination:** The subscription will be coordinated by the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), an autonomous body under the University Grants Commission (UGC), which will handle payments to publishers on behalf of the institutions.
- **Budget Allocation:** A Total budget of ₹6,000 crore has been allocated for the year 2025, 2026, and 2027, underscoring the

government's commitment to enhancing educational resources.

- Awareness Campaigns: The government plans to conduct information campaigns to promote awareness and usage of the ONOS scheme among students, faculty, and researchers.
- Unified Access Model: This scheme aims to replace fragmented subscription models with national subscription model, allowing institutions that previously could not afford comprehensive access to quality journals to benefit from equitable resources.
- Launch Date: The ONOS scheme is set to launch on January 1, 2025, making a significant step in improving academic access in India.
- Phases: Phase-1 All Higher Educational Institutions under the Management of the Central or State Government and Research & Development Institutions of the Central Government. Phase 2 Remaining HEIs and Phase 3 Entire Country.

Necessity

A survey involving ten government-funded library consortia, conducted by the Ministry of Education, revealed that eight of these consortia subscribed to a total of 92 distinct electronic resources, which exhibited varying levels of overlap, with an estimated annual expenditure of ₹ 350 crore. The MCIT Library Consortium had complete overlap, with all resources (100 percent) being common with other consortia. Among the resources subscribed under the NLIST Project, ten out of eleven (90.91 percent) were shared with other consortia. For the DRDO e-journal Consortium, nine out of eleven resources (81.82 percent) were also common with other consortia. Conversely, DeLCoN had the lowest level of commonality, with only 33.33 percent of its resources shared with other consortia (Mujoo Munshi & Arora, 2021).

Library Consortia in India

Library consortia facilitate collaboration, resource sharing, and collective decision-making among member libraries. These consortia operate on different models, each tailored to address specific needs, goals, and resources (Kumar, 2014). Some of consortia available in India are: INDEST - Indian National Digital Library in Science and Technology. CSIR Consortium, UGC-INFONET E-Journal Consortium, N-LIST

(National library and information services infrastructure for scholarly content), DELCON CONSORTIUM: DBT e-library consortium, FORSA Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics. IIMs Consortium CeRA CONSORTIUM: CeRA consortium for e resources in agriculture, ERMED CONSORTIUM: An electronic resource in medicine consortium, HELINET - Health Science Library and Information Network.

Major Objectives

The initiative aims to facilitate nationwide access to the scholarly content of scientific and academic research journals through a centrally negotiated payment framework. Research funded by the government will be made available to the citizens of India at no cost. The objective is to reduce the overall journal subscription expenses by means of centralized negotiation for bulk purchases. The goal is to ensure that all research studies are accessible to the Indian populace at a fixed, centrally determined rate.

Advantages

The ONOS policy is designed to minimize the redundancy of journal subscriptions among academic institutions while enhancing access to scholarly resources.

Some anticipated advantages of the ONOS policy include:

- Enhanced access to scholarly resources: By centralizing journal subscriptions within a national consortium, the ONOS policy seeks to improve access to scholarly materials, especially for institutions lacking the financial means to subscribe to individual journals or databases. This initiative could stimulate research and innovation in India by ensuring that scholars can access the latest global research findings.
- Financial savings: The ONOS policy has the potential to lower expenses for academic institutions by consolidating resources and negotiating advantageous subscription rates with publishers. This could ease the financial strain on institutions, particularly those with limited budgets, allowing them to allocate resources to other academic pursuits.
- Minimization of redundancy: By curtailing the overlap of journal subscriptions among academic institutions, the ONOS policy aims to eliminate unnecessary expenditures and ensure that resources are utilized more efficiently. This could enhance operational efficiency within the academic

sector and direct limited resources toward the most significant research endeavors.

- Promotion of collaboration: The ONOS policy may also encourage increased collaboration among academic institutions in India by establishing a unified platform for accessing scholarly content. This could lead to the development of new research partnerships and facilitate the exchange of research findings across institutions.

Libraries may provide their patrons with access to a vast array of scholarly literature that they may not have previously encountered.

Conclusion

The paper examines the potential impact of the "One Nation One Subscription" (ONOS) initiative on the landscape of scholarly content access in India. With a lack of a global ONOS policy, various initiatives worldwide aim to enhance access to scholarly materials while minimizing subscription costs. The ONOS initiative is posited to revolutionize the library consortia journal subscription model in India by providing a centralized subscription that simplifies access to a vast array of journals, thereby promoting efficiency and cost-effectiveness. However, the initiative's success hinges on factors such as funding availability, negotiation capabilities with publishers, and the inclusion of diverse academic needs. The paper also addresses the uncertain sustainability of library consortia under this new model, emphasizing the need for adaptability in response to evolving member requirements in the digital age. Furthermore, it suggests that a unified ONOS policy could mitigate duplicate subscriptions, optimizing public fund utilization, while also highlighting potential drawbacks, including diminished negotiation power for libraries. The research underscores the criticality of understanding the implications of the ONOS policy as it is developed and implemented, forecasting its dual potential to yield both positive and negative outcomes for academic libraries in India.

Further Understanding

The subscription module, financial aspects, subscription period, institute which is going to handle the ONOS process, Patents and Copy right issues need to be understood.

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