

# UTILIZATION OF OPEN ACCESS RESOURCES AMONG THE ACADEMIC STAFF AT SOUTH EASTERN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA: A CASE STUDY

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## Abstract

This article aims to provide an overview of Open Access (OA) resources and its utilization by the academic staff at South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL) and the level of growth of OA resources. The concept of OA has been greatly developed globally, and these benefits have prompted researchers to change their academic communication practices. The data was collected using questionnaires. The population of this study was 210 staff members and 136 staff members were selected as the research sample data for analysis using stratified random sampling technique. Used SPSS version (23) to analyze the data to examine the tools used to get awareness on OA Resources by research scholars. The majority of the respondents have used OA resources for academic-related activities and found utilization of OA are to be very encouraging. The studies found the OA resources that are accessed online have been well utilized. The use of academic social networking sites, OA journals, e-books, online lecture videos, etc. is very encouraging. Similarly, universities and research institutions can formulate OA policies, establish institutional knowledge bases, and encourage the publication of articles in OA journals and archive them in digital knowledge bases for future development and research. In addition, this will help librarians to make strategic decisions for the development of open science. This study recommends conducting exploratory research to identify university communities.

**Keywords:** *Academic staff, Open Access (OA), South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL)*

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## **Introduction**

The concept of Open Access (OA) in academic publications has become a common expression in academic discourse due to its practicality. OA is a relatively new method of providing information through electronic journals and other resources. Once academic literature enters the OA field, it can be freely available for the public to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the full text of the article on the Internet. Readers can freely use OA projects for any legal purpose without financial, legal or technical obstacles. Before the advent of OA, printed journals were the norm in libraries, but many libraries in Sri Lanka burdened with high subscription rates.

Academic publishing is changing rapidly, and it is characterized by the deployment of a large number of environments, forms, models, practices, and sports to bring a series of information resources to direct users for free. One of the movements is OA and Giarlo (2013), explained that OA is used to describe a model of academic communication in which users can freely view, download, copy and print academic articles, books, conference records etc. This means that users can freely access academic materials because the publication is undertaken by another party, usually the author, the author's institution, or the funding agency. According to Aliyu & Mohammed (2014) and Jain (2012) the development of the OA model occurred due to the increased the cost of publishing and the prices of published academic journals by commercial publishers. OA resources are the resources that anyone can obtain and use without restriction at any time. Therefore, it was intended to assess the influence level of OA resources on the academic staff of the selected institutions in the SEUSL.

## **Problem statement**

Emergence of ICT has affected all walks of life. Every industry relies on the Internet to share information and make it visible through internal and external communication. Educational institutions mainly invest in knowledge resources, which are kept in libraries based on budget availability. Each institution does not get the same amount of budget. Through these budgets, the library cannot obtain all the resources needed by stakeholders and fully satisfy them. In order to eliminate such barriers and discrimination, publishers and Knowledge creation institutions have introduced an OA policy to make academic literature freely available through the Internet. Although academic literature is accessible freely online, many research reports say that the utilization rate of these resources has not met expectations. Therefore, it aims to assess the level of utilization of OA resources for research purposes.

## **Objectives**

The Objective of the research is as follows:

- To discover the purpose of using open access resources in SEUSL academia
- To identify the problems associated with the use of open access resources

- To examine the tools used to get awareness on open access resources by research scholars

## **Literature Review**

Suber (2004), defined as "open access literature is digital, online, free and unaffected by most copyright and licensing restrictions. It is the Internet and the consent of the author or copyright owner that makes it possible". A study by Obuh et al (2012). Noted the high level of use of OA resources by library and information science (LIS) lecturers in Southern Nigeria. Study conducted by Nelson (2014), on the knowledge and use of electronic journals by faculty members showed that faculty members are willing to use the electronic resources provided, they understand these resources and teach how to use them. Mashroofa and Seneviratne (2016), conducted research on Sri Lanka's OA program and institutional repository, and they analyzed the status quo of OA in Sri Lanka. Many universities have established electronic knowledge bases to provide OA to their institutional research papers. Mashroofa, (2015), conducted research on OA academic publishing in Sri Lanka, and authorized to demonstrate paradigm shifts in academic exchange practices.

## **Methodology**

The research was conducted among academic staff of the SEUSL. The researchers used Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table to determine the sample size. South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, composes of its academic programs under six faculties thorough, the data was collected from a representative sample of 136 faculty members in all departments using a stratified random sampling technique, and the study population was 210 members of the University. Questions were designed for academic staff to understand their experience in OA and Internet use for study and research work. The questionnaire survey method was staff analyzed the collected data and present it in tabular form.

## **Results and Discussion**

This contains the key findings, results, and discussion based on the objectives and research questions. Table 1 shows the demography of respondents and 70.59% of respondents were male and 29.41% were female. The reason for this discrepancy is not known, though it could be assumed either that fewer numbers of female faculty members are involved in OA education or that they were not interested in participating in this survey. Hence, one should infer that the results of this study pertain primarily to male respondents.

The researcher obtained various findings which amounted to the objectives being analyzed. The findings have provided the researchers, academic staff, and administration of SEUSL with valuable information about the OA resources opportunities and challenges.

Table 1: Demography of respondents

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No of respondent</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	96	70.59
Female	40	29.41
Total	136	100

Table 2 shows academic rank of 136 respondents.

Table 2 :Academic Rank of participants

<b>Academic Rank</b>	<b>No of respondent</b>	<b>%</b>
Bachelor	37	27.2
Masters	54	39.73
Doctorate	32	23.52
Professor	13	9.55
Total	136	100

The study is also attempted to identify the tools used by the academic staff to access information available in the OA resources and it is given in the Table 3. It is found that the majority of the Academic staff were highlighted barriers as “Google search engine” (SD 30.906), occupied first rank, followed by “Email” (SD 28.261) ranked second, “Social Media” (SD 27.253) placed in the third ranked also found in the low level in the overall ranking of the OA resources.

Table 3: Most helpful Sources to know about Open Access Scholarly Publication

Description	Not at all helpful %	Slightly helpful %	Somewhat helpful %	Very helpful %	Extremely helpful %	Mean	Std. Deviation (SD)
Email	-	0.73	16.17	38.97	44.13	27.2	28.261
E-Discussion	-	11.03	27.21	41.18	20.58	27.2	21.3
Library Professional	-	3.67	11.76	40.44	44.13	27.2	27.114
Journals / Resource Websites	-	3.68	27.95	30.12	38.25	27.2	23.21
Conference/Seminar/Work shop	-	13.24	14.7	46.32	25.74	27.2	23.552
Library Website	-	1.47	19.12	33.08	46.33	27.2	27.251

Colleagues	0.74	3.68	25.74	47.79	22.05	27.2	25.869
Google search engine	-	-	14.7	32.36	52.94	27.2	30.906
Library Staff	-	2.2	19.86	33.08	44.86	27.2	26.386
Posters – printed notices	1.47	8.82	25.73	44.13	19.85	27.2	22.376
Professional forum	3.67	14.7	23.53	27.22	30.88	27.2	14.856
Social Media	-	3.68	16.18	32.35	47.79	27.2	27.253

The Barrier level of OA resources were ascertained among the Academic staff mean value same (27.20) and same is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Barrier level of open access resources

Description	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	No Opinion %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean	Std. Deviation
Incomplete or poor abstracting of articles	12.5	27.2	33.08	18.38	8.82	27.2	13.719
Non-availability of full-text articles	5.88	11.02	9.55	40.44	33.08	27.2	21.265
Non-availability of relevant articles	6.61	8.08	20.58	29.41	35.29	27.2	17.254
Not easy to download articles	9.55	16.17	23.52	30.14	20.58	27.2	10.521
Slow internet connection / slow response by the content provider	0	5.88	27.2	32.35	34.55	27.2	21.673
Too many results have shown	6.61	13.23	21.32	27.94	30.88	27.2	13.737
Unfamiliar search options	5.88	15.44	19.85	30.88	27.94	27.2	13.627
Unfamiliar subject terms used in describing the	0	13.97	26.47	28.67	30.88	27.2	17.627
Difficult to locate the URL of the journals/Resources	5.88	10.29	23.52	27.2	33.08	27.2	15.643
The resources are not constantly available at the same URLs address	5.14	11.76	20.58	27.94	34.55	27.2	16.146
The information may not be available later	7.35	13.97	30.14	25	23.52	27.2	12.478

The OA journals are not always authoritative	8.82	12.5	23.52	25	30.14	27.2	12.194
Server down is a major problem in open access Resources	0	7.35	25	32.35	35.29	27.2	21.194
Lack of uniform standard in OA journal publishing industries	2.94	14.7	23.52	27.2	31.61	27.2	15.482
Lack of awareness of OA resources	0	6.61	18.382	33.08	41.91	27.2	23.879

It is found from the Tables 4 that majority of the Academic staff were highlighted barriers as “Lack of awareness of OA resources” (SD 23.879), occupied first rank, followed by “Slow internet connection / slow response by the content provider” (SD 21.673) ranked second, “Non-availability of full-text articles” (SD 21.265) placed in the third ranked also found in the low level in the overall ranking of the OA resources.

## Conclusion

Research shows that most scholars rely on OA in obtaining the relevant information they need. The output of the research showed that most of the OA resources were used by the male staff as those who follow the master degree. They mainly use the Internet and e-mail for various purposes. Interestingly, though scholars were aware of the availability of OA, many used it as a supplementary way of using information. However, the preference for electronic formats is related to the resource type and time availability of the IT infrastructure. OA electronic journals are very useful for academics. Libraries should identify OA journals and disseminate them among their user groups through different channels, so that users can gain the advantage of academic exchanges. OA is still the subject of a lot of discussion between academicians and academic publishers. OA is a global effort to provide free online access to scientific and academic research literature.

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