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SOCIAL SCIENCE SCHOLARS PERCEPTION TOWARDS OPEN ACCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to explore the attitudes and knowledge about open access publishing and institutional repositories of social science scholars and their participation towards university digital repository. Questionnaire based survey method was employed and the self-administered questionnaires were distributed among all permanent academic staff members in the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka on May, 2016 and out of 192, 99 duly completed questionnaires were received making a 51.6% response rate. The results revealed that only 48% of the respondents had knowledge about open access publishing and nearly 22 % of them never heard about the term “open access”. These results gave an insight that the majority of the respondents are not familiar with the term of open access. The results further revealed that most of the respondents learnt about the institutional repositories as a result of a web search engine, information provided at the faculty or meetings held in the university and by working in subject based archives. Only 51% of the respondents were aware of the university digital repository and 36% mentioned that they were not aware of it. Of the respondents, 40% mentioned the university digital repository is either very important or important and 38% agreed that the establishment of institutional repository for the University of Peradeniya will enhance

the global reputation of the university. The interesting finding is that 57% of the respondents reported their willingness to contribute to the university digital repository in future while 14% of them were not willing to contribute in future.

Keywords

Social Science Scholars, Open Access, Institutional Repositories, Faculty Awareness, Publishing, Digital Repository, Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In this digital era, Institutional repository (IR) is becoming an integral part of any academic institution especially research institutions such as universities. *“An institutional repository exhibits scholarly and research output of the academics of the particular institution to the wider audience, and notably helps in institutional advancement and extending services.* It has the benefit of disseminating research findings with scholars outside the institution. It also provides an opportunity to raise profiles and create recognition of an institution, faculty and students to the global community”. (Nagra, 2012) According to Lynch an IR is *“a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members”* It is an electronic system that captures, preserves, and provides access to the digital work products of a community (Lynch, 2003). In a university setting, an IR may serve as a place to archive faculty research material such as journal articles, book chapters, conference works and unpublished scholarly works, lecture notes, students theses and dissertations, e-journals, departmental data sets and so on. Whatever the particular focus of the university IR, for it to be successful it must be filled with scholarly work of persistent value that is searched and cited.

Based on the number of institutional repositories established over the past few years, the IR service materializes to be quite fascinating and alluring to institutions. *“IRs provide an institution with a mechanism to exhibit its scholarly output, centralize and introduce efficiencies to the maintenance of digital documents of value, and respond proactively to the escalating crisis in scholarly communication”* (Gibbons, 2006). However, the possible value of IRs is not yet fully acknowledged by the faculty staff; several studies indicate that only a small proportion of faculty deposit articles or data into IRs. This low contribution from the faculty towards the IR is

a common circumstance across IRs, and it is a major issue for the ongoing success of the repositories. (Kim, 2011) As a tool, Institutional repositories help to disseminate the scholarly research output of an institution among the academic world. Faculty contribution is considered one of the success factors for an IR and therefore it is required to implement proper strategies to make awareness about IR among faculty members. To achieve success the IR must serve to fulfill faculty members' requirements and ensure that services of the IR meet faculty needs as well. Librarian as a mediator of faculty and IR has to collaborate with faculty and identify the requirements of the faculty when creating a sustainable IR service.

Examining the factors that are to be considered when maintaining an IR, it is essential to understand the requirements to provide an IR that will preserve and disseminate research materials created with a research intensive university. Therefore this study was conducted to explore the faculty attitudes and knowledge about OA publishing and IRs and their participation towards university digital repository. On the other hand there are number of studies conducted by librarians and information science professionals in foreign countries on IR and open access publishing, but very few studies could be found in Sri Lanka. Even though the global recognition of institutional repositories as a channel of open access scholarly communication IRs are still struggling with low participation from academic scholars in developing countries like Sri Lanka. Therefore it is a prime necessity to conduct a study on IRs as it collect, preserve and disseminate the intellectual output of the institutions and this study examines the perceptions towards the open Access (OA) and IRs by the social science scholars in the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

1.2 Significance and Limitation of the Study

Low faculty contribution towards the IR is one of the main problems faced by academic institutions today. Therefore, this study is necessary to examine the attitudes and knowledge of contributors for depositing research materials and its possible implications on their professional and publishing practices. This study will help IR managers and administrators to understand contributors' perceptions, problems, and opinions toward deposition and usage of IR. It will provide necessary information that need for decision making to meet their future requirements and changes in the institutional policies regarding IR.

The major limitation of the study is that its scope is confined to the Social science faculty at the University of Peradeniya only, but results of the study are applicable to the IRs of academic institutions reporting low participation and contributions.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study was intended to ascertain the perceptions towards digital repositories of social science scholars in Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- To determine the faculty's knowledge and attitudes regarding open access publishing
- To examine faculty's knowledge towards institutional repositories
- To explore faculty awareness and knowledge about the University digital repository
- To explore their willingness to participate to the University digital repository

3. Review of Related Literature

The development of institutional repositories in university libraries, especially in developed countries where advance information and communication technologies are used for retrieval and dissemination of information has been a global phenomenon. There have been several previous studies that looked at faculty attitudes and perceptions towards open access and IRs and their willingness to contribute to digital repositories. It is noted that most of the studies found similar results regardless of whether the survey was conducted to the faculty in a large research institution or a small institution or what disciplines the faculty were affiliated in. But universities in developing countries like Sri Lanka, it is in the developing phase and there are very few studies which have been conducted on this regard.

In 2002 Lawal (2002) conducted a survey among academic scholars that randomly chosen from nine scientific disciplines from colleges and universities in the United States and Canada to investigate faculty participation in depositing materials into digital repositories. The study found that Physics and astronomers reported the highest contribution to the digital repositories, followed by mathematicians and computer scientists, engineers, cognitive scientists and psychologists, and biological scientists. The study further found that those who reported contribution mentioned the dissemination of research results, high research visibility, and the author's exposure as motivating factors for depositing their research work while reasons for non-participation included publisher policies, non-relevance to their subject field, and technological constraints.

The survey conducted by Pellizari (2005) on social science faculty's knowledge towards Open Access (OA) established that almost all the respondents were known and used OA materials while more than half said that they already had OA materials freely available on the web. Pelizzari reported that positive acceptance of OA principles among academic staff of the social science discipline. According to the findings of the study most preferable uses for author's work were free version of the materials, followed by the possibility to print, save and copy and majority of the respondents refused the possibility by other people to modify the deposited materials. Davis and Connolly (2007) found that Cornell University IR is not used by merely its faculty members as they have not aware and less motivation to use the repository instead many of them use alternatives to IRs, such as their personal Web pages and subject based repositories. In European survey Van Westrienen and Lynch (2005) found that low contribution of faculty towards IRs due to confusion and uncertainty about intellectual property issues, as well as the perception of open access content being of low quality. Accordingly the findings of survey carried out by the Office of Scholarly Communication at University of California and the California Digital Library eScholarship program, the majority (82 %)of respondents were not aware or aware of but don't know much about IRs and 79% of respondents were not aware or aware of but don't know much about Digital Repositories (DRS), while 8% had submitted to DRS. Sixty-four percent were unaware of, or knew little about OA journals (University of California, 2007) which was a pathetic situation that should not exist in any academic institution.

Kim (2011) conducted a study on academic scholars' perceptions towards IRs among Carnegie doctorate granting universities in the US. The findings established that 60 % were unaware of their university IRs and the study investigated factors that encourage faculty contribution as well as the factors that hinder faculty contributions to IRs. The study found copyright issue, more time and effort spent for self archiving as major barriers that might account for the less contribution to the university IR. The study strongly recommended that the importance of strengthening digital preservation and copyright management in IRs to increase faculty participation.

In the same vein, Halder and Chandra (2012) also examined user attitudes towards IRs in Jadavpour University in India. The study showed that there were low levels of awareness of IR among staff of the university. The low level of awareness could have been as a result of poor publicity in creating the awareness of IR among academic staff within the university.

Dhanavandan and Tamizhchelvan (2013) conducted a critical study on attitudes and awareness of IRs and OA publishing in Annamalai University. They found that the majority of the faculty members were aware of IR and they accepted that depositing their research works will enable them to participate in scholarly communication process, it will enable other researchers to have access to their work and this will increase the citation impact of their work. Singeh, Abrizah, and Karim (2013) examined the readiness of academic staff in five research intensive universities in Malaysia to self archive in Open Access institutional repositories. The main objectives of the study were to explore the awareness of academics towards self archiving, investigate their perception towards self archiving practices and find out the impending and hindering factors for faculty contribution to IRs. According to their study, most of the respondents were willing to contribute content for the IRs as they confirmed the principle of Open Access and the major barrier for content contribution was fear of plagiarism followed by inefficiency in the archiving process which was identified as time consuming task. Similarly, Ogbomo and Muokebe (2015) conducted a study on IRs as emerging initiatives in Nigeria University libraries. The study found that lecturers in Universities in South-South Nigeria are aware of IRs and they were learnt from colleges, workshops, internet and publishers. The study concluded that the lecturers were willing to deposit their research outputs in the IRs.

In the Sri Lankan context, very few studies have been conducted on IR and most of them shared their experiences in developing IRs in their respective universities. Murugathas and Balasooriya (2014) conducted a study to discuss the experiences in developing an IR at Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna and they emphasized some challenges to be considered when developing a repository. At the same time they emphasized the benefits of the IR for a university in aiming to encourage the other universities to develop repositories of their own.

4. Methodology

4.1 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the permanent academic staff of the Faculty of Arts in University of Peradeniya. The whole population was surveyed in order to get a clear picture of social science scholars perception towards open access publishing and institutional repositories and therefore no sampling technique was applied for the study.

4.2 Survey Questionnaire

After a comprehensive literature search a questionnaire was prepared which included both open ended and closed ended questions. The questionnaire comprised four parts: background information, awareness on open access publishing, knowledge and practices of institutional repositories and willingness to contribute to the university digital repository. These questions attempted to quantify social science scholars' perceptions towards open access publishing and their knowledge and attitudes on digital repositories. The questionnaires were personally administered among all permanent staff members in the Faculty of Arts on March 2016 and recipients were requested to send completed questionnaires within one month time. Due to low rate of responses, a reminder was sent on May, 2016. The results were analysed using SPSS.

5. Data Analysis

The data gained from the responses were analyzed to understand social science scholars' perception towards digital repositories and related activities and the analysis was based on the questionnaire survey of the research. The data collected from the survey were analyzed using simple percentage technique. The questionnaires were distributed among 192 permanent academic staff members in the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya (UOP) and 99 duly completed questionnaires were received by making 51.6 % response rate.

5.1 Awareness on Open Access (OA) Publishing

To examine the awareness of Open Access (OA) publishing the respondents were asked to indicate whether they were aware of opportunities to publish their research articles in open access journals. Out of 99, only 48 (48%) were aware of the OA publishing that provide opportunity to publish their findings without paying any charges and provide free access for them through the internet and 12 (12%) respondents mentioned that they did not know about open access publishing. Of the respondents, 40% of them did not respond to the question.

5.2 Familiarization of the Term on Open Access

The respondents who were aware on OA publishing were asked to indicate their level of awareness on open access according to their choice in the list given in the questionnaire and the results are presented in the table 1.

Table 1: *Familiarization of the term on open access*

	Level of familiarize	Frequency	%
1	Never heard of the term of open access before	22	22.2
2	Come across this concept but knew nothing to know about it	18	18.2
3	Come across this concept but knew little about it	16	16.2
4	Come across this concept but knew quite a bit about it	10	10.1
5	Very knowledgeable about open access	02	2.0
6	Not responded	31	31.3
	Total	99	100

Source: Survey data collected by the researcher

As revealed in table 1, more than twenty percent of the respondents never heard about the term of “open access” before while 18.2% said they knew nothing about it and 16.2 % knew little about it. These results give an insight that majority of the respondents are not familiar of the term of “open access”, only 2% are knowledgeable about open access while 10.1% of them knew quite a bit about it.

5.3 Awareness of Institutional Repositories (IR)

In order to examine the awareness of social science scholars towards IRs, the respondents were asked whether they knew anything on IR and a total of 54 (54.5%) respondents indicated yes and 45 (45.4%) reported no. Several previous studies provide some evidence supporting the findings of this study. (Davis & Connolly, 2007; Halder & Chandra, 2012; Kim, 2011) Those who know about the IR were asked to indicate how they learnt about it and the results are presented below.

Table 2: *How to learn on IR*

	Ways of learning	Frequency	%
1	Result of a web search engine	22	22.2
2	Information provided at faculty, department or any meeting at the university	17	17.2
3	Working in a field with established subject based archives	16	16.2
4	Publicity on the university library web site	10	10.1
5	From the library	08	8.1
6	Following the debate on open access	07	7.0
7	Fellow postgraduate students	02	2.0
8	From other academic staff	01	1.0
9	Not responded	16	16.2
	Total	99	100

Source: Survey data collected by the researcher

As revealed in table 2, 22.2% of the respondents mentioned that they learnt about IR as a result of a web search engine followed by 17.2% learnt from the information provided at faculty, department or any other meeting held in the university. Of the respondents, 16.2% mentioned that they learnt on IR by working in a field with established subject based archives and 10.1% learnt as result of the publicity given by the university library web site.

5.4 Frequency of Institutional Repository Use

The respondents who were aware on IR were asked to mention whether they used any IR and total of 42 (42.4%) respondents indicated that they have experienced in using IR and 57 (57.6%) mentioned that they do not have any experience in IR. Those who use IR were asked to mark how frequently they use IR according to the choices given in the questionnaire and the results are presented in the table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of Use IR

	Frequency	Frequency	%
1	Always	0	0
2	Very frequently	12	12.1
3	Somewhat frequently	24	24.2
4	Rarely	14	14.1
5	Not at all	29	29.4
6	Not responded	20	20.2
	Total	99	100

Source: Survey data collected by the researcher

With regard to the frequency of IR use, only 12% use IR very frequently while 24.2% used somewhat frequently and surprisingly, 14% rarely use and majority of the respondents (29.4%) not use IR at all.

5.5 University Digital Repository (Digital Library)

The University Digital Repository (UDR) called as “Digital Library” maintained by the Main Library of UOP was started in December, 2011 by using D-space software. Initially the repository provided access to abstracts in the university research sessions proceedings and the university theses. Then it started to add research publications of the university academics and journal articles published in the University Journals. Although the repository was established in 2011, the enthusiasm to upload the publications specially the research articles by the academics is very low and it seems the scholars in the UOP are not much interested to deposit materials in IR. Therefore the academics need to be convinced about contributing to the repository which will enhance their reputation and result in wider dissemination of their work among academic community.

5.6 Awareness of University Digital Repository

To examine the awareness of the UDR ,the respondents were asked to indicate whether they are aware about the “Digital Library” and out of 99, only 51 (51.5%) respondents were aware of the Digital Library and 36 (36.3%) mentioned that they were not aware of it and 12 (12.1%) marked “undecided” as the response.

5.7 Importance of University Digital Repository

To examine the importance of the UDR, the respondents were asked to mark their responses against the level of importance and the results were presented in the table 4 below.

Table 4: *Importance of University Digital Repository*

	Perception	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very important	22	22.2
2	Important	18	18.2
3	Neutral	11	11.2
4	Not important	05	5.0
5	Not important at all	03	3.0
6	Not responded	40	40.4
	Total	99	100

Source: Survey data collected by the researcher

As revealed in table 4, twenty two percent of the respondents mentioned that the University digital repository is very important while 18 (18.2%) mentioned important and 11 (11.2%) marked neutral. The significant finding was more than 40% of the respondents refrained to mark any response.

In general IRs serves as meaningful indicators of an institution's academic quality and help for enhancing the reputation of the institution in academic world. Therefore a question was asked whether they think that the establishment of IR for the UOP will enhance the global reputation of the university and total of 38 (38.3%) respondents indicated yes while 11 (11.1%) mentioned don't know and more than half (50.5%) of the respondents (N=50) did not respond to the question.

5.8 Enhancing the Reputation of the Institution

Those who agreed that the establishment of the IR for the university will enhance the global reputation were asked to indicate what ways will the establishment of the university IR will enhance their reputation as a member of the institution according to their choice in the lists of ways given in the questionnaire.

Table 5: *Ways of enhancing institute's reputation (Multiple responses)*

	Ways of enhancing reputation	Frequency	Percentage
1	By making their research publications more visible and widely accessible	32	32.3
2	Boosting the reputation of the institution and as a member of the institution implicating	23	23.2
3	Motivating to publish more research work to be deposited in the repository	16	16.2
4	Don't know	06	6.0
Note : N=99			

Source: Survey data collected by the researcher

As revealed in table 5, 32.3% of the respondents indicated the establishment of university IR would make their research publication more visible and widely accessible while 23.2% indicated it would boost the reputation of the institution and by implicating as a member of the institution and 16.2% indicated that the university IR would motivate them to publish more research work to be deposited at the repository.

5.9 Willingness to Contribute to the University Digital Repository

A successful IR depends on the willingness of authors to deposit their work. Therefore the respondents were asked to indicate whether they have an idea of making available of their intellectual output in the UDR and out of 99, 57 (57.6%) respondents mentioned their willingness and 14 (14%) marked their unwillingness while 28(28.3%) mentioned undecided. Those who mentioned their unwillingness or marked as undecided were asked to indicate whether they have an idea or plan to contribute to the UDR in future and out of 42 respondents, 24(57.1%) mentioned yes while 7(16.7%) mentioned no and again 11(26.2%) marked undecided.

6. Conclusion

This study concluded that only 48% of the respondents were aware about open access publishing but 22% of them never heard about the “open access” before and these results give an insight that majority of the respondents are not familiar of the term “open access”. Several previous studies support the conclusion of this study that social science scholars are not much familiar on open access publishing than academic scholars in other disciplines (Creaser *at el*,

2010; Manjunatha and Thandavamoorthy, 2011 and Gibbons,2006) where some studies found contradiction with this conclusion.(Kyriaki-Manessi,2013; Shukla & Khan,2014 and Dhanavandan and Tamizhchelvan, 2013) The results revealed that 22% of the respondents learnt about IR as a result of a web search engine followed by 17 % learnt from the information provided at the faculty, department or any other meeting held in the university and 16% learnt by working in a field with established subject based archives. With regard to the frequency of IR use, only 12% use very frequently and 24% use somewhat frequently. Regarding the awareness of the University Digital Repository (UDR), 51% of the respondents were aware while 36% mentioned that they were not aware about it. Of the respondents, 57% reported their willingness to contribute for the UDR while 14% were not given their willingness and this conclusion do not match with previous study which found majority of faculty scholars do not deposit their research publications in IRs. (Paul, 2012) The results established that 40% of the respondents believed the university repository is very important or important and 38% of them mentioned the establishment of IR for the UOP would enhance the global reputation of the university.

7. Recommendations

The results indicated that nearly half of the social science scholars were not aware about the open access publishing and UDR; therefore the library should develop some strategies to popularise the UDR among the academic community specially to recruit the contents. In promoting the repository it is important to stress the benefits of the institutional repository to the academics as well as to the institution. The following recommendations were made to create more awareness and educate them on open access publishing and institutional repositories.

- University and the library work together and should organize workshops and seminars specially designed to create awareness and deeper understanding of open access repositories.
- University or the library should prepare and disseminate open access promotional materials and advise authors on possible open access repositories for the dissemination of their scholarly output.
- There is a need to develop institutional policies that will enhance open access. These policies should be a means of improving and uplifting open access.

At the same time the university should conduct an open access advocacy campaign and training sessions for researchers to demonstrate access and publish in open access repositories.

8. Further Research

This study has highlighted a number of issues that require investigation in more depth. The related literature has shown that the awareness of open access publishing and IR among research scholars is increasing. The present study identified attitudes and perceptions among scholars towards open access publishing and institutional repositories in the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya which verify this trend. Therefore it will be interesting to explore the perceptions and attitudes towards open access publishing practices and content recruitment for digital repositories of academic scholars in other disciplines and make comparisons among various disciplines as well.

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