

# Open Access Strategy of UNESCO

Bhanu Neupane

UNESCO, Paris

b.neupane@unesco.org

One of UNESCO's overarching goals is to build inclusive knowledge societies by harnessing information and communication technologies to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge in the fields of education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information, including through open access.

Open Access (OA) is the provision of free access to peer-reviewed, scholarly, research information (both scientific papers and research data) to all. It envisages that the rights-holder grants worldwide irrevocable right of access to copy, use, distribute, transmit, and make derivative works in any format for any lawful activities with proper attribution to the original author. Through Open Access, researchers and students from around the world gain increased access to knowledge, publications have greater visibility and readership, and the potential impact of research is heightened.

There are over 9700 OA journals and over 2500 institutional OA repositories. The major institutional repository software, DSpace, has reached over 1300 installations recently. However, only 20% of scientific journal articles are available via Open Access. Although many have started to argue that a tipping point has been reached. Since 2000, the average annual growth rate has been 18% for the number of Open Access journals and 30% for the number of articles. Spain has recently taken the legislation route to OA by enacting law on Science that includes provision for OA mandate. Similarly, Argentina has just passed a policy, which demands ALL big institutions to maintain Open Access Repository for the benefit of science, technology and innovation.

To date, UNESCO has mainly been engaged in capacity building and awareness-raising about OA. Pursuant to the General Conference Resolution 35C/Resolution 63, UNESCO mapped the OA activities of various existing stakeholders (i.e. researchers, research institutions, publishers and librarians) and initiatives in the world. This work was concluded in October 2011. The results of this activity formed the basis of Global Open Access Portal (GOAP) which was launched during the General Conference in 2011.

## **The Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources (ROAD)**

ROAD is a global, comprehensive and multidisciplinary system which gives access to a variety of Open Access scholarly resources such as journals, academic repositories of articles, conference proceedings, etc. Its aim is to facilitate the access to those resources and to help assessing their editorial quality.

Based on the ISSN system (the international system for the identification of serial resources), which is a Category II center under the auspices of UNESCO, ROAD will link data coming from a variety of sources such as scientific indexes, metrics, and

selective registries devoted to scholarly publications. Developed and maintained by the ISSN International Centre with the support of UNESCO, accessible via the GOAP Portal of UNESCO, ROAD will provide a unique tool for assessing the quality of Open Access scholarly resources, and following up on the development of the Open Access model worldwide.

ROAD beta-version will be launched for public in December 2013. This resource can be accessed via GOAP (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/portals-and-platforms/goap/>) and the ISSN Web site (<http://www.issn.org/>)!

UNESCO brings out a large number of scholarly publications as monographs and also publishes and/or supports the publication of scholarly journals. However, only Diversities (published by the Social and Human Sciences Sector) is listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). While most UNESCO publications are accessible online, the Organization is yet to formally adopt Open Access policy to make all publications prepared by UNESCO or with its support available in Open Access repositories for easier retrieval and increased use of these resources.

UNESCO has been promoting OA in combination with Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and Open Educational Resources (OER) in a package as Open Suit Strategies. Recently UNESCO and the Nature Publishing Group launched the ‘World Library of Science’ to increase access to quality scientific information in institutions in developing countries. The UNESCO “Beyond Campus” iTunes University is yet another initiative to improve access to UNESCO’s technical and scholarly resources.

## **Strategic Action Plan**

In the framework of the overarching objective of “building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication” (34 C/4), UNESCO focuses on policy development, capacity building, standard setting, partnerships and collaborations, and on playing the role of a clearing-house on OA as a forum for international cooperation, exchange of dialogue and reflection. It will promote long-term solution for OA based on an inclusive and rights-based approach in the framework of the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and in line with the mandate of Information for All Programme (160 EX/Decision 3.6.1) to contribute to “free exchange of ideas and knowledge”, and to narrow “the gap between the information rich and information poor”. In order to achieve this goal, UNESCO’s work in the next four biennia (2012-)2019) is proposed to be divided into three core areas:

- (i) Provision of upstream policy advice and building partnerships
- (ii) Strengthening capacities to adopt OA
- (iii) Serve as a clearing-house and informing the global OA debate

The OA strategy implementation shall draw on the existing body of work, networks of practice and exchanges developed within the framework of the Information for All Programme (IFAP). This will complement IFAP’s ongoing activities in the

IFAP priority areas of information preservation, information for development and information accessibility and envisages the development of active collaborative and operational links between implementation of the Open Access strategy and IFAP's Working Groups and National Committees.

The use of the term 'scientific' in the description of OA would cover all scholarly publications that have undergone the process of professional peer review, and shall not be limited to science publications only. Overall, this strategy will foster an enabling environment for OA to scientific information and research as well as Open Data enabling research and production of scientific information. To this end, the strategy envisages activities to be undertaken in consultation and cooperation with all programme sectors.

## **Core Area I: Provide Upstream Policy Advice and Build Partnerships**

### **Develop and Review Comprehensive National OA Policies**

Within core area I, which is proposed to be the priority area in the implementation strategy, UNESCO will provide upstream policy advice on development of OA policy in Member States and their research institutions. Building the capacity of national decision-makers and personnel of research institutions to draft and implement OA policies will be an integral part of this activity that will focus on the principle of OA for all publicly funded research and associated publications in Member States.

UNESCO's assistance will focus primarily on building national capacities to undertake review of the production of scientific information and policy analysis leading to prepare comprehensive national OA policies integrated into the national systems of research and development.

Using its convening power, UNESCO will raise global awareness about the advantages of OA to encourage policy development in Member States. UNESCO will mobilize stakeholders to organise regional consultations and will explore the possibility of organizing the first international congress on open access to scientific information and research towards the end of the next biennium (2012-2013). Amongst other issues of the congress will be analysis of existing national and international legal framework concerning open access and examination of necessity of elaboration of a new international instrument.

### **Enhance Cooperation and Partnerships**

As the OA to scientific information is a new programme, there is a need to strengthen it through partnerships and collaborations with publishers, universities, research institutions, libraries and specialized national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNESCO will thus initiate and support the establishment of a Network for Open Access to Scientific Information and Research (NOASIR) and consider the best possible way to: support institutional OA archives and journals in various

disciplines by research institutions; encourage researchers and scientists to publish in OA journals and deposit their works in OA repositories; encourage publishers to offer more journals and articles in OA; support research and development in OA technologies, policies and practices; provide access to scientific journals to developing countries; and serve as a laboratory for innovation and catalyst for international cooperation.

In line with the Research4Life programme of other UN organizations and potentially with UNESCO, the Organization will initiate access to scientific publications in Science, Technology/Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) journals for developing countries. While UNESCO will continue to engage with the scientific journal publishers to join the OA movement, research institutions and funding agencies will also be encouraged to create specific funding schemes to support publication fee in OA journals, and support researchers from the developing countries.

UNESCO will aim to establish systematic cooperation and improved coordination as regards OA with UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), regional bodies like European Commission (EC), and also non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foundations. The Organization will also continue to facilitate the OA activities of United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) within the framework of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

## **Core Area II: Strengthening the Capacities to Adopt OA**

It is important that institutional capacity is increased to develop, maintain and sustain OA repositories and journals. Member States shall be facilitated to organize workshops and training programmes on OA covering policy, planning and implementation issues. It will also cover development of software expertise to maintain repositories for scientific and educational materials. Suitable guidelines and manuals in the form of toolkits shall be developed in print, interactive CD and online versions to support the workshops and training activities.

UNESCO will play the role of standard setter in OA by developing curricula and courses for adoption and adaptation in the curricula of Library and Information Science Schools of the Member States.

## **Core Area III: Serve as a Clearing-House and Informing the Global OA Debate**

The Global Open Access Portal (GOAP) (to be launched during the General Conference 2011) will provide information about the status of OA in Member States, identify key stakeholders, policies, and OA practices in institutions and communities. It will play the role of a clearing-house for OA related information, and link to resources,

bibliographies and documents, including lists of experts and institutions on OA. The GOAP will also serve as a Community of Practice (CoP) for OA along with the OA Community in the WSIS-Community website.

24. Going beyond the clearing-house function, UNESCO will also encourage and support research and evaluation of the impacts of OA on the advancement of knowledge, including user studies, citation studies, impact factor analysis, and visibility of researchers and research institutions. UNESCO will also promote regional, subject-specific and indigenous knowledge repositories in different languages. Subject to availability of resources, UNESCO will prepare a state-of-the-art publication on world trends, issues and best practices in OA.

### **Administrative and Financial Implications**

Implementing this strategy will require strengthening UNESCO's capacity in the area of OA. Currently only one professional staff is following OA portfolio on full time basis, and in order to implement this strategy, professional staff in the field offices shall be oriented to backstop in the capacity development activities and regional consultations. Considering the lack of critical mass of experts, UNESCO will seek assistance from external experts, possibly via extrabudgetary funding and secondments, and to strengthen partnerships and networking. The detailed action plan, timeline and budgetary requirements (US \$4,340,000) envisaged in this strategy are listed in the Annex.

The financial and administrative implications of the activities to be undertaken within the framework of this strategy for 2014-2015 therefore fall within the parameters of the current 37 C/5 document, while those for the following two biennia (2016-2017 and 2018-2019) will be taken into account in the planning and preparation of the respective biennial work plans. The implementation of the OA strategy is dependent on availability of financial resources envisaged, and therefore, the Organization will seek extrabudgetary contributions from Member States and other funding bodies for its implementation.

