

Short Communication

Delhi Declaration on Open Access 2018: An overview

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The Delhi Declaration on Open Access, pronounced on 14th February 2018, becomes another instance of solidarity of the researchers in Global South in making open access (OA) to scholarly literature a popular choice in the dissemination of the scientific research¹. The Open Access India (OAI), an open access advocacy group, was the main architect behind this Declaration. The Declaration had over 120 signatories from India and other countries in the Global South within first two weeks of its pronouncement. This declaration is supported by the Knowledge Societies Division of UNESCO; IFLA RSCAO; Forum for Open Access in SAARC, etc. The signatories are not limited to the information professionals, journal editors, and research funders, but also the committed academic researchers who use and promote open access resources. The Declaration also marked the sixteenth anniversary of Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI), which is considered as the starting point in the shaping of the global open access movement². On the 15th anniversary of BOAI, the AgriXiv, a preprint self-archiving portal for agriculture and allied sciences was launched as an Open Access India's community initiative.

BOAI was pronounced on 14th February 2002 to make a new transition in the process and channels of research dissemination – now accepted worldwide by the researchers' community, "An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good".

Delhi Declaration on Open Access (DDOA) supplements the responsible research and innovation

(RRI) framework while ensuring the access, equity, and inclusiveness of public funded research literature. The DDOA ensures that commitment comes from within. The keen researchers make use of available open access resources, including the open research data. In return, they publish their scientific findings in open access modes, embracing the green and gold OA channels. They are also convinced to share their research data, as and when these are complete and validated, through the open data repositories or other research data sharing platforms. This way open science proliferates by involvement of academia, researchers and scientific personnel working in the public institutions.

The Declaration was initially conceptualized during the *UNESCO-NDL India International Workshop on Knowledge Engineering for Digital Library Design* in New Delhi in October 2017 but effectively made public with a draft Declaration during the *OpenCon New Delhi* in February 2018. In the public convention, the members of OA community in India debated on the different provisions of the Declaration. They finally approved the Declaration containing ten sections that is expected to have a far-reaching impact on the availability of research literature in the Global South and the dissemination of research outputs. The accepted 10-points agenda in DDOA are summarized below:

- The signatories advocate the practice of open science (sharing research methods and results that avoid "reinventing the wheel") and the introduction of open technologies for the development of models for the exchange of science and scholarships (open scholarship) to accelerate the progress of research and to tackle the real societal challenges.
- The signatories would seek to publish their research results as preprints or post-print (e.g., institutional repositories) and to encourage their colleagues and regulators to do the same to make their research open and actionable promptly.

- The signatories would practice and encourage researchers and scholars to implement openness in peer review and other editorial services, influence the scholarly societies to flip their journals into OA and would help to adhere to the development of the whitelist of OA journals in India conforming the "Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scientific Publishing".
- The signatories would be supporting the relevant stakeholders (academics, editorial teams, university libraries, research funders, government agencies responsible for disseminating scholarships in higher education) for spearheading the OA movement.
- The signatories would continue to advance the concept of OA to make all publicly funded research (not limited to journals literature only) free for the public to access in all media in open formats, to facilitate their use, reuse, and public share.
- The signatories would impress public policymakers to adopt an open research evaluation system and an institutional reward system for the exercise of openness in science, research communications and scientific research across disciplines including the sciences, social sciences and humanities.
- The signatories would support and work for an alternative reward system in recognition and promotion, not regarding the "impact factor" of the journals but the 'impact' of the article / scholarship in science and society and impress all scientists, scholars, research funders, research institutions, universities, academies and scientific societies to sign the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)*.
- The signatories agree with the principles and requirements of the *Joint COAR-UNESCO Declaration on Open Access*, *Jussieu Call*, and the *Dakar Declaration*. They would also follow the international initiative *Open Access 2020* to develop roadmaps in support of sustainable OA

research communication models that are free for the authors, and freely available to the readers.

- While learning from the South-South cooperation on OA, the signatories would work for the development of a framework for OA in India and South Asia: the national OA policies and country-specific action plans are to be formulated to provide OA as a default choice for research communications in India and South Asia by 2025.
- To increase awareness of OA, infrastructure, capacity building, funding and policy mechanisms, and incentivizing OA, the signatories are ready to share success stories, studies, and discussions during the Open Access Week.

DDOA will strengthen the national and institutional OA policies, already undertaken by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and few other national agencies, by making the OA resources widely available. India's Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has to be the largest supporter in the creation of OA resources and OA infrastructure across the country. MHRD-supported Shodhganga has become one of the largest and most resourceful repositories of theses and dissertations in the world. However, its global success will depend on its early adoption of open licensing terms, which is presently missing. The Declaration also envisages a developmental framework for the South-South cooperation in promoting OA and country-specific OA action plans where the OA ideas need a faster implementation framework. The under-represented stakeholders in OA ecosystem also need to be accommodated for the creation of a greater public good.

References:

1. Open Access India (2018). *Delhi Declaration on Open Access*. Available at: <http://openaccessindia.org/delhi-declaration-on-open-access/>.
2. BOAI (2002). *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. Available at: <http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read>.