Transforming Library Services: The Vital Contribution of LIS Professionals in One Nation One Subscription Initiatives

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ABSTRACT-

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative by the Government of India aims to provide seamless and affordable access to digital content and services across the country. This article explores the crucial role of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in implementing this initiative. LIS professionals play a vital role in policy development, collaboration, collection management, user support, and assessment. They collaborate with government bodies, negotiate licensing agreements, and address legal and copyright issues. They also facilitate coordination among libraries and institutions, streamline the subscription process, and establish standards for content acquisition and sharing. Moreover, LIS professionals curate comprehensive digital collections, assess user information needs, and align resources with educational and research interests. They provide user support, conduct digital literacy training, and guide users in accessing and utilizing digital resources effectively. Additionally, they gather user feedback, evaluate the impact of the initiative, and make recommendations for continuous improvement. The involvement of LIS professionals is essential for the success of the 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiatives, ensuring equitable access to digital resources, promoting collaboration, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning and innovation.

Keywords: One Nation One Subscription (ONOS), Open Access, LIS Professionals, Digital Resources, Collection Management, Policy Development, Digital Content.

INTRODUCTION

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative, introduced by the Government of India, aims to revolutionize access to digital content and services across the country. With the rapid growth of digital resources, the initiative seeks to centralize subscriptions and provide seamless access to a diverse range of digital materials for libraries and educational institutions.1 In this article, we explore the implementation of the 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative in libraries and the essential role

played by Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in its success.

The initiative holds immense potential in addressing the challenges of fragmented access to digital resources and bridging the digital divide[1]. By streamlining the subscription process and negotiating bulk licensing agreements, the initiative aims to make digital resources more affordable and accessible to a wider user base. It also promotes collaboration among libraries, institutions, and content providers, fostering resource sharing and cooperative collection development[1, 2].

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chakraborty et al. (2020)[3] identified several problems faced by the Indian research community. These include limited funding for researchers, high charges for publication in prestigious journals, and expensive subscription fees for accessing research findings. The authors noted that the administration of prestigious journals has shifted from academic communities to commercial interests, causing difficulties in global visibility and access to research. They highlighted the significant amount of money spent on journal subscriptions and publication fees. To address these issues and enhance global visibility for Indian research literature, one proposal put forth by the authors is the implementation of ONOS (One Nation One Subscription) policy.

Munshi and Arora (2021)[1] discuss the concept of "One Nation One Subscription" (ONOS) in India. They address the limitations faced by institutions and consortia in terms of resources and infrastructure and propose solutions at the national level. Their recommendations include extending access to remote institutions and citizens, establishing an umbrella body for ONOS, identifying core electronic resources, negotiating cost-effective national licenses, developing a common model license

agreement, creating innovative services around e-resource subscriptions, promoting open access and fair use, and supporting publishing in open access journals. These measures aim to improve research, education, and knowledge dissemination, leading to a knowledge-based society and long-term growth and competitiveness for the country.

Koley and Lala (2022)[4] supported the Indian Government's "One Nation, One Subscription" (ONOS) policy, recognizing the importance of scholarly publications for academic development. They highlighted the issue of high subscription costs and the need to consider the global and Indian open access landscape when implementing the policy. The authors recommended negotiating with publishers from different disciplines and addressing access issues to avoid inequality.

Rathinasabapathy and Veeranjaneyulu (2022)[2] discussed the expectations and challenges of the "One Nation One Subscription" (ONOS) policy in India. They mentioned that ONOS is a new initiative that could replace the concept of library consortia in the future. Library consortia were established in India to facilitate access to quality literature for academic research communities. The authors highlighted that ONOS aims to not only provide access to quality publications but also improve the quality of Indian journals, making India a hub for high-quality scientific publications.

Koley (2022)[5] in her article discuss the limitations of the "Indian One Nation, One Subscription" policy proposal and suggests an alternative way forward. The policy aims to provide access to research articles for all higher educational institutions in India by establishing a national subscription contract. However, the article argues that the policy is limited in scope as it only considers subscription-based access and disregards open access publishing options.

The authors analyse the trends in open access publishing in India and other top publishing countries, highlighting the changing landscape of scholarly publishing. They emphasize the need to strengthen the publishing infrastructure and promote open access content to address the accessibility issues in the long term. The article provides insights into the various models of open access publishing and discusses the advantages and challenges associated with them.

Ravichandran et al. (2023)[6] discuss the proposed policy of the Government of India called "One Nation One Subscription" (ONOS). The ONOS policy aims to provide access to national and international scientific and academic content to all citizens in India, addressing the issues of high subscription costs and inequality among higher education institutions in accessing high-quality research findings. The paper emphasizes the potential benefits of the ONOS policy in providing equal access to scientific and academic content in India. However, it also highlights the need for careful implementation and consideration of current trends in scientific and academic publications.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The current subscription model for digital content in libraries and educational institutions is fragmented and often results in limited access to resources, high costs, and inequitable distribution of information[7]. This poses challenges for users, particularly those in underprivileged areas or smaller institutions, who face barriers in accessing quality digital resources necessary for education, research, and personal development. The problem lies in the lack of a unified and affordable platform that provides seamless access to a wide range of digital content across the nation. Libraries and institutions struggle to manage individual subscriptions, negotiate favourable licensing agreements, and provide comprehensive resources that meet the diverse needs of their users. This fragmented approach leads to inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and restricted access to valuable information.

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative seeks to address these challenges by centralizing the subscription process, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and providing a unified platform for accessing digital content. The aim is to eliminate redundancies, reduce costs, and ensure equitable access to a diverse range of resources for all citizens, regardless of their location or institutional affiliation. By identifying and addressing the problem of fragmented access to digital resources, the 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative aims to bridge the information gap, promote inclusivity, and empower individuals with the knowledge necessary for personal growth, education, and research.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing the "One Nation, One Subscription" policy in India as a means to promote access to scholarly research publications?

RQ2: How does the "One Nation, One Subscription" policy aligns with the principles and goals of Open Access publishing, and what challenges may arise in its implementation?

RQ3: What are the financial implications and sustainability considerations associated with transitioning from a subscription-based model to a nationwide subscription policy in India?

RQ4: How does the "One Nation, One Subscription" policy impact the accessibility and availability of research publications for

researchers, students, and institutions across different regions and disciplines in India?

RQ5: What are the lessons learned from other countries or regions that have implemented similar nationwide subscription policies, and how can these insights inform the potential implementation of the "One Nation, One Subscription" policy in India?

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the implementation of the ONOS initiative at a national level within the geographical boundaries of the country. It aims to ensure equitable access to digital resources across various regions, including urban, rural, and remote areas.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed for this study involved conducting a thorough analysis of existing documents related to the 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative. These documents were sourced from various online platforms and resources available on the internet. By examining and reviewing these documents, the study gained insights into the implementation and impact of the ONOS initiative in libraries across the country.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

One Nation One Subscription (ONOS)

"One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS), an initiative proposed by the Government of India (GoI), aims to provide countrywide access to national and international scientific and academic content. ONOS is expected to sign national licenses with most of the prominent STEM publishers and database producers across the world in order to encourage easy access to high quality academic information, thus stimulating scientific research and innovation in the country. This initiative is expected to benefit research and educational institutions including universities, colleges, research organizations, as well as every citizen of the country through public libraries" (Munshi & Arora, 2021)[1].

Objectives of the ONOS Initiative

The objectives of the 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) initiatives are:

a) **Equitable Access:** The initiative aims to ensure equitable access to digital content and services for all citizens across India, irrespective of their geographic location or socio-economic background[6]. By centralizing subscriptions and providing a unified platform, it seeks to eliminate disparities in access to digital resources.

b) **Cost Reduction:** The initiative aims to reduce costs for libraries and educational institutions by negotiating bulk licensing agreements with content providers. By pooling resources and adopting a centralized subscription model, the initiative strives to make digital resources more affordable and accessible to a wider range of users[6].

c) **Collaboration and Resource Sharing:** The ONOS[1,7] initiative emphasizes collaboration among libraries, institutions, content providers, and technology vendors. It seeks to foster partnerships and promote resource sharing to optimize the use of available digital resources. By encouraging collaboration, the initiative aims to enhance the overall collection and provide a diverse range of resources to users.

d) **Enhanced Learning and Research:** The initiative aims to enhance learning and research capabilities by providing access to a comprehensive collection of digital resources. It aims to support academic pursuits, facilitate knowledge discovery, and enable users to access up-to-date and relevant information across various domains[1,7,8].

e) Digital Inclusion: The ONOS initiative aims to bridge the digital divide by ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their location or background, have access to digital resources. By promoting digital inclusion, it seeks to empower users with the necessary tools and information to participate actively in the digital age[1].

f) Streamlined Access and User Experience: The initiative aims to provide a seamless and user-friendly platform for accessing digital content and services. It strives to simplify the subscription process, improve navigation, and enhance the overall user experience, making it easier for users to discover, access, and utilize digital resources effectively[8].

Impact and Benefits

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative has the potential to bring several impacts and benefits to libraries, educational institutions, and users across India. Some of these impacts and benefits include:

a) Enhanced Access to Digital Resources: The initiative aims to provide seamless access to a wide range of digital resources, including e-books, journals, databases, multimedia content, and more. It enables libraries and institutions to offer an extensive collection of digital materials, significantly expanding the availability of resources for users[8].

b) Bridging the Digital Divide: The ONOS initiative plays a crucial role in bridging the digital divide by providing equal access to digital resources for users in both urban and rural areas. It helps to overcome geographical limitations and ensures that users from diverse backgrounds have access to the same wealth of information and educational opportunities[6,7,8].

c) Cost Savings and Resource Optimization: By centralizing subscriptions and negotiating bulk licensing agreements, the initiative enables libraries and institutions to achieve significant cost savings. It eliminates the need for multiple individual subscriptions, reduces administrative overheads, and allows for efficient allocation of resources to enhance the overall collection and user experience[9,10].

d) Collaboration and Resource Sharing: The initiative encourages collaboration among libraries, institutions, and content providers, fostering resource sharing and cooperative collection development. It promotes partnerships and knowledge exchange, enabling libraries to diversify their collections and provide access to a broader range of resources[11].

f) Academic and Research Advancement: The availability of a comprehensive collection of digital resources through the ONOS initiative enhances academic and research pursuits. Students, researchers, and educators gain access to a wealth of scholarly materials, improving the quality and depth of their research, facilitating innovation, and fostering academic excellence.

g) Digital Literacy and Skill Development: The initiative promotes digital literacy and skill development by providing access to digital resources and training opportunities. Users can acquire essential digital literacy skills, learn effective information retrieval techniques, and enhance their overall digital competencies, empowering them to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

h) Democratization of Knowledge: The ONOS initiative democratizes knowledge by making high-quality educational and informational resources accessible to a broader audience. It breaks down barriers to education and information, promoting lifelong learning, and fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and dissemination.

i) User Empowerment and Engagement: The initiative empowers users by giving them greater control over their learning and research journeys. It enables users to explore diverse topics, access specialized content, and personalize their learning experiences, thereby enhancing engagement and satisfaction.

These impacts and benefits collectively contribute to the growth and development of the education and research ecosystem in India. The 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative has the potential to transform access to digital resources, promote collaboration, and empower users with the necessary information and resources for education, research, and personal growth.

Role of LIS Professionals

The role of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in the "One Nation, One Subscription" initiative is vital in ensuring its successful implementation and effective management. Here are some key roles they can play:

a) Policy Development and Advocacy: LIS professionals are at the forefront of policy development and advocacy for 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiatives. They work closely with government bodies, library associations, and other stakeholders to shape policies that facilitate unified access to digital content. This involves addressing legal and copyright issues, negotiating licensing agreements with content providers, and advocating for user privacy rights.

b) Collaboration and Partnerships: Implementing 'One Nation, One Subscription' requires extensive collaboration and partnerships among libraries, content providers, and technology vendors. LIS professionals play a pivotal role in fostering these relationships. They facilitate coordination among libraries to streamline the subscription process, negotiate contracts, and establish standards for content acquisition and sharing[11]. By forging strong partnerships, LIS professionals help create a robust infrastructure that supports seamless access to digital resources[7,11].

c) Collection Development and Management: LIS professionals bring their expertise in collection development and management to ensure the success of 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiatives. They assess the information needs of diverse user groups and curate a comprehensive collection of digital resources that caters to those needs. Through careful selection, evaluation, and weeding of digital content, LIS professionals ensure that libraries offer high-quality resources that align with educational, research, and recreational interests of their patrons.

d) User Support and Digital Literacy: One of the key responsibilities of LIS professionals in implementing 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiatives is to provide user support and promote digital literacy. They assist library users in navigating the subscription platform, accessing and utilizing digital resources effectively. LIS professionals conduct training sessions and workshops to enhance digital literacy skills, enabling users to make the most of the available resources. They also offer guidance on information retrieval, evaluation, and ethical use of information.

e) Assessment and Continuous Improvement: LIS professionals play a critical role in assessing the impact and effectiveness of 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiatives. They gather user feedback, analyse usage statistics, and conduct evaluations to identify areas for improvement. Based on their findings, they provide recommendations for enhancing the subscription model, expanding the collection, and optimizing user experience. By monitoring and continuously improving the

initiatives, LIS professionals ensure that they remain relevant and valuable to library patrons.

LIS professionals bring their expertise in information organization, access, and user services to ensure that the "One Nation, One Subscription" program optimally benefits library users and facilitates equitable access to digital resources across the nation.

Limitations and Challenges of ONOS Implementation

The implementation of the 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative in libraries is not without its challenges and limitations. Some of the key challenges and limitations include:

a) Infrastructure Constraints: Limited internet infrastructure and connectivity in certain regions pose a significant challenge to the seamless access and utilization of digital resources. Inadequate internet connectivity can hinder the effective implementation of the initiative, particularly in remote or underserved areas[6].

b) Copyright and Licensing Issues: Negotiating licensing agreements with content providers and ensuring compliance with copyright regulations can be complex and time-consuming. Libraries must navigate the intricacies of copyright law and address licensing issues to ensure legal access to digital resources while also respecting the rights of content creators.

c) Financial Constraints: While the ONOS initiative aims to reduce costs through centralized subscriptions, financial constraints may still be a challenge for some libraries and institutions. Limited budgets may restrict their ability to subscribe to a wide range of digital resources or upgrade their technological infrastructure to support the initiative fully[6].

d) User Awareness and Digital Literacy: Many users, particularly in underserved areas, may have limited digital literacy skills and awareness of the available digital resources. Promoting digital literacy and providing adequate training and support to users are essential for maximizing the benefits of the initiative and ensuring effective utilization of digital resources.

e) Technical Compatibility and Integration: Libraries may encounter technical challenges related to the compatibility and integration of various digital platforms and systems. Ensuring smooth integration of the ONOS initiative with existing library systems and workflows requires careful planning, technical expertise, and ongoing maintenance[6].

f) Content Diversity and Specialized Needs: While the initiative aims to provide a wide range of digital resources, ensuring diversity and catering to specialized needs can be a challenge. Libraries may need to address the demand for discipline-specific resources, multilingual materials, and resources that cater to specific user groups or communities[11].

g) Data Privacy and Security: The implementation of the ONOS initiative requires handling user data and ensuring data privacy and security. Libraries must adopt robust data protection measures and adhere to relevant privacy regulations to safeguard user information and maintain user trust.

Addressing these challenges and limitations requires proactive measures, including investments in infrastructure, capacity building for librarians and users, collaboration with content providers, and ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the initiative. Overcoming these challenges will contribute to the successful implementation of the ONOS initiative and the realization of its benefits for libraries and users across India.

Future Implications and Recommendations

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative holds significant implications for the future of library services and access to digital resources in India. To ensure its continued success and effectiveness, the following recommendations can be considered:

a) **Strengthening Infrastructure:** Investing in robust internet infrastructure and improving connectivity across all regions of the country is crucial. The government, in collaboration with internet service providers and relevant stakeholders, should prioritize infrastructure development to ensure seamless access to digital resources.

b) **User-Centric Approach:** The initiative should adopt a user-centric approach, considering the diverse needs and preferences of library users. Conducting regular user surveys, needs assessments, and feedback mechanisms will help shape the initiative to better align with user expectations and requirements[1].

c) **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Encouraging collaboration among libraries, institutions, content providers, and technology vendors is vital. Establishing partnerships and consortiums can enhance resource sharing, negotiation power, and cost-effectiveness. Collaboration should also extend to sharing best practices and knowledge exchange among professionals in the Library and Information Science (LIS) field[11].

d) **Continuous Evaluation and Adaptation:** Regular evaluation of the initiative's impact, user satisfaction, and efficiency is essential. Collecting and analysing data on usage patterns, user feedback, and cost savings will help identify areas for improvement and inform future enhancements to optimize the initiative's effectiveness.

e) **Training and Professional Development:** Providing continuous training and professional development opportunities for LIS professionals is crucial. Building their capacity in areas such as digital literacy, copyright management, negotiation skills, and emerging technologies will enable them to navigate the complexities of the initiative and better support users.

f) **Promoting Open Access and Open Educational Resources (OER):** The initiative can benefit from actively promoting the use of open access resources and OER[11]. Encouraging the creation and dissemination of open educational content will enhance the availability of free and openly accessible resources, complementing the subscribed content.

g) **Awareness and Outreach:** Conducting awareness campaigns to promote the initiative among library users, educational institutions, and the general public is essential. These campaigns should highlight the benefits, functionalities, and user support available through the initiative, ensuring that potential beneficiaries are well-informed about the resources and services available to them.

h) **Scalability and Sustainability:** Ensuring the scalability and sustainability of the initiative should be a long-term consideration. Continual evaluation, monitoring, and adaptation should be carried out to address emerging needs, technological advancements, and changes in the information landscape.

By considering these future implications and implementing the recommended strategies, the 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative can continue to evolve and adapt, effectively serving the needs of libraries, educational institutions, and users across India.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative has the potential to revolutionize access to digital content and services across India. The successful implementation of this initiative relies on the crucial role played by Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals. LIS professionals contribute to policy development, collaboration, collection management, user support, and assessment. They work closely with government bodies, negotiate licensing agreements, and address legal and copyright issues. They also facilitate coordination among libraries and institutions, streamline the subscription process, and establish standards for content acquisition and sharing. Moreover, LIS professionals curate comprehensive digital collections, assess user information needs, and align resources with educational and research interests. They provide user support, conduct digital literacy training, and guide users in accessing and utilizing digital resources effectively. Additionally, they gather user feedback, evaluate the impact of the initiative, and make recommendations for continuous improvement.

While implementing the 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative poses challenges such as infrastructure constraints, copyright issues, financial constraints, user awareness, and technical compatibility, addressing these challenges is crucial for the success of the initiative. Investments in infrastructure, capacity building for librarians and users, collaboration with content providers, and ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the initiative are recommended to overcome these challenges. By doing so, the initiative can continue to enhance access to digital resources, promote collaboration, and empower users with the necessary information and resources for education, research, and personal growth.

The 'One Nation, One Subscription' initiative has the potential to transform library services and access to digital resources in India. With the active involvement of LIS professionals and concerted efforts from various stakeholders, this initiative can bridge the digital divide, promote equitable access, and foster a culture of lifelong learning and innovation in the country.

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