



Research Article

Perspective of Academic Librarians About Open Educational Resources (OER): A Comparative Study of College Libraries Affiliated with Calcutta University

Indira Dey ^{1*}, Shraboni Das ²

¹ Former Student of Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi, India

² Librarian, Raja Peary Mohan College, Uttarpada, Hooghly, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author: * Indira Dey

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the point of view of the library professionals about Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives. Eleven (11) college libraries under Calcutta University were selected as a research sample and information collected mainly through questionnaires for this study. The findings of this study reveals that librarians understand OER well and definitely want to make OER accessible, but they are unable to take the lead because of proper institutional policies. The findings of this study indicate that faculty-library collaboration and proper institutional guidelines are the key factors for the consistent progress and fruitfulness of the OER movement.

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KEYWORDS: Digital Revolution, OER, Academic Library, Calcutta University, Digital Library.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution is rapidly evolving the educational system in India. Digital tools are expanding access and improving the quality of education in India. But still, technology integration should be done thoughtfully to ensure that no student is left behind. The digital revolution is changing the landscape of learning by providing high-quality, freely accessible, openly licensed materials known as Open Educational Resources (OER) such as textbooks and multimedia. Higher education institutions are switching to open educational materials to break down financial and geographic barriers that anyone can use and customize.

Academic librarians play a crucial role in the OER movement by maintaining and managing institutional repositories, making resources easily discoverable and accessible to students. They help faculty locate high-quality, subject-specific open textbooks and modules. They promote OER awareness and train faculty in utilizing open licenses. By using their cataloging skills, librarians generate accurate metadata for OER, so anyone across the globe can easily locate them.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Higher institutions can make learning more flexible, equitable, and widely adopted through the help of librarians as they are the experts in creating and sharing Open Educational Resources (Coyne and Fitzpatrick, 2021) ⁽³⁾. Confidence and positive beliefs of librarians about OER play a crucial role in adopting and using these resources (Tang and Tseng, 2023) ⁽⁹⁾.

The librarian's awareness of OER is crucial for the growth of the OER movement. Calilung (2020) observed that academic librarians are fully aware of digitized library collections, but they have moderate awareness about OER ⁽¹⁾. Orzech and Samuel (2020) observed that some librarians are excited about using and sharing OER, but others are still learning about OER, its benefits, and incorporation process ⁽⁷⁾.

Faculty and librarian collaboration is very important for the growth of the OER movement. Larson (2020) noticed a rising trend of OER adoption in faculty who want to improve teaching practices and lower student expenses in faculty. Libraries support this shift by promoting affordable, open materials over traditional textbooks ⁽⁴⁾. Mosharraf (2024) noticed that faculty often hesitate to adopt OER due to lack of proper knowledge about OER ⁽⁵⁾.

Upneja (2020) observed that the majority of library professionals know about OER, but a lack of institutional policies and support significantly hinders their ability to promote and implement OER initiatives effectively ⁽¹⁰⁾. Coyne (2020) identified the barriers to implementing OER like institutional culture, lack of a clear roadmap, etc. and recommended CPD (Continuing Professional Development) for librarians, and adding-on skills like teaching, IT, and soft skills to enhance their capabilities ⁽²⁾. Schultz and Azadbakht (2021) found that due to a training gap, librarians do not prioritize OER in their work but they value the importance of OER accessibility ⁽⁸⁾. Ogunbodede and Bulor (2023) found that Nigerian librarians support OER initiatives but implementation of OER is hindered by frequent power outages, poor internet connectivity, lack of staff awareness etc. ⁽⁶⁾.

3.1. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1. To find out the viewpoint of the library professionals about OER initiatives.
- 3.1.2. To find out librarians' familiarity regarding Open Educational Resources.
- 3.1.3. To identify the jobs performed by the library personnel and also to gather knowledge about the processes in OER initiatives in which library personnel are vigorously involved.
- 3.1.4. To explore the accessibility rate of OER and the OER services provided in their institution.
- 3.1.5. To examine the advantages and barriers associated with OER integration.
- 3.1.6. To find out the strategies taken by the librarians to overcome the barriers.

3.2. Scope

The study covers different categories of personnel, like professional, semi-professional & non-professional staff, who work in the central library of these colleges. This study explores the viewpoint of academic librarians about OER. This survey highlights the crucial roles of library professionals in OER adoption and utilization in their institution.

3.3. Sample Size

This study selected only 11 college libraries out of a total 154 colleges affiliated with Calcutta University from two districts, i.e., Kolkata District and Hooghly District. Selected colleges are given below:

NAME OF THE DISTRICT	NAME OF THE COLLEGE
KOLKATA	Asutosh College
	Basanti Devi College
	Muralidhar Girls' College
	Vidyasagar College
	Chittaranjan College
	Charuchandra College
HOOGHLY	Bidhan Chandra College
	Serampore Girls' College
	Serampore College
	Raja Peary Mohan College
	Swami Niswambalananda Girls' College

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey-based method through well- structured questionnaires was used for this study. 15 questionnaires were distributed, and out of them, 11 completed questionnaires were ultimately received and reviewed. The collected data were then analyzed using statistical methods. Data is presented via tables and charts with frequencies and percentages by using Excel.

5. Limitations

This study covered only 11 colleges out of 154 colleges under the sponsorship of Calcutta University. Therefore, the outcomes of this study are limited only to the evaluated colleges. This study explores the viewpoint of librarians about OER but omits the feedback of library patrons, whose daily needs drive library services. Self-selection bias may exist because participation was voluntary.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

6.1. Library staff: The findings of the study indicated that the total share of women among total selected library personnel (41) were confirmed 48.78% (20), while the remaining 51.22% (21) were male. Among the sample library personnel, 4.88% (2) of library personnel were less than 25 years, 7.32% (3) of library personnel were between 25-30 years, 17.07% (7) of library personnel were between

30-35 years & 70.73% (29) library personnel were above 35 years of age. This study found that 34.15% (14) of respondents were professional, 12.19% (5) of the respondents were semi-professional & remaining 53.66% (22) of the respondents were non- professional staff. This study also revealed that 7.32% (3) of library personnel have under 3 years of experience, 17.07% (7) have 3-6 years, 19.51% (8) have 6-9 years and 56.10% (23) have more than 9 years.

6.2. Collection of the Libraries: This study found that most of the libraries (81.82%) have diverse resources, while the remaining 18.18% (2) have limited resources.

6.3. Status of Automation: This study found that out of the 11 college libraries, 5 (45.45%) are fully automated, while the remaining 6 (54.55%) are partially automated. Integrated Library Management Software KOHA is used by the libraries for extending facilities of automated search and online access.

6.4. Status of Digitization: The results of the study revealed that 63.64% (7) of the libraries provide hybrid i.e. traditional and digital services. They manage their digital resources by utilizing DSpace software

6.5. Familiarity with OER: Survey results revealed that the majority of the respondents (72.73%) considered them very familiar with OER (Table -1).

Table - 1: Familiarity with OER

Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
Very familiar	8	72.73%
Slightly familiar	1	9.09%
Moderately familiar	1	9.09%
Not at all familiar	1	9.09%
Never heard of it	-	-
Total Responses	11	100%

6.6. Librarians' Support for OER & Importance of OER in Academic Libraries

Librarians mentioned that OERs are very crucial for education and information accessibility. They also mentioned that academic libraries are the key promoters of the OER movement. But they are concerned regarding the quality, long-term sustainability, and integration of OER with existing library systems.

6.7. Key Requirements for OER Integration:

This study's findings indicated that the successful integration of OER in libraries depends on some factors such as funding and upgraded digital infrastructure, staff training, institutional policies, and faculty-library collaboration (Fig. 1).

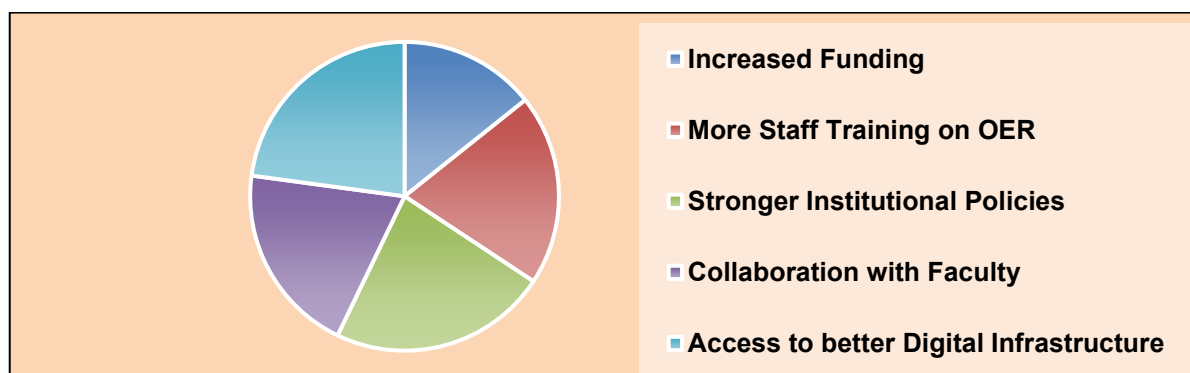


Fig. 1: Key Requirements for OER Integration

6.8. Incorporation of Open Educational Resources into Library Services

The study found that out of 11 college libraries, 5 (45.45%) have incorporated OER into their core services, the remaining 6 (54.55%) plan to do so in the future.

6.9. Usage level of OER among LIS Professionals

The results of the study revealed that library professionals are leaning more on OER to optimize academic instruction and research outcomes. Table-2 presents the frequency of OER use by library professionals in their daily activities.

Table 2: Usage level of OER among LIS Professionals

Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
Very frequently	5	45.45%
Occasionally	3	27.27%
Rarely	2	18.18%
Never	1	9.09%
Total Responses	11	100%

6.10. Adoption of OER by the Faculty Members for Teaching:

Faculty in the selected colleges actively integrate OER into their professional practice (Table-3).

Table-3: Adoption of OER by the Faculty Members for Teaching

Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
Very likely	2	18.18%
Somewhat likely	8	72.73%
Not likely	-	-
Uncertain	1	9.09%
Total Responses	11	100%

6.11. Levels of User Awareness regarding OER:

Survey results indicated varying levels of user awareness, from minimal to extensive (Table-4).

Table-4: Levels of User Awareness regarding OER

Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
Very Aware	1	9.09%
Slightly Aware	4	36.36%
Moderately Aware	4	36.36%
Not Aware	2	18.18%
Total Responses	11	100%

6.12. Users Demand for OER: The survey results revealed that users consistently depend on OER materials for their studies. Both educators and students recognize the benefits of OER.

Conversely, 3 respondents (27.27%) mentioned that OER materials were very accessible and 2 respondents (18.18%) mentioned that the materials were rarely or never accessible to students and faculty at their institution (Fig. 2).

6.13. Accessibility of OER: Most of the respondents (54.55%) mentioned that OER materials were moderately accessible to students and faculty at their institution.

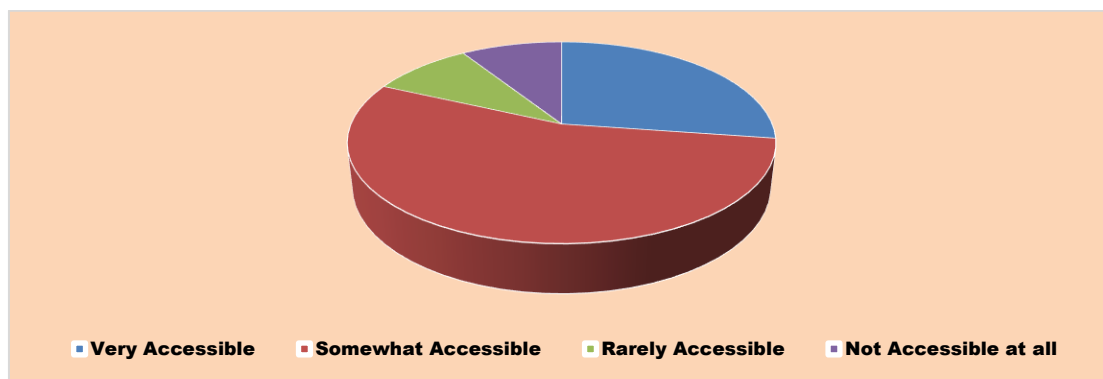


Fig. 2: Accessibility of OER

6.14. Types of OER frequently provided

Figure 2 illustrates the OER formats most frequently provided by the participating libraries. The findings of this study revealed that Open Textbooks are the most commonly

provided as Open Educational Resource. 8 college libraries offering them, followed by Journals & Articles (7), Learning Modules & Course Materials (7), Multimedia Resources (2), and Magazines (1).

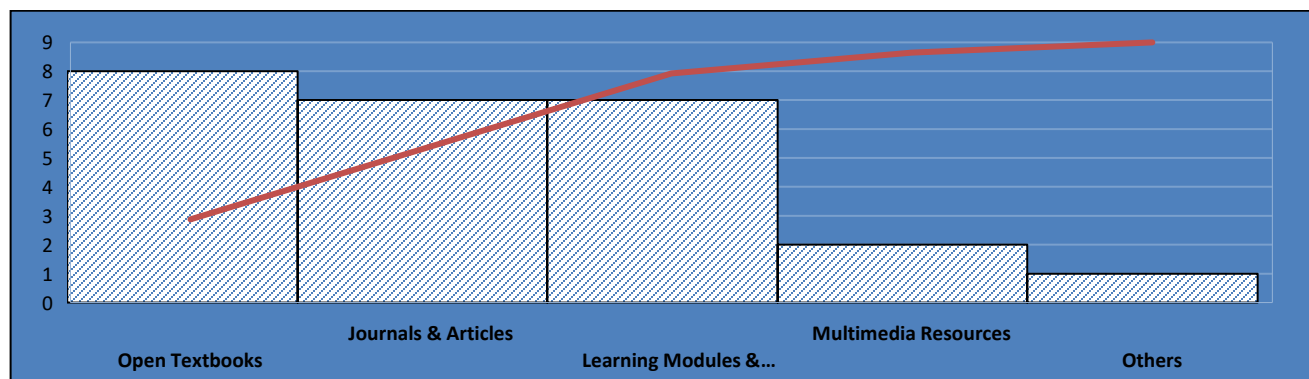


Fig. 3: Types of OER frequently provided

6.15. Barriers to integrating OER

Respondents identified various types barriers to integrating OER such as, copyright concern, insufficient budget and

upgraded digital infrastructures, low faculty participation and awareness, and training gaps (Fig. 4).

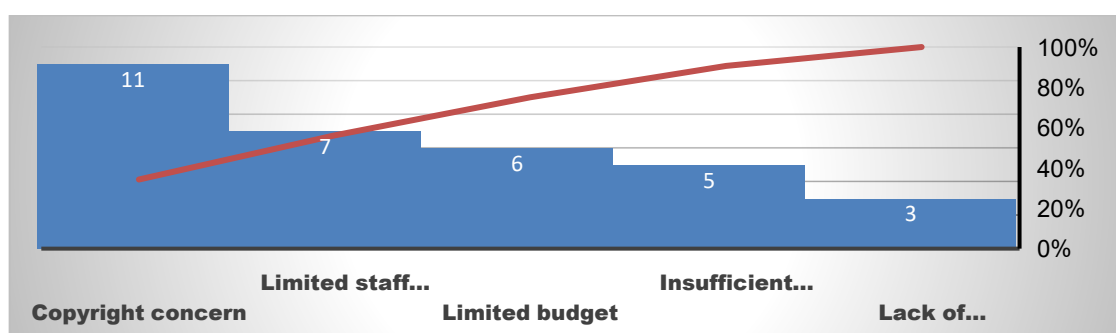


Fig. 4: Barriers to integrating OER

6.16. OER as primary library resources in the near future-

Table- 5 outlines the anticipated decade-long shift toward OER as a primary resource in Indian academic libraries, based on respondent feedback.

Table -5: Anticipated decade-long shift toward OER

Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
Very likely	3	27.27%
Somewhat likely	7	63.64%
Unlikely	1	9.09
Unsure	-	-
Total Responses	11	100%

6.17 Promoting and Maintaining OER Knowledge via Training Programmes

This study investigated how academic librarians maintain their OER awareness. It found that 18.18% rely on formal training

and 36.36% on informal training, while 45.45% are interested in future learning opportunities (Table-6).

Table 6: Promoting and Maintaining OER knowledge via Training Programmes

Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
Yes, formal training	2	18.18%
Yes, informal training	4	36.36%
No, but interested in learning	5	45.45%
No, and not interested	-	-
Total Responses	11	100%

7. FINDINGS

- a. Out of the 41 respondents, 14 (34.15%) were professional, 5 (12.19%) were semi-professional and the remaining 22 (53.66%) were non-professional staff.
- b. Out of the 11 surveyed libraries, 9 (81.82%) libraries have a variety of library resources, while the remaining 2 (18.18%) libraries have limited collections.
- c. The study revealed that library automation is essential to manage growing digital collections and provide 24x7 access.
- d. This study indicated that Calcutta University affiliated college libraries are increasingly adopting the digitization process to enhance information accessibility and preservation.
- e. The findings revealed that the majority of the librarians were aware of OER and its benefits in the educational field.
- f. Survey results showed strong support for Open Educational Resources and also indicated that librarians see OER as a transformative force for education.
- g. This study's findings indicated that funding, upgraded digital infrastructure, staff training, institutional policies, and faculty collaboration, etc. are the key factors to incorporate OER into libraries.
- h. The study found that out of 11 college libraries, only 5 (45.45%) have incorporated OER into their core services whereas the remaining 6 (54.55%) plan to do so in the future.
- i. The results of the study revealed that library professionals are leaning more on OER to optimize academic instruction and research outcomes.
- j. The survey results revealed the three main hindrances to OER adoption among users are language barriers, time constraints, and quality concerns.
- k. The survey also indicated that the demand for OER from users is growing, driven by the need for affordable learning materials, flexibility, and accessibility.
- l. The findings of this study revealed that Open Textbooks, Journals & Articles, Learning Modules & Course Materials are the most commonly provided Open Educational Resource.
- m. This study identified copyright concerns, limited budget, and limited staff training as the three major barriers to implementing OER services.

8. CONCLUSION

Academic librarians are the vital people for the growth of OER as they provide essential support, expertise, and resources. Confidence and positive beliefs of librarians about OER play a vital role in adopting and using these resources. Findings indicate that library professionals are increasingly trusting OER to upgrade the quality of institutional teaching and research outcomes. Findings suggest that the rapid growth of OER movement and increased participation of faculty in it will make the role of the librarian even more important. This survey also reveals that most library professionals are familiar with OER and are willing to participate in the OER movement. But unfortunately, they face several problems to lead the OER movement such as, insufficient budget and upgraded digital infrastructures, institutional policies, low faculty participation and awareness, and training gaps.

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About the Corresponding Author



Indira Dey is a former student of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, India. She has a strong interest in higher education and interdisciplinary research. Her academic pursuits reflect a commitment to continuous learning, critical inquiry, and contributing to scholarly discussions across diverse fields through research and academic engagement.