



## **ONE NATION ONE SUBSCRIPTION: A STEP TOWARDS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Union Cabinet, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the One Nation One Subscription initiative, a new Central Sector Scheme designed to ensure nationwide access to scholarly research articles and journal publications. This scheme will be implemented through a seamless, digital, and user-friendly system. It aims to provide a unified subscription service for government funded higher education institutions and central government R&D laboratories. The One Nation One Subscription initiative seeks to democratize access to academic knowledge, reduce the educational gap, and ensure equal opportunities for research and learning across the country. This article delves into the concept, advantages, and potential challenges of the scheme, emphasizing its transformative impact on India's education sector.

*Keywords: One Nation One Subscription, Higher Education, Knowledge, Academic Resources.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Access to knowledge is a fundamental driver of progress and innovation, yet in India, socio-economic disparities and unequal distribution of educational resources have long hindered equitable learning opportunities. The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative, introduced by the Government of India, aims to address these challenges by providing nationwide access to high-quality scholarly research articles and journals. By removing financial and institutional barriers to academic resources, ONOS seeks to democratize knowledge and foster an inclusive research ecosystem.

Aligned with India's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat@2047, this initiative will ensure that students, educators, and researchers across all regions—including tier-2 and tier-3 cities—have access to critical academic literature. Through a unified national subscription model, ONOS is set to revolutionize India's research landscape, bridging the knowledge gap and strengthening the country's position in the global academic community.

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## **BACKDROPOFTHESTUDY**

India, with its vast population and diverse socio-economic conditions, faces considerable challenges in ensuring equal access to knowledge. Disparities in education and resource distribution hinder national progress, necessitating innovative solutions. The One Nation One Subscription initiative is a significant step in addressing these issues. On August 15, 2022, during his Independence Day speech from the Red Fort, the Prime Minister of India emphasized the importance of Research and Development (R&D) in the nation's growth during the Amrit Kaal. He also introduced the slogan "Jai Anusandhan" to highlight the need for scientific advancements. Additionally, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recognized research as an essential component for quality education and national development.

In alignment with the vision of making India Atmanirbhar and achieving Viksit Bharat@2047, the Government of India has approved the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme. This initiative will grant nationwide access to high-impact international scholarly research articles and journals to students, faculty, and researchers across centrally and state-managed Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Research & Development (R&D) institutions.

Before the introduction of the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative, access to subscription-based journals was managed through multiple library consortia operated by government departments, academic institutions, and research organizations. Many higher education and research institutions also relied on individual subscriptions to access scholarly resources. The major consortia facilitating access included the E-ShodhSindhu (ESS) Consortium under the Department of Higher Education (DHE), the National Knowledge Resource Consortium (NKRC) managed by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), and the DERCON Consortium under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). Other significant consortia included the CERA Consortium under the Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE), the DRDO Consortium overseen by the Department of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D), and the Electronic Resources in Medicine (ERMED) Consortium under the Department of Health Research (DHR). Additionally, the Ministry of Electronics



and Information Technology (MeitY) managed digital and electronic resources, while the DeLCON Consortium served the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and institutes in the NorthEastern region. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) Consortium facilitated research in atomic energy, and the Department of Space (DoS) Consortium supported institutions involved in space research. These consortia played a vital role in providing access to academic journals and research publications before ONOS streamlined and unified the subscription model.

The ONOS initiative aims to secure national licenses for e-journal and database subscriptions from leading academic publishers. A total of 30 major international journal publishers have been included in this scheme, ensuring access to their entire collection for participating institutions. This initiative is expected to benefit around 1.8 crore students, faculty members, and researchers across various disciplines, including those in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. By providing access to top-quality scholarly journals, ONOS will promote both core and interdisciplinary research across the country.

The scheme is set to commence on January 1, 2025, with Phase-I approved for the years 2025, 2026, and 2027. Access to these journals will be facilitated through a national subscription coordinated by the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre, an autonomous institution under the University Grants Commission (UGC), based in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The Department of Higher Education, Government of India, will manage a centralized portal (Web Link: <https://www.onos.gov.in/>), enabling institutions to access these journals seamlessly.

Furthermore, the ANRF (Academic and Research Funding body) will periodically review the utilization of ONOS and assess the contributions of Indian authors from participating institutions. By ensuring widespread access to academic resources, the One Nation One Subscription initiative will strengthen India's position in the global research ecosystem and enhance the ease of conducting research in government institutions.

## **KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the feasibility, potential impact, and benefits of the "One Nation, One Subscription" model in ensuring equitable access to knowledge resources across



India, addressing existing knowledge gaps, and promoting economic, social, and educational development.

- To identify the challenges, limitations, and possible mitigation strategies for effectively implementing the "One Nation, One Subscription" initiative, ensuring its sustainability and long-term success.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- How can the "One Nation, One Subscription" initiative enhance equitable access to scholarly knowledge and bridge existing educational and research disparities in India?
- What are the key challenges and potential solutions in implementing the "One Nation, One Subscription" model to ensure its long-term effectiveness and sustainability?

## **RESEARCH METHODS AND APPROACH**

In alignment with the study's objectives, a comprehensive research methodology has been designed to examine the "One Nation, One Subscription" initiative and its potential impact on equitable access to knowledge in India. This study primarily relies on secondary data analysis, utilizing information from scholarly journal articles, government reports, policy documents, and conference/seminar papers relevant to the subject. A qualitative approach has been adopted to critically assess the feasibility, benefits, and challenges of implementing a unified subscription model for knowledge resources. By systematically reviewing existing literature and policy frameworks, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how ONOS can bridge knowledge gaps and enhance research accessibility in India.

## **REVIEWED LITERATURE FOR THE STUDY**

- Digital library initiatives in India have played a crucial role in preserving knowledge, improving accessibility, and modernizing library services. Various government and institutional efforts have led to the development of digital repositories such as the National Digital Library of India (NDLI) and other state-level programs, aimed at making books, research papers, and rare manuscripts available to a wider audience. These digital archives serve as essential resources for students, researchers, and the



general public. However, challenges such as gaps in digital infrastructure, copyright concerns, and the need for more user-friendly platforms hinder their full potential. The success of digital libraries in India depends on robust policy support, technological innovations, and greater public awareness to maximize their impact.

It is in this context that *Sankhayan Mukherjee and Swapan Kumar Patra's book, Digital Library Initiatives in India: A Comprehensive Study (2023)*, is significant. The book examines the evolution of digital libraries in India, highlighting key challenges and future prospects. The authors emphasize the need for strong policies, improved digital infrastructure, and innovative strategies to enhance the role of digital libraries in knowledge dissemination and preservation.

- Public libraries play a crucial role in promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and access to information. However, in India, the absence of a unified national policy has led to disparities in library services across states. While several state-level public library acts exist, gaps in funding, infrastructure, and digital transformation continue to hinder their efficiency. Public libraries require better institutional frameworks, financial support, and modernization strategies to function effectively as inclusive knowledge centers. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure that libraries can adapt to the changing needs of society and bridge the digital divide. In light of these challenges, the work of *B. Preedip Balaji, M.S. Vinay, and J.S. Mohan Raju in A Policy Review of Public Libraries in India (2018)*, published by IIHS, holds great relevance. Their study delves into the complexities of public library policies in India, highlighting critical gaps in legislation, financial constraints, and the evolving role of digital transformation. The authors emphasize the urgent need for a cohesive national policy to streamline regulations, enhance accessibility, and strengthen libraries as essential hubs for education and research.
- The study *Research Productivity of India's Scientific Literature on Library Science and Information Science (2022)* by *Rajkumar. N* holds significant academic relevance in evaluating India's Library and Information Science (LIS) research landscape. This comprehensive analysis examines trends in LIS research output, tracing its evolution from early contributions to recent advancements. By employing a data-driven



approach, it critically assesses publication volume, thematic distribution, and research impact, shedding light on the intellectual growth of the field. A key focus of the study is identifying research trajectories in terms of publication frequency, preferred journals, and institutional affiliations. It explores dominant themes such as digital libraries, bibliometrics, knowledge management, and technology's role in library services. Additionally, it analyzes national and international collaborations, highlighting co-authorship trends and institutional partnerships.

Beyond quantitative insights, the study discusses how emerging technologies, policy changes, and evolving user needs have influenced LIS research priorities. It underscores the role of government initiatives, funding, and digital infrastructure while also addressing challenges such as access to global databases and the impact of open-access publishing. By providing a well-rounded assessment of India's LIS research productivity, the study serves as a valuable resource for scholars and policymakers. It emphasizes the need for strategic policy interventions, technological integration, and innovation to enhance research quality and strengthen India's global presence in LIS scholarship.

- In the context of assessing the research output in *Library and Information Science (LIS) in India*, S.K. Sonkar's study, *Library and Information Science Research in India: A Bibliometric Assessment of Publications Output during 2014-18 (2020)*, provides significant insights. This bibliometric analysis systematically examines LIS research publications from India within the specified period, offering a detailed evaluation of growth patterns, citation impact, and thematic trends. The study highlights the steady increase in LIS research output, analyzing the distribution of publications across various journals, conferences, and institutional affiliations. It identifies key research areas, including digital libraries, information retrieval, bibliometrics, knowledge management, and open-access publishing. By tracking citation impact and author productivity, the study sheds light on the most influential contributors and institutions in India's LIS research landscape. A notable aspect of the study is its exploration of collaborative research trends, both at the national and international levels. It assesses co-authorship patterns, institutional collaborations, and interdisciplinary engagements, emphasizing the growing importance of research networking in advancing LIS scholarship. Furthermore, the study examines the role of



government policies, academic funding, and digital initiatives in shaping research productivity. By providing a comprehensive bibliometric evaluation, Sonkar's study contributes to understanding the evolving LIS research environment in India. It offers valuable recommendations for improving research quality, fostering collaborations, and enhancing the visibility of Indian LIS scholarship at the global level. The study serves as an essential resource for policymakers, academicians, and LIS professionals aiming to strengthen research development in the field.

### **Exploring One Nation One Subscription: Enhancing Access to Academic Resources**

The Government of India has introduced the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative, a Central Sector Scheme designed to provide nationwide access to academic research articles and journal publications. This scheme, which will operate through a seamless and fully digital system, aims to support higher education institutions and research laboratories managed by the central government. Over three years (2025–2027), approximately ₹6,000 crore has been allocated to ensure its successful implementation.

The initiative builds upon previous government efforts to enhance access to quality higher education and promote research and innovation. Administered by the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), an autonomous body under the University Grants Commission (UGC), ONOS will benefit over 6,300 institutions and nearly 1.8 crore students, faculty members, and researchers across the country, including those in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. This aligns with the objectives of Viksit Bharat@2047, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), fostering both specialized and interdisciplinary research.

A unified digital portal will facilitate access to subscribed journals, while ANRF will periodically assess the scheme's impact, including its contribution to research output by Indian scholars. Additionally, the Department of Higher Education, in collaboration with state governments and relevant ministries, will actively promote awareness and engagement with ONOS through outreach campaigns. By ensuring



equitable access to global academic resources, this initiative is set to strengthen India's research ecosystem and academic landscape.

### POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ONOS

- **Comprehensive Accessibility:** The One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) initiative operates under a unified national-level subscription model, enabling seamless access to an extensive collection of academic and research materials. Through this platform, users—including students, educators, and researchers— can conveniently access a diverse range of resources such as e-books, peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, and online courses. By consolidating these resources under a single framework, ONOS eliminates the need for multiple institutional subscriptions, thereby streamlining the process of accessing scholarly content across educational and research institutions in India.
- **Equal Distribution of Knowledge:** One of the primary objectives of ONOS is to bridge the gap in knowledge access and ensure equal educational opportunities for all users, regardless of their geographical location, financial background, or institutional affiliation. The initiative significantly reduces disparities in resource availability by offering a standardized level of access to high-quality academic materials, making knowledge more inclusive and accessible. Rural and remote institutions, which often struggle with limited access to scholarly resources due to financial and logistical constraints, stand to benefit significantly from this initiative, thus promoting a more equitable academic ecosystem.
- **Economic Viability:** The ONOS initiative is designed to reduce the financial burden on educational and research institutions by eliminating redundant subscriptions and consolidating licensing agreements at the national level. Traditionally, universities, colleges, and research institutions have had to bear high costs for individual subscriptions to scholarly journals and digital academic databases. Through ONOS, these expenses are significantly minimized as the government negotiates bulk subscriptions with publishers, making high-quality research and learning materials more economically viable. This cost-effective approach benefits not only institutions



but also individual scholars who may otherwise struggle to afford access to premium academic content.

- **Advancement in Research and Innovation:** By providing broader access to scholarly materials, ONOS plays a crucial role in fostering a more research-intensive academic environment. Researchers, educators, and students gain access to a vast repository of cutting-edge studies, enabling them to engage in innovative research and contribute to knowledge production. The initiative also enhances interdisciplinary collaboration by providing access to a wide array of academic domains, thus fostering an ecosystem of intellectual exchange and innovation. The availability of diverse academic resources empowers institutions to strengthen their research output, leading to advancements in science, technology, social sciences, and humanities.

## **CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS**

**Infrastructure and Connectivity Limitations:** One of the primary challenges in implementing ONOS is the existing digital divide across India, particularly in rural and remote areas. Many regions still lack the necessary technological infrastructure, including high-speed internet access and stable electricity supply, which can hinder seamless access to the platform's digital resources. Addressing these issues requires significant investment in technological advancements and broadband expansion to ensure equitable access for all users.

**Content Accuracy, Relevance, and Timeliness:** Maintaining a high standard of content quality is essential to the success of ONOS. It is imperative to ensure that the educational materials provided remain accurate, up-to-date, and relevant to contemporary academic and research needs. Outdated or irrelevant content could diminish the platform's effectiveness, making it less beneficial to students and researchers. Regular updates, peer reviews, and collaboration with subject matter experts are necessary to uphold the credibility and usefulness of ONOS resources.

**Digital Literacy and User Proficiency:** Another significant concern is the varying levels of digital literacy among users. Many students, educators, and researchers, especially those from rural and underprivileged backgrounds, may lack the necessary skills to



navigate and effectively utilize digital learning platforms. Without adequate digital proficiency, users may struggle to access and make the most of the available resources. To address this challenge, dedicated digital literacy programs and hands-on training workshops should be implemented to equip users with the skills required to maximize the benefits of ONOS.

**Long-Term Sustainability and Financial Viability:** Ensuring the long-term sustainability of ONOS is a critical concern that requires continuous funding and strategic financial planning. While initial investments and government backing may support the initiative's launch, securing ongoing financial resources is essential for maintenance, expansion, and content updates. A well-structured funding model involving government support, institutional contributions, and potential public-private partnerships could play a pivotal role in sustaining the initiative over the long term.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:**

- **Strategic Collaborations:** Strengthening partnerships among government bodies, academic institutions, publishers, and private enterprises is essential to maintaining content quality, improving infrastructure, and securing funding.
- **Infrastructure Enhancement:** Investments in high-speed internet, digital library infrastructure, and advanced online platforms are critical to ensuring seamless access for all users.
- **Digital Literacy Enhancement:** Specialized training programs should be introduced to improve digital literacy among users, particularly in underserved and rural regions, ensuring effective utilization of available resources.
- **Impact Assessment and Continuous Improvement:** A structured framework should be developed to regularly monitor and evaluate ONOS's effectiveness, identifying potential issues and facilitating continuous enhancement of the initiative.

#### **EXECUTING AGENCY:**



The INFLIBNET Centre, based in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, functions as an autonomous Inter-University Centre (IUC) under the University Grants Commission (UGC). It has been formally designated as the principal agency responsible for the execution and implementation of the ONOS initiative. INFLIBNET brings extensive experience in digital resource management, particularly through its administration of eShodhSindhu (ESS), India's largest academic library consortium operated under the Ministry of Education. Given its established expertise in handling digital academic resources, content licensing, and large-scale digital infrastructure, INFLIBNET has been entrusted with the operational oversight of ONOS, ensuring seamless implementation and effective distribution of resources to academic and research institutions nationwide.

#### **BENEFICIARY INSTITUTIONS:**

It is envisaged to expand access to e-resources to all 6500+ government academic and R&D institutions which is nearly three times of current beneficiaries across 10 consortia in the country. The number of beneficiary users will be increased from 56.7 Lakh to 177.82 Lakh from 2360 institutions to 6500+ institutions respectively.

#### **NO. OF PUBLISHERS & JOURNALS:**

30 publishers of full-text journals, which are subscribed by at least one of the 10 library consortia or self-subscribed by the current beneficiary institutes, have been selected. It is envisaged to acquire licenses from journal publishers for the full collection of journals published by them. Hence the no. of journals is expected to increase to about 13,000 journals.

#### **ACCESS TO JOURNALS:**

INFLIBNET has been tasked with the implementation of ONOS. Access to the journals will be made available through the campus IP address of the institute or outside campus through INFED Access Federation set up at INFLIBNET. The resources can be accessed through any device including mobiles.



## **CONCLUSION**

Currently, access to subscription-based academic journals is facilitated through various library consortia associated with government departments, academic institutions, and research organizations. Additionally, many institutions acquire subscriptions individually, leading to fragmented and sometimes redundant access to resources. At present, government, academic, and R&D institutions collectively subscribe to approximately 8,000 e-journals from different publishers, with some resources being duplicated across multiple consortia and institutions. The One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) initiative aims to centralize access to scholarly content by securing comprehensive agreements with 30 major publishers, thereby eliminating redundant subscriptions and optimizing resource distribution.

The ONOS initiative holds the potential to revolutionize India's academic and research ecosystem by providing equitable access to high-quality knowledge resources. While various challenges, such as digital infrastructure limitations, content quality management, and funding sustainability, must be addressed, a well-planned implementation strategy, collaborative efforts, and sustained policy support can help overcome these obstacles. As India moves towards establishing itself as a knowledge-driven economy, ONOS can serve as a transformative initiative that empowers students, researchers, and professionals, ultimately driving innovation, economic growth, and social progress.

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