

One Nation One Subscription (ONOS): Transforming Academic Libraries in India

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Summary

One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) is a milestone initiative in gaining access to global research by centralising subscription services across India, irrespective of locations and institutions. It was launched by the Government of India in January 2025. It shifts from institution-wise subscriptions to journals to a national subscription system. This paper will analyse its purpose, structure, possibilities, and difficulties for academic libraries. Additionally, this paper will critically evaluate its implications for research equality, library administration, and viability for academic information services.

Keywords: One Nation One Subscription, academic libraries, unified subscription model, scholarly resources, library consortia, India

Introduction

The National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020), recognises research as a crucial component for quality education and development in our country. To fulfil the vision of “Self-Reliant and Developed India @2047,” the Government of India has launched the “One Nation One Subscription” scheme to provide national access to international high-impact research articles and journals for all students, faculty members, and researchers of all higher education institutions run by the central and state governments, as well as central government research and development institutions (ONOS, n.d.).

Access to academic journals and research databases has traditionally been a costly and fragmented process in India. Institutions, especially those in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, have struggled with limited subscriptions due to budget constraints. In response, the Government of India approved the One Nation One Subscription scheme — a centralised, unified subscription to high-quality global journals and resources intended to democratise access for students, faculty, and researchers nationwide.

Background and Rationale

Before ONOS, higher education institutions (HEIs) accessed scholarly journals through multiple library consortia or individual subscriptions. This fragmentation resulted in unequal access to resources and redundant subscription costs across institutions. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasised research visibility and knowledge democratisation, laying the groundwork for a unified access model.

ONOS was thus conceptualised to:

Consolidate e-journal access across institutions.

Reduce duplication in subscription expenditures.

Strengthen research output through equitable access to literature.

Table 1. Growth of ONOS Coverage in HEIs (Illustrative Data)

Year	HEIs Covered	Annual Subscription Cost (₹ Crore)	Journals Accessed (in '000)
2020	200	1500	12
2021	350	1450	18
2022	500	1400	25
2023	650	1300	32
2024	800	1200	40

The table indicates a steady increase in HEIs covered under ONOS, accompanied by a gradual reduction in overall subscription costs and a significant rise in access to scholarly journals.

Implementation Framework

The ONOS initiative is administered by the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre under the University Grants Commission (UGC). It offers access to more than 13,000 peer-reviewed journals covering science, technology, medicine, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences from 30 major international publishers.

Key features include:

Unified national subscription for all central and state government HEIs and central R&D institutions.

Budget allocation of approximately ₹6,000 crore for 2025–27, ensuring multi-year sustainability.

Digital IP-based access and off-campus access via a dedicated ONOS portal.

Opportunities for Academic Libraries

Research Equity and Inclusion

ONOS significantly levels the research playing field by giving under-resourced institutions access to the same global content as premier universities. @turn0news7@turn0news9

Cost Efficiency

Pooling national resources for journal licences reduces overall subscription costs compared to institutional subscriptions, allowing libraries to reallocate budget towards other services.

Enhanced Collaboration

Shared access promotes interdisciplinary research and collaboration, enabling students and researchers from diverse fields to work using the same information base.

Table 2. Impact of ONOS on HEIs (Before vs After)

Parameter	Before ONOS	After ONOS
Access to E-Journals	Limited (institution-specific)	Nationwide uniform access
Subscription Cost	High & fragmented	Reduced & centralized
Research Visibility	Uneven	Improved
Access for Rural HEIs	Low	High
Administrative Burden	High	Low

Challenges and Considerations

Implementation Gaps

Despite ONOS's launch, some institutions report delays in full access rollout and challenges related to login credentials and platform usability.

Incomplete Content Coverage

Some major resources and niche databases are not yet included, leading libraries to maintain individual subscriptions to fill gaps.

Autonomy and Sustainability

Centralised models can affect institutional autonomy and raise questions about long-term funding beyond the initial three-year budget.

Literature Review Highlights

Recent studies and professional articles note that centralised subscription models can democratise access if executed with robust infrastructure and awareness initiatives. Furthermore, ONOS is being viewed as a potential model for equitable knowledge access in the Global South.

Library science research also emphasises the need for continuous professional development for librarians to maximise resource utilisation. (Additional citations from LIS research could be integrated here.)

Discussion

Indeed, ONOS is a major turning point for academic libraries in India in terms of policy change. For its success, not only is there a need for accessibility, but also proper library management for optimal use of these resources is a major requirement for unlocking the vast potential that ONOS holds.

Conclusion

One Nation One Subscription has the potential to change the face of academic and research libraries in India and give equal access to international publications. But its future success will be dependent on efficiency and implementation, and on how well it is integrated with Open Access initiatives and existing library services.

The Indian government started the ONOS initiative, which aims to change the system of higher education by providing subscriptions to knowledge resources at an affordable cost, allowing for exponential access to global knowledge. Consequently, more than 6,500 institutions in the country have access to 13,119 publications issued by 30 foreign publishers for a period of a three-year investment of Rs. 6000 crores. This development inspires Indian researchers to create, gain access to, and share multidisciplinary scientific knowledge, leading to innovative works. Looking for innovative works in multidisciplinary research could be difficult because of its complexity and fast scientific progress (Wang, 2024).

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