

Framework for Evaluating User Perspectives on Open Access Information Resources: Evidence from the University of Delhi

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ABSTRACT: Open Access (OA) information resources have significantly transformed scholarly communication by providing unrestricted access to scientific knowledge and educational materials. Universities increasingly rely on OA resources to enhance teaching, learning, and research productivity while reducing dependence on costly subscription-based databases. Despite substantial growth in OA initiatives, user awareness, accessibility, usability, information quality, and institutional support continue to influence effective utilization. This review and conceptual study develops a comprehensive analytical framework for evaluating user perspectives on Open Access Information Resources with specific reference to the University of Delhi. The study synthesizes existing scholarly literature to examine awareness, accessibility, perceived usefulness, technological readiness, library support services, user satisfaction, and barriers affecting OA adoption. A structured conceptual methodology is proposed to explain interactions among institutional infrastructure, digital literacy, information behaviour, and user experience. The review further identifies major research gaps, including limited institution-specific evaluation models and inadequate integration of accessibility, metadata quality, and user-centred service dimensions. The proposed framework offers practical guidance for academic libraries, policymakers, and university administrators seeking to improve OA service delivery. The findings emphasize that sustainable Open Access implementation requires not only technological infrastructure but also continuous user education, metadata enhancement, inclusive accessibility policies, and active library engagement. The study contributes to Library and Information Science by presenting an integrated evaluation model that can guide future empirical investigations across higher education institutions.

KEYWORDS: Open Access, Academic Libraries, Information Resources, User Perspectives, University Libraries, Information Behaviour, Digital Libraries, Scholarly Communication, Library Services, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

The rapid digital transformation of higher education has fundamentally changed the production, dissemination, preservation, and utilization of scholarly information. Open Access (OA) publishing has emerged as one of the most influential developments within scholarly communication by enabling unrestricted access to research outputs without financial or legal barriers. Unlike traditional subscription-based publishing models, OA resources facilitate equitable knowledge sharing among researchers, students, educators, and policymakers irrespective of institutional economic capacity (Holley, 2018).

Universities represent one of the primary beneficiaries of Open Access because research-intensive institutions depend heavily upon timely availability of scholarly literature. Academic libraries have

traditionally invested substantial financial resources in subscription databases; however, increasing journal subscription costs have intensified interest in OA repositories, institutional archives, open educational resources, and freely accessible scholarly databases (Hatzipanagos & Gregson, 2015).

Within India, digital library initiatives have expanded considerably during the past decade. Universities increasingly integrate Open Access resources into teaching, curriculum development, and research support services. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends largely upon users' awareness, digital competencies, institutional infrastructure, accessibility standards, and perceptions regarding information quality.

Previous investigations demonstrate that awareness alone does not necessarily translate into effective utilization. Students often possess limited understanding

of trustworthy OA repositories, licensing conditions, metadata quality, and advanced retrieval techniques (Muthuvennila & Thanuskodi, 2020). Consequently, significant differences continue to exist between resource availability and actual usage.

The University of Delhi provides an important institutional context for examining these issues because of its diverse student population, extensive academic programmes, and significant dependence upon digital scholarly resources. Evaluating user perspectives within such an environment provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of Open Access implementation and institutional support mechanisms.

Accessibility remains another essential dimension of Open Access evaluation. Bhardwaj (2018) highlighted that effective information access requires not only digital availability but also inclusive mechanisms capable of supporting users with diverse accessibility requirements. The study emphasized that accessibility infrastructure significantly influences equitable information utilization, particularly within higher education institutions. These observations remain highly relevant while evaluating Open Access services in contemporary university libraries (Bhardwaj, 2018).

The increasing integration of Open Access resources during the COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated their strategic importance. During periods of restricted physical library access, freely available scholarly information became indispensable for maintaining academic continuity (Matonkar & Dhuri, 2021). This experience reinforced the necessity of sustainable OA policies within higher education.

Although numerous studies have examined awareness, utilization, and perceptions regarding OA resources, existing literature generally investigates isolated variables such as awareness, usage frequency, or attitudes. Comprehensive analytical models integrating institutional support, accessibility, technological readiness, metadata quality, information behaviour, and user satisfaction remain comparatively limited.

Accordingly, this article develops a comprehensive analytical framework capable of evaluating multiple dimensions influencing user perspectives toward Open Access Information Resources. Rather than examining individual determinants independently, the proposed framework considers interactions among institutional, technological, behavioural, and informational factors affecting successful OA implementation.

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the conceptual foundations of Open Access Information Resources.

- To synthesize existing literature concerning user awareness, attitudes, accessibility, and utilization.
- To identify major determinants influencing user perspectives.
- To develop an integrated analytical framework suitable for evaluating Open Access services within higher education institutions.
- To identify research gaps and practical implications for academic libraries.

The significance of this study extends beyond theoretical contribution. Academic libraries increasingly require evidence-based frameworks for evaluating digital services, allocating resources, improving accessibility, and strengthening user engagement. A multidimensional evaluation model enables librarians and policymakers to identify strengths and weaknesses across various service dimensions while supporting strategic planning for sustainable OA implementation.

2. Literature Review

The scholarly literature demonstrates that Open Access has evolved from a publishing alternative into an essential component of contemporary knowledge dissemination. Existing research consistently emphasizes that successful OA implementation depends upon technological infrastructure, institutional policy, user awareness, accessibility, information quality, and library support.

Holley (2018) described Open Access as a transformative mechanism capable of reshaping scholarly communication by reducing financial barriers associated with traditional publishing. The study emphasized that expanding institutional repositories, disciplinary archives, and OA journals has substantially improved research visibility and global knowledge exchange. However, sustainable implementation requires institutional commitment, quality assurance mechanisms, and continued investment in digital infrastructure.

Similarly, Hatzipanagos and Gregson (2015) examined the relationship between Open Access and Open Educational Resources within distance learning environments. Their findings demonstrated that unrestricted educational resources promote inclusive learning opportunities while supporting flexible teaching methodologies. The study argued that technological accessibility should be accompanied by effective instructional design and user engagement strategies to maximize educational outcomes.

Research focusing upon university libraries indicates that organizational support significantly influences successful OA adoption. Chigbu, Njoku, and Uzoagba

(2016) investigated management and utilization of Open Access scholarly resources within Nigerian university libraries. Their findings revealed that institutional awareness programmes, librarian guidance, and digital infrastructure substantially affected resource utilization. The authors further observed that inadequate user training and inconsistent institutional policies frequently limited effective adoption despite widespread availability of OA resources.

Within the Indian higher education context, Muthuvennila and Thanuskodi (2018) explored the impact of Open Access resources among Library and Information Science students. Their investigation suggested that students generally recognized the academic value of OA materials but encountered challenges associated with information retrieval, source evaluation, and resource discovery. The study recommended systematic user education programmes to improve information literacy competencies.

A subsequent investigation by Muthuvennila and Thanuskodi (2020) extended this discussion by examining user perceptions among college students. Their results demonstrated that perceived usefulness strongly influenced user satisfaction, whereas limited awareness regarding specialized repositories reduced overall utilization. The study emphasized that libraries should actively promote OA collections through workshops, orientation programmes, and digital reference services.

Another important dimension concerns accessibility and inclusive information services. Bhardwaj (2018) investigated information access mechanisms for visually impaired students within higher education institutions in Delhi. The study highlighted that effective information systems must address accessibility requirements alongside resource availability. The findings demonstrated that assistive technologies, accessible digital interfaces, and institutional support significantly improve equitable access to scholarly information. These observations reinforce the importance of incorporating accessibility indicators into any comprehensive evaluation framework for Open Access resources (Bhardwaj, 2018).

The relationship between user awareness and actual utilization has been extensively examined in Library and Information Science research. Hussain, Shahzad, and Awan (2021) investigated the use of subscribed and Open Access information resources among Library and Information Science (LIS) research scholars. Their findings indicated that although scholars increasingly relied on Open Access resources for literature searching and academic writing, subscription databases continued to be preferred for highly specialized

research because of perceived quality assurance. The authors argued that awareness programmes conducted by university libraries significantly improved users' confidence in identifying reliable OA resources. This finding suggests that user education remains an essential component of successful Open Access implementation.

Similarly, Ishfaq, Sheikh, and Baquee (2022) explored awareness, utilization, and attitudes of Indian higher education students toward scholarly Open Access resources. Their empirical investigation revealed that students generally possessed positive attitudes regarding freely accessible scholarly literature but demonstrated varying levels of digital literacy when evaluating information credibility. The authors emphasized that academic institutions should integrate Open Access literacy within information literacy programmes to enhance critical evaluation skills and responsible scholarly communication.

Professional perceptions of Open Access publishing have also attracted considerable scholarly attention. Majhi, Baral, and Maharana (2018) examined perceptions of Open Access publishing routes among Library and Information Science professionals in Odisha. The study reported widespread acceptance of OA publishing because of its ability to increase research visibility, citation potential, and dissemination speed. Nevertheless, respondents expressed concerns regarding publication quality, predatory journals, copyright issues, and inconsistent peer-review mechanisms. These findings illustrate that user perceptions extend beyond accessibility and include trust, scholarly credibility, and publication ethics.

Researchers' attitudes toward Open Access resources have been further explored by Mangai and Ganesan (2021). Their study proposed that positive perceptions arise when users experience high information quality, ease of retrieval, institutional encouragement, and technological convenience. Conversely, limited digital competencies, inadequate search skills, and uncertainty regarding source authenticity reduce effective utilization. Their work emphasized that user perception represents a multidimensional construct influenced by cognitive, behavioural, and technological variables rather than simple resource availability.

Expanding upon this perspective, Mangai and Ganesan (2023) investigated researchers' responses toward Open Access resources in higher learning institutions of Tamil Nadu. Their findings demonstrated that institutional policy, librarian assistance, metadata organization, and repository usability substantially affected researchers' satisfaction levels. The study concluded that universities should adopt user-centred service strategies to improve resource discoverability and maximize research productivity.

Metadata quality constitutes another important determinant of Open Access effectiveness. Chan et al. (2024) examined the evolving role of metadata librarians in Open Access environments. Their study emphasized that high-quality metadata enhances resource discovery, retrieval precision, interoperability, and long-term preservation. Accurate metadata enables users to identify relevant scholarly materials efficiently while supporting institutional repositories and digital library services. The authors argued that metadata management has become a strategic responsibility within modern academic libraries because discoverability directly influences resource utilization.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the strategic importance of Open Access information resources. Matonkar and Dhuri (2021) observed that restrictions on physical library access significantly increased dependence upon freely accessible digital resources. Their findings demonstrated that Open Access collections ensured continuity of teaching, learning, and research activities during institutional closures. This experience reinforced the necessity for sustainable digital infrastructures and proactive library support services.

Collectively, the reviewed literature identifies several recurring determinants influencing Open Access utilization, including awareness, accessibility, digital literacy, institutional support, metadata quality, technological infrastructure, information credibility, user satisfaction, and librarian engagement. Despite considerable scholarly attention, most investigations examine these variables independently rather than integrating them within a comprehensive analytical framework.

Moreover, institution-specific evaluation models remain comparatively limited. Existing studies rarely combine accessibility considerations with technological usability, metadata quality, information behaviour, and organizational support. Bhardwaj (2018) further demonstrated that accessibility should be considered a central dimension of information service evaluation rather than a peripheral concern. However, accessibility indicators remain insufficiently represented within many existing Open Access evaluation frameworks.

Research Gap

The literature synthesis reveals five major research gaps.

First, previous investigations predominantly examine awareness or utilization independently without integrating behavioural, institutional, technological, and accessibility dimensions into a unified analytical framework.

Second, relatively limited literature evaluates Open Access services within large multidisciplinary universities such as the University of Delhi, where diverse academic communities may demonstrate varying information behaviours.

Third, accessibility considerations for users with different information needs receive comparatively limited integration despite evidence demonstrating their importance for equitable information access (Bhardwaj, 2018).

Fourth, metadata quality and repository organization remain underrepresented within user perception models despite their direct influence on discoverability and retrieval effectiveness (Chan et al., 2024).

Finally, limited conceptual models explain the dynamic relationships among institutional support, user awareness, technological readiness, information quality, and long-term user satisfaction.

These gaps justify the development of a comprehensive analytical framework capable of evaluating multiple determinants simultaneously.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a systematic conceptual review methodology combined with an analytical framework development approach. Rather than generating new empirical data, the research synthesizes findings from the thirteen selected scholarly publications to identify recurring themes, theoretical relationships, and practical determinants affecting user perspectives on Open Access Information Resources.

The review-based methodology is appropriate because the primary objective is to consolidate existing knowledge into an integrated framework that can guide future empirical investigations within higher education institutions.

Conceptual Foundation

The proposed analytical framework is based upon the assumption that user perception represents a multidimensional outcome influenced by interactions among institutional, technological, behavioural, informational, and accessibility-related variables.

The framework considers user perception as the dependent construct influenced by six primary dimensions:

1. User Awareness

Awareness includes knowledge regarding Open Access repositories, scholarly journals, institutional repositories, licensing conditions, copyright principles,

and resource availability. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that awareness directly affects utilization frequency (Muthuvennila & Thanuskodi, 2020).

2. Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the ease with which users can obtain scholarly information irrespective of physical, technological, or cognitive limitations. This includes interface usability, assistive technologies, device compatibility, and inclusive digital design. Bhardwaj (2018) emphasized that accessibility significantly determines equitable information utilization within higher education institutions.

3. Information Quality

Users evaluate Open Access resources according to relevance, credibility, currency, completeness, accuracy, and scholarly authority. Information quality substantially influences trust and long-term adoption.

4. Technological Infrastructure

Institutional technological readiness includes internet connectivity, repository architecture, search functionality, metadata organization, authentication systems, and digital preservation capabilities.

5. Library Support Services

Library services encompass orientation programmes, information literacy workshops, research consultation, digital reference assistance, repository promotion, and user training initiatives.

6. User Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction reflects users' cumulative evaluation of accessibility, usability, information quality, and institutional support. Higher satisfaction encourages repeated utilization and positive attitudes toward Open Access.

Development of the Proposed Analytical Framework

The proposed framework conceptualizes user perception as the outcome of continuous interaction among institutional support mechanisms and individual user characteristics.

The analytical process consists of five interconnected stages.

Stage 1: Resource Availability

The university provides institutional repositories, Open Access journals, digital archives, subject repositories, and electronic learning resources.

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Stage 2: User Awareness and Digital Literacy

Students and researchers develop awareness through library orientation, academic instruction, peer interaction, and independent learning.

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Stage 3: Information Access Experience

Users interact with search interfaces, metadata structures, retrieval systems, accessibility tools, and repository platforms.

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Stage 4: Perceived Information Value

Users evaluate information quality, relevance, reliability, usability, and research usefulness.

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Stage 5: Overall User Satisfaction

Positive experiences contribute to continued usage, academic productivity, research collaboration, and institutional trust.

Evaluation Dimensions

To operationalize the framework, six analytical dimensions are proposed:

Dimension Evaluation Focus

Awareness Knowledge of OA resources and services

Accessibility Ease of access and inclusive design

Information Quality Accuracy, relevance, credibility

Technological Usability Search efficiency, interface design, metadata

Library Support Training, guidance, digital services

User Satisfaction Overall perception and continued use

Analytical Interpretation Strategy

The framework recommends evaluating relationships among these dimensions using comparative thematic analysis in future empirical studies. Researchers may investigate how improvements in one dimension—for example, library training programmes—affect user awareness, information retrieval behaviour, and overall satisfaction.

Furthermore, accessibility should not be viewed solely as a technical issue but as a strategic institutional responsibility. Consistent with Bhardwaj (2018), inclusive information services enhance educational equity and expand participation among users with

diverse information needs.

The proposed framework therefore serves both as a theoretical model for scholarly investigation and as a practical decision-support tool for university libraries seeking to improve Open Access service quality.

4. Results / Findings

As this study is a review and conceptual analysis based exclusively on the thirteen selected references, the findings presented below represent synthesized outcomes from the reviewed literature rather than newly collected empirical data. The analytical framework developed in this study identifies six interrelated dimensions that consistently influence users' perspectives on Open Access (OA) information resources in higher education institutions.

The first major finding is that user awareness is the primary determinant of effective OA resource utilization. Across the reviewed studies, awareness was found to extend beyond basic familiarity with OA concepts to include knowledge of institutional repositories, subject-specific databases, copyright provisions, licensing mechanisms, and advanced search techniques. Studies by Hussain, Shahzad, and Awan (2021), Muthuvennila and Thanuskodi (2020), and Ishfaq, Sheikh, and Baquee (2022) consistently indicate that users possessing greater awareness demonstrate higher levels of information retrieval efficiency and resource utilization.

The second finding concerns the importance of accessibility and inclusive information services. The review demonstrates that unrestricted digital availability alone does not ensure equitable access. Accessibility must include user-friendly interfaces, assistive technologies, compatibility with multiple digital devices, and inclusive design principles. Bhardwaj (2018) emphasized that accessible information environments significantly improve educational participation among users with diverse information needs. Consequently, accessibility emerges as a strategic component of institutional information services rather than merely a technological feature.

A third finding identifies information quality as a critical factor affecting user trust. Users consistently evaluate OA resources according to scholarly credibility, accuracy, currency, relevance, and completeness. Although respondents generally expressed positive attitudes toward Open Access publishing, concerns regarding publication quality, predatory journals, and inconsistent peer-review standards continue to influence user confidence (Majhi, Baral, & Maharana, 2018). This finding suggests that libraries should provide guidance regarding credible OA platforms while promoting information evaluation

skills.

The review further demonstrates that metadata quality and repository organization substantially influence resource discoverability. Chan et al. (2024) argue that effective metadata management improves search precision, retrieval efficiency, interoperability, and long-term preservation. Well-structured metadata reduces search complexity and enhances users' overall experience within institutional repositories.

Another important finding concerns the strategic role of academic libraries. The literature consistently indicates that libraries contribute significantly to OA adoption through orientation programmes, research consultation, information literacy instruction, repository management, and digital reference services. Institutions that actively promote OA resources generally report higher user engagement and greater research productivity (Chigbu, Njoku, & Uzoagba, 2016).

The final finding demonstrates that user satisfaction results from the interaction of multiple institutional and technological factors rather than any single variable. Satisfaction increases when users experience reliable infrastructure, quality information, accessible interfaces, effective metadata, and continuous library support. Conversely, deficiencies within any of these dimensions reduce overall utilization despite widespread resource availability.

Collectively, these findings validate the proposed analytical framework by demonstrating that user perspectives toward Open Access Information Resources represent a multidimensional construct integrating awareness, accessibility, information quality, technological usability, institutional support, and overall satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The analytical framework developed in this study contributes to Library and Information Science by integrating diverse variables that have generally been examined independently within previous research. Rather than treating awareness, accessibility, information quality, or institutional support as isolated determinants, the framework conceptualizes these dimensions as interconnected components influencing user perceptions and Open Access adoption.

The literature indicates that awareness functions as the foundation of effective utilization; however, awareness alone cannot guarantee successful information access. Users require appropriate technological infrastructure, intuitive repository interfaces, accurate metadata, and institutional guidance to transform awareness into meaningful academic engagement. This observation supports the multidimensional perspective

proposed within the present framework.

Accessibility emerges as one of the most significant theoretical contributions of this review. Bhardwaj (2018) demonstrated that information accessibility extends beyond simple digital availability and encompasses inclusive information environments capable of serving users with diverse abilities. Incorporating accessibility into OA evaluation expands traditional models by recognizing equity and inclusion as essential indicators of service quality. Consequently, future evaluation frameworks should explicitly incorporate accessibility metrics rather than treating them as supplementary considerations.

The findings also reinforce the growing importance of metadata management within digital scholarship. Chan et al. (2024) argue that metadata librarians increasingly contribute to scholarly communication by improving discoverability, interoperability, and repository organization. This suggests that metadata quality directly influences user satisfaction through improved retrieval efficiency and enhanced resource visibility. Academic libraries should therefore consider metadata enhancement a strategic investment rather than solely a technical responsibility.

Institutional support represents another recurring theme throughout the reviewed literature. Libraries functioning as active educational partners through training workshops, research consultation, and digital literacy programmes consistently demonstrate higher levels of user engagement. These findings correspond with previous investigations emphasizing librarian involvement in promoting sustainable Open Access ecosystems (Chigbu, Njoku, & Uzoagba, 2016).

The framework further recognizes that user satisfaction represents a cumulative outcome influenced by interactions among technological, behavioural, informational, and organizational variables. This holistic perspective provides a more comprehensive explanation of user behaviour than traditional single-factor models.

From a practical perspective, universities should integrate Open Access awareness programmes into academic orientation activities while strengthening digital literacy instruction throughout higher education curricula. Institutional repositories should continuously improve metadata quality, search functionality, accessibility compliance, and user interface design. Libraries should also establish systematic assessment mechanisms to monitor user satisfaction and identify emerging information needs.

Despite its contributions, the present study possesses certain limitations. The analysis relies exclusively upon thirteen selected publications and

therefore reflects conceptual synthesis rather than empirical measurement. Furthermore, institution-specific behavioural variations cannot be evaluated without primary data collection. Future empirical investigations applying the proposed analytical framework through surveys, interviews, or mixed-method approaches would provide stronger validation across diverse university environments.

Nevertheless, the framework offers a theoretically grounded foundation capable of supporting future research, institutional assessment, and evidence-based decision-making within academic libraries.

6. Conclusion

Open Access Information Resources have become indispensable components of contemporary higher education, facilitating unrestricted scholarly communication, research collaboration, and educational equity. The literature reviewed in this study demonstrates that successful Open Access implementation depends upon a complex interaction among awareness, accessibility, information quality, technological infrastructure, metadata organization, institutional support, and user satisfaction.

This study synthesized existing scholarly evidence to develop a comprehensive analytical framework for evaluating user perspectives toward Open Access Information Resources with reference to higher education institutions. Unlike previous investigations that focused primarily on isolated determinants, the proposed framework integrates behavioural, technological, informational, organizational, and accessibility dimensions into a unified conceptual model.

The review identifies user awareness as the fundamental prerequisite for effective utilization while emphasizing that awareness alone remains insufficient without appropriate institutional support and technological infrastructure. Accessibility, particularly inclusive information services highlighted by Bhardwaj (2018), emerges as an essential component of equitable scholarly communication and should occupy a central position within future evaluation models. Similarly, metadata quality, repository usability, and librarian engagement substantially influence resource discoverability and long-term user satisfaction.

The proposed analytical framework contributes theoretically by expanding existing Open Access evaluation models and practically by offering academic libraries a structured approach for assessing service quality and user experience. Universities may employ this framework to strengthen policy development, improve digital infrastructure, enhance information literacy programmes, and optimize repository management.

Future research should empirically validate the framework across multidisciplinary universities using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method research designs. Comparative institutional studies may further examine variations in user behaviour, digital literacy, and accessibility requirements across different educational contexts.

Overall, the study concludes that sustainable Open Access ecosystems require coordinated institutional commitment, continuous technological improvement, inclusive information policies, and active user engagement. Such integrated efforts will strengthen scholarly communication and maximize the educational value of Open Access resources within higher education institutions.

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