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## ONE NATION ONE SUBSCRIPTION: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN INDIA'S ACCESS TO SCHOLARLY RESOURCES

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**Abstract :** *The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative, launched by the Government of India in 2025, marks a watershed moment in democratizing access to scholarly information. By centralizing and negotiating national licenses with leading publishers, ONOS aims to provide nearly 1.8 crore students, researchers, and faculty across government-funded academic and research institutions with seamless access to over 13,000 journals. This article presents a comprehensive analysis of ONOS, exploring its historical context, objectives, implementation strategies, anticipated impact, challenges, and global comparisons. The study underscores the transformative potential of ONOS for the Indian research ecosystem and offers recommendations for maximizing its effectiveness and sustainability.*

**Keywords :** One Nation One Subscription, ONOS, scholarly communication, digital library, journal access, INFLIBNET, India, library consortia, research policy

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**Introduction :**

India's rapid growth in research and higher education has been accompanied by persistent challenges in equitable access to high-quality scholarly resources. Traditionally, access to international journals has been fragmented, expensive, and often limited to premier institutions, leaving many universities and colleges—especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities—at a disadvantage. The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme, approved by the Union Cabinet in November 2024 and operational from January 2025, seeks to address these disparities by providing country-wide access to international, high-impact scholarly journals through a unified national subscription model.

## Historical context and rationale :

### 1. Indian Scenario :

Before ONOS, journals were accessed by Indian institutions via multiple consortia and individual subscriptions, leading to duplication, inefficiencies, and significant financial outlays. Indian universities and research organizations collectively spent over ₹1,500 crore annually on journal subscriptions, with considerable overlap and underutilization. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision emphasize the need for robust research infrastructure and equitable knowledge access as cornerstones for national development.

### 2. International Models :

Countries like China have successfully implemented national consortia, such as the National Science and Technology Library (NSTL), to negotiate favorable terms and provide thousands of institutions with broad access to scholarly resources. ONOS draws inspiration from such models, aiming to create a unified, cost-effective, and inclusive knowledge ecosystem in India.

## Objectives of the ONOS :

- **Universal Access** : Provide equitable access to over 13,000 international journals from 30 major publishers—including Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Oxford, and Cambridge—for all students, faculty, and researchers in government-funded higher education and research institutions.
- **Duplication elimination** : Replace fragmented, overlapping subscriptions with a single national license, reducing redundancy and optimizing resource allocation.
- **Promotion of Research Excellence** : Enhance research output and quality by ensuring comprehensive, up-to-date literature access across all disciplines, including STEM, medicine, social sciences, and humanities.
- **Cost Efficiency** : Achieve significant savings through centralized negotiations and bulk purchasing, freeing up funds for other academic priorities.
- **Bridging the digital divide** : Empowering institutions in under-resourced and rural areas, fostering inclusive growth and innovation.

## Implementation Strategy :

### 1. Institutional Coverage :

ONOS covers more than 6,400 institutions, including central and state universities, colleges (including all medical colleges), and central government R&D organizations, benefiting nearly 1.8 crore students, faculty, and researchers.

### 2. Access model :

- **Digital Platform** : INFLIBNET centrally manages access, using IP-based authentication and off-campus access through the INFED platform, ensuring

seamless user experience.

- **Phased Rollout** : The first phase (2025–2027) focuses on government-funded institutions, with plans to expand to private institutions and public libraries in the future.
- **Unified Portal** : A single, user-friendly portal will facilitate access, search, and usage analytics, thereby reducing administrative burden and enhancing discoverability.

### **3. Financial allocation :**

The government has allocated ₹6,000 crore for the first three years of ONOS, reflecting its commitment to long-term sustainability and nationwide impact.

### **4. Monitoring and Evaluation :**

The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) will periodically review usage statistics, publication outcomes, and user feedback to ensure the effectiveness of the scheme and guide future improvements.

### **Anticipated Impact :**

#### **1. Democratization of Knowledge :**

ONOS is poised to bridge the knowledge gap between urban and rural institutions by providing equal opportunities for academic excellence and research innovation across the country.

#### **2. Boosting Research Productivity :**

With comprehensive access to global literature, Indian researchers can effectively contribute to cutting-edge research, leading to increased publication rates, higher citation impact, and greater international collaboration.

#### **3. Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaboration :**

Universal access to a wide array of journals will encourage interdisciplinary research, supporting India's emergence as a global hub of knowledge.

#### **4. Cost savings and resource optimization :**

Centralized negotiations and elimination of duplicate subscriptions are expected to save hundreds of millions of dollars annually, enabling reinvestment in infrastructure, training, and open access initiatives.

#### **5. Empowerment of marginalized regions :**

By extending high-quality resources to tier-2 and tier-3 cities and rural institutions, ONOS can help nurture local talent, support regional research priorities, and reduce the urban-rural academic divide.

## 6. Challenges and Considerations :

- **Negotiation Complexity** : Securing favorable terms with global publishers requires skilled negotiation and ongoing dialogue to ensure comprehensive coverage and value for money.
- **Sustainability** : Long-term funding and adaptability to evolving research needs are critical for the scheme's success.
- **Awareness and Training** : The effectiveness of digital resource discovery and management depends on widespread awareness campaigns and user training.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation** : Robust mechanisms for tracking usage, impact, and user satisfaction must be maintained to inform future policy decisions.
- **Open Access and Article Processing Charges (APCs)** : While ONOS addresses "pay to read" barriers, future integration with open access publishing models and negotiation of APCs for Indian authors will be essential for comprehensive knowledge dissemination.
- **Technological infrastructure** : Ensuring reliable, high-speed internet connectivity and digital literacy, especially in remote areas, is crucial for equitable access.

## 7. Global comparisons and lessons :

ONOS aligns India with global best practices in scholarly resource management. The Chinese NSTL and similar European consortia have demonstrated the benefits of centralized negotiation, cost savings, and expanded access. India's scale and diversity present unique challenges but also offer opportunities for innovation in digital access, multilingual content, and inclusive research support.

## 8. Future Directions :

- **Expansion to the private sector** : Subsequent ONOS phases could include private universities and colleges as well as public libraries, further broadening the knowledge base.
- **Integration with Open Science** : ONOS can serve as a springboard for promoting open science, supporting Indian journals, repositories, and new research evaluation metrics.
- **Leveraging data analytics** : Usage analytics and feedback mechanisms enable continuous improvement and evidence-based policy adjustments.
- **Encouraging Local Content Creation** : ONOS could support the development of Indian scholarly journals and open educational resources, promoting indigenous research and language diversity.
- **International Collaboration** : By providing world-class resources to Indian researchers, ONOS can facilitate greater participation in global research networks and collaborative projects.

## Conclusion :

The One Nation One Subscription initiative represents a transformative step in

India's journey toward inclusive, high-quality research and education. By providing equitable, nationwide access to scholarly journals, ONOS will empower researchers, foster innovation, and strengthen India's global academic standing. Sustained commitment, strategic implementation, and stakeholder engagement will be key to realizing this visionary policy's full potential.

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