

E-Journal Publishing in India: A Case Study of Indian Statistical Institute Publication: *Sankhya* – The Indian Journal of Statistics

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Abstract

The Indian Statistical Institute publishes Sankhya- The Indian Journal of Statistics, one of the oldest statistics journal of the world. The Institute started producing the electronic version of Sankhya, and provided link to old volumes from 1999 onwards. The archives provide full text of the articles from 1999 onwards. Sankhya, a peer-reviewed science journal published by ISI, has more than 500 reviewers. There are also the editors, technical editors, co-editors and the journal official staff involved in the publishing workflow. The number of articles submitted has increased with a substantial proportion of articles coming from authors from outside India. Sankhya has its independent website: <http://www.isical.ac.in/sankhya.php>

Indian Statistical Institute and Springer Science, have signed a co-publishing agreement for the journal Sankhya. The Sankhya will be published electronically and in print by Springer from 2010. The journal will include Cross Reference Linking, alert services, and Online First™, a feature by which articles are published online before they appear in print. Springer will also implement the online author submission system, Editorial Manager. This system will be in use by authors and it allows the peer-review process to be handled faster. Manuscripts will be processed through it resulting in the speedy publication of the articles.

Keywords: *E-Journal Publishing, ISI Publication-Sankhya.*

Introduction

Electronic publishing deals with the collection, modification and distribution of information, art and software in any form, such as on physical media or via computer networks. E-publishing may be broadly divided into two categories: online and offline publishing. Online publishing uses computer and communication networks including the Internet, intranet and extranet for delivery of the content. Offline publishing uses storage media such as CD-ROM, DVD, memory card and diskette for distributing the content. By definition, electronic publication (e-

publication) is the publication of any form of electronic media. There is wide variety of e-publications now in the market, including databases, information resources, games and entertainment products. (Ramaiah, 2006).

India has been one of the major publishing countries in the world of book publishing for a long time. In addition to English, it publishes in 24 regional languages to meet the local needs of the population. There are almost 15,000 publishers registered in India, between them publishing 70,000 titles annually in 24 languages, 18 of which are more prominent and highly developed and used by millions of people. However, though the registered number of publishers is high, the majority of them are inactive and not currently publishing at all, and some of these are publishing just their own institutional titles, so the average number of publications produced by such publishers is very low. India is the sixth largest book publishing country in the world and third among English language publishing nations.

A large number of e-journals from India are published by research institutions/learned societies. Majority of these journal editors are full time academicians and part time editors. The editor is the editor-cum-publisher who reviews, rewrites and copy edits the submitted manuscripts, prints and distributes the print copies and promotes the journal. Not many editors have been able to succeed in this job and the result is seen an overall quality of the journals published from India and the representation of the Indian journals in bibliographic databases such as Science Citation Index, Chemical Abstracts etc. The involvement of Indian Commercial publishers in e-journals is limited. (Sahu, 2006).

The circulation of majority of the journals published from India is more or less limited to the members of the respective societies. Paid non-member subscriptions of the journals are usually limited to very few institutions in India. With a very less non-member

subscriptions, the Indian journals have limited visibility. With this limited visibility, articles published in the Indian journals are cited less frequently than their Western counterparts. (Sahu, 2003). The resultant low impact factor prevents authors from submitting their quality work to the Indian journals. Thus, the best articles from India are usually published in journals from outside India. Electronic publishing is the right tool for the Indian journals to reach to a wider audience and increase the visibility. (Sahu, 2003).

Most scholarly journals published from India and other developing countries face the problem such as shortage of quality research papers, low citations and impact factor, late publication schedule and poor finances. Many of these problems are inter-linked and are also related to the journals' quality and visibility. Being published by scholarly societies and associations, most of these journals have limited print circulation restricted to the members of the society or association within that country. This limited visibility has led to poor citation and impact factor, which in turn repelled the authors and subscribers. Free Web access to the journals content has the potential to solve this long standing problem of journals from the developing world. (Sahu, 2009).

Standard of Journals

Apart from the honours and titles conferred on people who do good research (which cannot be bestowed on everyone doing reasonably original and standard research), the best way to judge the quality of research is to look for publications in standard journals. Publication of research results is a service done to the society, considering the fact that public money is used for a majority of our research endeavours. It is imperative that publications are made in well-circulated journals, rather than in obscure ones. Renowned journals have excellent editorial policies and expert referees, so that almost always only good papers get published in them. Hence publishing in these journals is not easy (Suryanarayanan, 2008). The suggestion made by T.S. Suryanarayanan was welcomed that some recognized body such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) should list the standard journals in each field published from India in order to judge the quality of scientific research publications.

In the field of medicine and allied health sciences, journals indexed by MedLine/ PubMed/Index Medicus are considered as standard. There are around 50 medicine-related Indian journals indexed by PubMed. The best way to judge the quality of scientific publications by Indians in the field of health sciences is to look for publications indexed by PubMed. This would cover not only the standard Indian health sciences journals, but also journals from other countries. Publications in national and international journals not indexed by PubMed should not be considered on par with those published in journals indexed by PubMed, particularly in procedures such

as recruitment of candidates for a job, academic career advancement promotions and even while considering scientific research proposals for funding. (Menezes, 2008).

Electronic Journals (E-journals)

E-publication is the publication of any kind of information on any form of electronic media. E-publications provide many advantages compared to its print counterpart like portability, easy and 24/7 access, search ability, space-saving, customized content can be created, multimedia can be included, wider reach than print publications. E-journals have become major resources in scholarly research. According to a report published in Nature "a journal without a Web version is now rare". (Nature, 1999). The history of e-journals began with the full text databases offered by DIALOG in 1980. With the emergence of Internet, revolution took place in the publication sector. Publishers are using internet as medium to publish and the Web as a way for making available their publications. From late 1990s many journals from India started producing the electronic version. *Current Science* and *Resonance* from Indian Academy of Sciences and all journals from INSA, *Sankhya* from Indian Statistical Institute, *Neurology India* from Neurological Society of India, *Indian Journal of Critical Care Medicine* from Indian Society of Critical Care Medicine and *Indian Pediatrics* from Indian Academy of Pediatrics, Indian Journal of Medical Research from Indian council of Medical Research are some of the journals which were available online by 1999-2000. Their electronic versions provide full text of the articles in HTML or PDF format. Most of these journals are open access journals.

Involvement in e-publishing

Publishers' survey by C.K. Ramaiah finds that 35 per cent publishers were engaged in e-publishing in India up to 2005, and a further 20 per cent are expected to start in the next three years. It was found that the publishers were using the Internet as the medium for their e-publishing and only 22 per cent of the publishers started publishing electronically during 1999. Overall, the majority of the e-publishers started publishing electronically in between 1995-1999. In India, most started publishing electronically only over the past ten years, and the concept of e-publishing is still new for publishers in India as compared to developed countries like the USA and UK, where it is already an established industry (Ramaiah, 2006).

About Sankhya

The first number of *Sankhya* was published in June 1933 under the editorship of Professor P.C. Mahalanobis. Each volume from One to Twenty-two was issued in four parts in a year. There was a temporary set-back in publication during the period of the Second World War.

From volume Twenty-three (1961), owing to increase in the flow and variety of research papers, the Institute decided to publish *Sankhya* in two separate series, A and B. Series A was devoted to papers on mathematical statistics and series B to papers on statistical methodology and applications. A separate series C was introduced from volume Thirty-six (1974) of which two parts (1 & 3) were subtitled Sample Surveys: Theory and Methods and the other two parts (2 & 4) were subtitled Quantitative Economics. From volume Forty (1978) the parts (2 & 4) Quantitative Economics, of series C, began to appear as a separate series D. From Volume Forty-three (1981), *Sankhya*, has been restructured by merging series C and D in series B. Series A from volume 44 to 64 (1982 to 2002) was issued in three parts and Series B from Vol. 43 to 64 (1981 to 2002) was also issued in three parts in a year.

From volume 65 (2003) *Sankhya*, has been restructured by merging series A and B in single volume. The issues appear four times a year in February, May, August and November. The Institute decided again to publish *Sankhya* in two separate series, A and B from volume Seventy (2008). *Sankhya* has been bringing out Special Issues on topics of current interest. The two series are available online with Archives going back to 1993. Abstracts/Summary of the papers is available for Volume 1- 54 (1933 to 1992)

An index published by I.S.I. covers all the volumes of *Sankhya* published during 1933-1980 (*Sankhya*, volumes 1-22; *Sankhya A*, volumes 23-42; *Sankhya B*, volumes 23-42; *Sankhya C*, volumes 36-42). The index consists of two parts: Author Index and Subject Index with features such as cross referencing and Mathematical Reviews review number.

Sankhya has published many seminal path breaking papers including some of the past works of Prof. C.R. Rao. *Sankhya* is presently published in two series, Series A and Series B. Series A deals with Probability and Mathematical Statistics, whereas, Series B deals with Applied and interdisciplinary statistics. Reviews and discussion articles in areas of current research activity are also published. It is a peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary journal. The journal is privileged to have an international editorial board comprising renowned scholars from different disciplines. It has wide circulation of 290 subscribers (both foreign and Indian). In addition journal has exchange with number of Institutions (79) across the world.

1) It is abstracted/reviewed in Statistical Theory and Method Abstracts, Mathematical Reviews and Zentralblatt für Mathematik. The most recent Impact Factor for *Sankhya* is 0.23 according to 2008 Journal Citation Reports released by Thomson Scientific (ISI) in 2009. Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata has signed a co-publishing agreement with the Springer Science to publish

Sankhya effective 2010. *Sankhya* will be published electronically and in print. The journal will include Cross Reference Linking, alert services, and Online First™, a feature by which articles are published online before they appear in print. Springer will also implement the online author submission system, Editorial Manager. This system allows the peer-review process to be handled faster, resulting in the speedy publication of the articles. (Springer, 2009)

Open Archives journal

Sankhya allows scientists in the developing world the twin advantages of accessing front line high-impact research articles and increases the visibility of their own research by contributing to a global knowledge base. The archives of *Sankhya* are accessible free through the internet. Presently archives of *Sankhya* for the years 1999 to 2007 (Full Text) is available Free Online for anyone to access. For the period 1933-1998, only the abstracts/summary are available online and it is linked to Mathematical Reviews for viewing Full Text.

Conclusion

It is found that the visibility of journal has increased considerably among the research scholars both within and outside the country. It is expected that in the coming years with the joint publishing of the journal with Springer Science, the journals' visibility and usage will further increase.

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