

## BUILDING NATIONAL ARCHIVE OF CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS: A PILOT STUDY ON INDIAN CONFERENCE-ABSTRACTING DATABASE (ICON-AD)

Santosh C. Hulagabali

Project Head, ICon-AD & Librarian, Nagindas Khandwala College, Mumbai

E-mail: [santosh@nkc.ac.in](mailto:santosh@nkc.ac.in)

### Abstract

*Indian Conference Abstracting Database (ICon-AD) is a growing database of abstracts of papers presented at conferences held in India. The ICon-AD was conceived keeping the status of Indian conferences and publication trends in mind. It is observed that not all conference organisers publish the conference proceedings during the conference or post-conference. But publishing conference papers holds importance because conferences always focus on the ongoing or futuristic trends of a particular domain. In this view, the ICon-AD was launched as to bring the abstracts of each paper presented at conferences on one platform. It aims to archive all the abstracts of the papers received from the conference organisers. The beta version of the project launched in January, 2014, has archived 1220 abstracts of 1597 authors. The pilot study on the project highlights processes related to archival and dissemination of conference abstracts, facts, figures, utilities, processes involved and limitations and opportunities for ICon-AD.*

**Keywords:** Abstracting, Conference, ICon-AD, DSpace, India

### INTRODUCTION

Conferences hold importance to bring the intellectuals on one platform to share, discuss and debate about the trends in any domain. Therefore it is evident that the deliberations of the conferences add new dimension to further study and research in the form of paper presentations or publications. However, not all conference organisers formally publish the conference proceedings. This results in non-availability of literature of the conference for those who presented their papers in particular and the readers in general.

There is a growing trend in Indian academic sector that, many academic institutes are organizing conferences on regular basis than ever before. This could be due to

the changing policies of the regulatory bodies, funding agencies (like UGC, NAAC, AICTE, ICSSR etc.) which support conferences financially, improved information and communication technology system, institutes opening publication units, increased approach of proprietary publishers to publish conference proceedings etc. On the other hand, this trend may also be attributed to UGC's Career Advancement Scheme (CAS), introduced in VI Pay Commission, which demands a teacher-in-service to obtain specific scores by presenting papers in the conferences, publishing papers, pursuing training programmes, offering consultancy services etc. Such scores lead to their promotion through CAS. So (Conference Alerts, 2014) there is an increased number of conferences being organised by the academic institutes in India. Thus

academicians are working hard to organize conferences, present and publish papers. Moreover, such initiatives are being appreciated by NAAC too.

It is interesting to note that the Conference Alerts, ([www.confeencealerts.com](http://www.confeencealerts.com)) a popular portal, lists out 148 forthcoming conferences to be held in India by December, 2014 (Conference Alerts, 2014). But these listings are 'registered' by selected organizers and there could be many other institutes holding conferences (but not registered on the said portal). The trend is progressive but it poses serious questions on issues related to the publishing of research papers presented in the conferences.

Keeping the above issues in mind, the ICon-AD was planned and executed. The database, launched in January, 2014, aims to connect the readers and update them with the abstracts of the conferences held in India. The database has archived 1220 abstracts of 1597 authors presented in 30 conferences of different domains. However, the database is under experiments and striving hard to improve its standard and approach. The pilot study highlights the issues, challenges and opportunities of the database.

## CONCEPTS

### **Abstract:**

"A brief, objective summary of the essential content of a book, article, speech, report, dissertation, or other work that presents the main points in the same order as the original but has no independent library value. An abstract can be indicative, informative, critical, or written from a particular point of view (slanted). In a scholarly journal article, the abstracts follow the title and the name(s), of the author(s), and precedes the text. In an entry in a printed indexing and abstracting service or bibliographic database, the abstract accompanies the citation" (Reitz, 2004, p.3).

### **Conference:**

"A formal meeting of people with a shared

interest"(Stevenson, 2010, p. 365).

### **Conference Abstracts:**

The abstracts of the papers selected for paper presentation or publication or both in any conferences.

### **Database:**

"A database is a collection of related data. A Database is a logically coherent collection of data with some inherent meaning. It is designed, built, and populated with data for a specific purpose. It has an intended group of users and some preconceived applications in which these users are interested" (Elmasri & Navathe, 2008, p. 4).

### **Digital Archive:**

"A system designed for locating, storing and providing access to digital materials over a long term. A digital archive may use a variety of preservation methods to ensure that materials remain usable as technology changes, including emulation and migration.".... "Archival materials that have been converted to machine-readable format, usually, for the sake of preservation or to make them more accessible to users"(Reitz, 2004, p.216).

## ICON-AD

ICon-AD is one of the not-for-profit initiatives of Library and Information Centre of Nagindas Khandwala College (NKC), Mumbai (affiliated to University of Mumbai). The Library has been promoting open access movement especially among the teaching fraternity and research scholars. The ICon-AD and short-term certificate course (COIST) for research scholars ([www.cosit.weebly.com](http://www.cosit.weebly.com)) are its lead initiatives to propagate the same.

The ICon-AD comprises abstracts of papers presented at various conferences organised by Indian colleges, universities, corporate firms, government agencies etc. It aims to archive all the abstracts received by Indian organisers of conferences. It also acts as a connecting

platform between organizing institutes, authors and readers. As the database is a beta version, efforts are being made to make it a full-fledge abstracting database of conference abstracts.

### Features and Utilities

- a) ICon-AD is a single-window for abstracts submitted to the Indian organisers of conferences.
- b) Readers can read, refer, cite, share link and download hundreds of abstracts.
- c) It acts as an institutional repository of the conference organisers to share, archive and access their old conference abstracts. Also, it can be one of the best practices of the contributing institute and the same may be appreciated by UGC-NAAC or AICTE or similar/any regulatory body.

- d) The database acts as a link between reader and author of the abstracts and connects them for further sharing of information or intellectual discussion.
- e) The themes/subthemes of the abstracts enhance the popularity of the organizer/s, authors and their theme of the papers. The authors and their abstracts may receive citations (in view of the above point (d)).

### ICon-AD Portal:

An official portal of ICon-AD was launched in January, 2014. The portal links the Icon-AD database (see Figure-1). The portal comprises the features of the database, guidelines for contributor of abstracts, frequently asked questions, list of conference organisers and Project Volunteers who helped share the abstracts of their institutes, contact details of the host, brochures of the project and application form to join the database.



Figure 1: Screenshot of ICon-AD portal

<http://www.iconad.in/>

**Collection:**

**a) Facts and Figures of ICon-AD:** ICon-AD has archived 1220 abstracts (till 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2014) penned by 1597 authors. These abstracts belong to 30 conferences, of eight broad domains, organized by 20 Indian academic institutes (see Table-1 and 4). There are 28 Project Volunteers who helped sharing the abstracts of the conferences organised by their institutes.

**Table 1: Facts and figures of ICon-AD**

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
Abstracts/Titles	1220
Authors	1597
Subjects	8
Keywords	2015
Conferences	30
Conference Organisers	20
Project Volunteers	28

**b) Domain-wise distribution of conference abstracts:** The ICon-AD has archived conference abstracts belonging to eight subjects. Among them, Library and Information Science(LIS) tops the list with 12 conferences followed by Education (4), Economics (4), Commerce (3), Sociology (3), Management (2), Information Technology (1) and Geography (1).

**Table 2: Subject-wise distribution of conferences and abstracts**

<i>Domains</i>	<i>No. of Conferences</i>	<i>No. of Abstracts</i>
Commerce	3	48
Economics	4	56
Education	4	159
Information Technology	1	19
Geography	1	115
Library & Information Science	12	677
Management	2	50
Sociology	3	96
Total	30	1220

The ICon-AD has archived 677 abstracts of 12 LIS conferences followed by 159 abstracts of Education (of four conferences), 115 abstracts of Geography (of one conference), 96 abstracts of Sociology (of three conferences) and 56 abstracts of Economics (of four conferences).

**Guidelines for the Contributors**

The host has set certain guidelines for its contributors for submission of abstracts. (i) ICon-AD allows conference organisers to share the (conference) abstracts of any domain. Before submitting the abstracts, the contributor needs to ensure that each abstract contains the title of the paper followed by name of the author/s, their affiliation, employer details, e-mail ID, body of abstract followed by at least three keywords. (ii) The word limit of each abstract should be 300-400 words. (iii) After verifying these, the submitter needs to add all the conference abstracts in a single MS-Word file and send the same by e-mail or in the form of CD-ROM. Hard copy (printed) of the abstracts is not acceptable. (iv) Along with the abstracts, submission of duly filled-in Permission to Archive Abstracts (PAA) is a must. The organiser may also send the copy of a conference brochure/pamphlet/proceeding along with the abstracts and PAA.

**a) Contributing Institutes:** Any Indian associations, colleges, institutes and universities can be the contributor for ICon-AD. Among the said categories, the colleges lead the contribution by sharing 791 abstracts to ICon-AD (see Table-3). Five universities have contributed 327 abstracts of five conferences.

**Table 3: Type of contributing institutes**

<i>Type of institute</i>	<i>No. of institutes</i>	<i>No. of abstracts shared</i>
Association	1	74
Colleges	13	791
Institutes	1	28
Universities	5	327
Total	20	1220

Nagaindas Khandwala College, Mumbai, being the host (institute) of the project, has contributed abstracts of nine conferences (see Table-4) by contributing 264 abstracts of nine conferences. All other institutes have shared abstracts of one conference each except KES College, Mumbai; and AISSMS, Pune which have contributed abstracts of two conferences each.

**Table 4: Indian institutes that shared old conference abstracts to ICon-AD**

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Conference organisers/institutes</i>	<i>Type of institute</i>	<i>Institute codes</i>	<i>No. of conferences</i>	<i>No. of abstracts shared</i>
1	Satija Research Foundation for Library and Information Science (SRFLIS), Delhi	A	SRF	1	74
2	A.I.S.S.M.S. College of Engineering, Pune	C	ACE	2	55
3	C T Bora College, Shirur	C	CTB	1	85
4	Ghanshyamdas Saraf College, Mumbai	C	GSC	1	33
5	Gokhale Education Society's College of Education, Mumbai	C	GES	1	55
6	P D L Dalmia Lions College, Mumbai	C	PDL	1	3
7	K P B Hinduja College of Commerce, Mumbai	C	KPB	1	5
8	KES College, Mumbai	C	KES	2	80
9	Nagindas Khandwala College, Mumbai	C	NKC	9	264
10	SevaSadan's College of Education, Ulhasnagar	C	SSC	1	80
11	Sri Sarada College, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu	C	SSC	1	75
12	St. Joseph College of Arts and Commerce, Virar-Thane	C	SJC	1	7
13	Thakur College of Engineering and Technology, Mumbai	C	TCE	1	30
14	Thakur College of Science and Commerce, Mumbai	C	TCS	1	19
15	MET Institute of Management, Nashik, Maharashtra	I	MET	1	28
16	<u>Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow</u>	U	RML	1	71
17	S N D T Women's University, Mumbai	U	SND	1	43
18	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai	U	TIS	1	86
19	Tripura University's Department of Geography	U	TRU	1	115
20	University of Mumbai's Dept. of Lifelong Learning and Extension, Mumbai	U	UOM	1	12
Total				30	1220

#A=Association; C=College; I=Institute; U=University

**b. Project Volunteers:** The person associated with the organiser of the conference, as a faculty or administrator or researcher, can become the ICon-AD Project Volunteer. He/she need to coordinate with the institute and host (ICon-AD team) and share the old conference abstracts. The name and affiliation of such Volunteer is added on the ICon-AD' sportal (see Figure-1). The Volunteer also gets Certificate (of appreciation) from ICon-AD team for sharing the abstracts and thus propagating the open access movement indirectly. A registered Volunteer is also expected to create awareness about the utilities of the project among their colleagues and peers. The Volunteer may also help in getting the abstract of any conference/s organised by other academic institutes by orienting them to the features and utilities of the project.

### Technical Architecture:

The ICon-AD is built on DSpace (see Figure-2), an open source software, widely used for building digital archive of scholarly content. The software is written in Java, therefore runs on any operating system (Linux, Windows, Mac OSX). DSpace is built on top of free, open-source tools, such as the Apache Web server, the Tomcat Servlet engine, and the Postgre SQL relational database system. For the convenience, the necessary JDBC and other drivers and libraries are packaged together with DSpace. This set of tools run on any UNIX-type OS, such as Linux, HP/UX, or Solaris. The system runs on anything from a laptop to a \$500K server, but there are few general recommendations for hardware architectures. In a production setting where DSpace is actively used in public, requires a reasonably good server (see 6.2), a decent amount of memory and disk storage. (DuraSpace, 2014)



<http://dspace.iconad.in:8080/jspui/>

Figure 2: Screenshot of ICon-AD database

### Requirements for Installation:

Minimal DSpace production system requirements are: two GB of Random Access Memory (RAM); one GB for Tomcat; one GB for Database (Postgre SQL or Oracle); 20 GB of Storage (or roughly enough storage for all the files to store in DSpace). This minimal system should be able to support DSpace sites of roughly 20,000 items or less, though the exact number of items depend on the amount of activity (searches, accesses, downloads, etc.) within the DSpace site (DuraSpace, 2014). Using the above specification, the database was installed successfully and executed.

### Archival Process of ICon-AD

The following archival processes are involved in adding the abstracts on to ICon-AD database (see Figure-3).

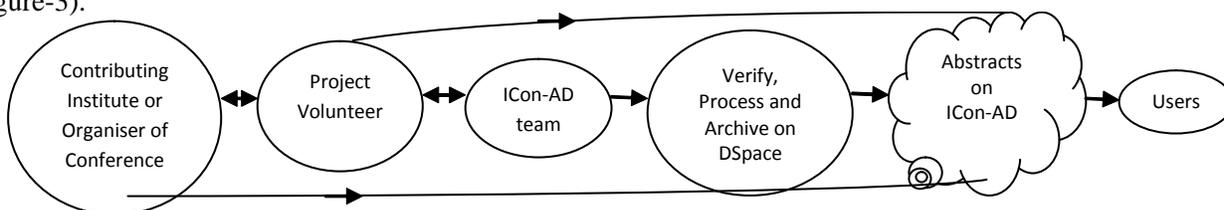
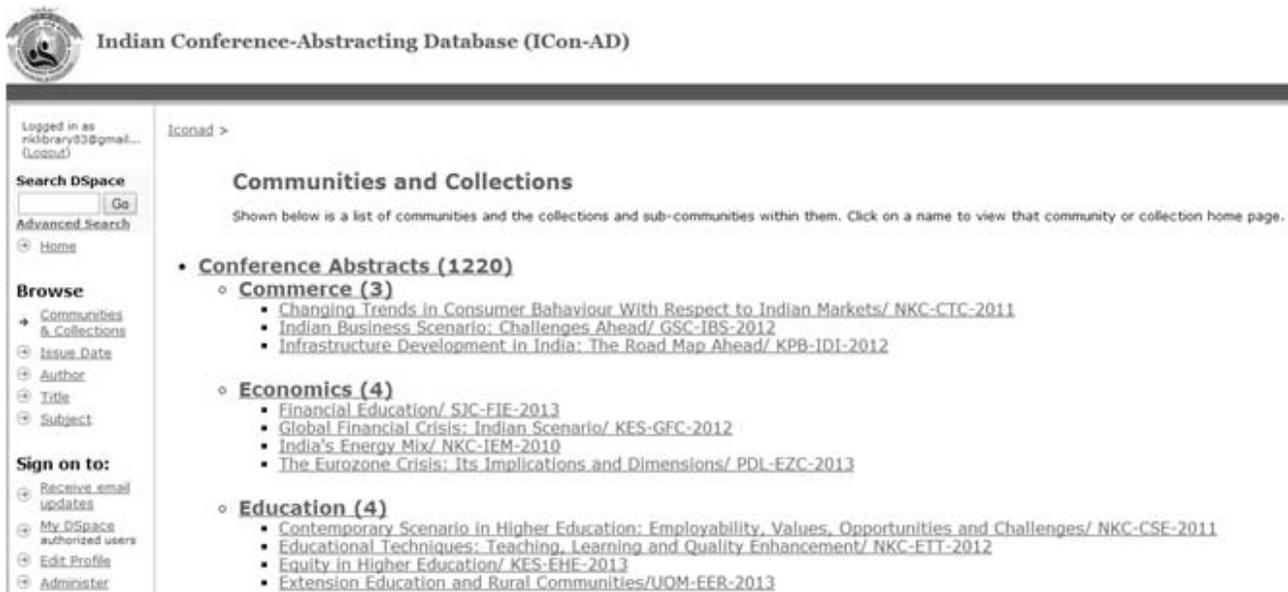


Figure 3: Archival process of abstracts on ICon-AD

- a) The organiser of the conference/s (or project volunteer) shares the abstracts via e-mail or CD-ROM along with duly filled-in PAA form to include in the database. The following figure (3) portrays the archival process and accessibility of ICon-AD.
- b) The ICon-AD team verifies the formalities and assigns ‘conference code’ to each conference. (Eg. TCS-RTI-2011 is a conference code. TCS= institute/organiser; RTI=theme of the conference; 2011=year in which conference was held (see Figure-4).



**Figure 4: Screenshot of the Communities and Collections created in ICon-AD**

The circles in the below figure (5) shows the ‘conference code’ (NKC-OAM-2012) and the number of abstracts (23) of the conference archived in ICon-AD.



<http://dspace.iconad.in:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/19/simple-search?query=NKC-OAM-2012>

**Figure 5: Screenshot of search results retrieved by conference code**

**BUILDING NATIONAL ARCHIVE OF CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS:  
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Each abstracts are formatted to maintain uniformity and also assigned with a unique code. (Eg. NKC-OAM-A01. 'NKC' represents name of the institute/organiser; OAM represents the theme of the Conference and A01 specifies the serial number of the abstract (see Figure-6)). The abstracts are then added to the database.

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item: <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/511>

**Title:** Portals of Open Access Journals: Case Studies  
**Authors:** Reddy, K Ramakrishna  
**Keywords:** Open Access Journals  
Open access publishers  
DOAJ  
Open J-Gate  
**Issue Date:** 12-Nov-2008  
**Publisher:** Sita Publication  
**Citation:** Koganurmath, M. M. et al. (Eds) (2008). Knowledge for All: Role of Libraries and Information Centres. Mumbai: Sita Publication.  
**Series/Report no.:** Indian Conference Abstracts;TISS-KFA-A01  
**Abstract:** Presents the facility of Open Access Journals (OAJ) available on Internet, which can be accessed by the readers. Gives various definitions, types, advantages and disadvantages, history of OAJ. Lists open access publishers and projects undertaken on OAJ. The facilities available with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Open JGate have been presented as case studies.  
**Description:** International Conference on 'Knowledge for All: Role of Libraries and Information Centres.' was organised by Sir Dorabji Tata Memorial Library, TISS, Mumbai on 12-15 November, 2008. For details contact: Dr. Satish Kanamadi on [satish@tiss.edu](mailto:satish@tiss.edu).  
**URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/511>  
**ISBN:** 9788186052006  
**Appears in Collections:** [Knowledge for All: Role of Libraries & Information Centres/ TISS-KFA-2008](#)

File	Description	Size	Format
<a href="#">TISS-KFA-A01.pdf</a>		104.47 kB	Adobe PDF <a href="#">View/Open</a>

[Show full item record](#)

**Figure 6: Metadata entries of one of the abstract**

c) The home page of the ICon-AD (DSpace interface) facilitates easy retrieval of abstracts. The reader can use search box to retrieve abstracts by issue date, author, title, subject and keyword. To obtain all abstracts of a particular conference/theme, reader can search the database by the respective 'conference code' (see Figure-4).

All abstracts are archived as PDF files. Readers can download them. Each conference abstract includes the theme and date of the conference, name of the organiser, name and contact details of the author followed by abstract and three keywords. This helps the reader to connect with the author if a particular abstract proves useful and is felt necessary of accessing the full-text.

### **Limitations of ICon-AD**

The host (ICon-AD team) does not claim ICon-AD as a complete database. Some limitations are identified

by the host and selected LIS experts. ICon-AD is, therefore said to be under experimentation and under experiments and requires initiation of all possible solutions to mitigate the following limitations.

- a) As a pre-determined policy, ICon-AD collects abstracts of old conferences from the organizers of conferences. So denying authors' request to their individual submission, of abstracts, is one of the limitations.
- b) The ICon-AD archives abstracts, submitted by conference organisers, without any modifications in the contents (except formatting and adding the necessary keywords). If a user finds any non-qualitative abstracts, the blame is also on the host.
- c) There are certain issues related to metadata (of abstracts) fed in the database. (i) Metadata is entered by the host to maintain uniformity. However, in certain cases, the data consistency is lacking. For

instance: In one of the abstracts the author writes her name as 'Arote, Prachi' and the same author, in another abstract, writes as 'Arote, Prachi P'. The person feeding-in the data feeds the data with no modifications. It is visible differently when searched by the author's name. So ICon-AD needs to work out to bring uniformity. (ii) The name of the principal editors, of some conference proceedings, has been added and for indicating the remaining co-editors, 'et.al.' is used. Due to which, any search made for co-editor does not fetch information. (iii) Instead of creating a Collection i.e. 'Conference Organisers', it can be incorporated by adding it as Corporate Author. The Dublin Core element needs to be explored or a new tag should be devised. (iv) The ICon-AD has added different data for few fields viz. 'Citations' and 'Series/Report No.' (see Figure-6). Instead of feeding citation of a conference proceeding, the said fields should have the pagination in 'Citations' filed and conference theme in 'Series' (suggested by Dr. Nanaji Shewale; e-mail received on 11-07-2014).

- d) The database needs to have an URL and PURL for each document in similar lines to DOI as IP addresses are vulnerable for attacks and URLs are bound to change after sometime. The port 8081 is not universal, therefore is blocked by many IT administrators for security reasons. ICon-AD should be either on 80 or 8080. (suggested by Dr. S M Pujar; e-mail received on 31-12-2013).
- e) OpenDOAR appreciated ICon-AD as an interesting and valuable resource. However, it informed that OpenDOAR lists repositories that include only full-text items. Therefore, ICon-AD does not comply with their criteria and cannot be included on their database (e-mail received from Marianne Bamkin on 23-06-2014).
- f) ICon-AD aims to collect all the abstracts of a particular conference from the conference organizer. But some conference organisers have not refrained

from sharing all the abstracts. Therefore, the host needs to make submission of all the abstracts of a particular conference mandatory.

- g) The host claims that the database connects the readers to authors (of the abstracts) as the abstracts incorporate name of the author/s along with their postal addresses and e-mail IDs. However, some abstracts just have name/s of the author/s and some abstracts do not have e-mail IDs.

## PLAN OF ACTION

All the above stated issues need to be addressed to make the database more approachable and user centric. The immediate improvements would include:

- a) amending the ICon-AD's policy to allow the authors to submit the conference abstracts individually;
- b) conference organisers shall be requested to share the required contact details of the authors to help readers contact the authors directly;
- c) maintaining data consistency, archiving qualitative abstracts, settling technical issues;
- d) ICon-AD archives old conference abstracts but the ICon-AD team needs to put efforts to convince the organizer of the conference to share the abstracts of forthcoming conferences too; and
- e) bringing the project details to the notice of information professionals, researchers, institutes who/that are pro-open access movement. This helps spread the participation by conference organisers and authors and also increases the use of the database.

## CONCLUSION

Any database that is unique in its idea and approach, uniformity in data entry, has qualitative contents, eases accessibility, wide coverage, user friendly, adoptability to changes etc. can become a complete database.

Icon-AD is an experiment to achieve the same. Icon-AD's effort to bring the conference discussions in the form of abstracts is an experiment. The host succeeded in obtaining abstracts of 30 conferences organized by 20 Indian academic institutions within six months' of launch of Icon-AD. This shows the organisers' and project volunteers' interest in supporting an open access abstracting database in particular and open access movement in general. The host is working on all the modalities to provide the best possible platform and services to make Icon-AD more useful for teaching, research and publication activities.

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