Viewpoint

Assessing Online literature

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Literature review is the most important and first step in conducting a research. New researches are based on previous research, their findings and questions aroused from them. This is often referred as "standing on the shoulder of giants".

Doing literature review has been much easier and faster with the advent of internet. Research papers are now available on the click of mouse. This was not the scenario in the past. Researchers had to go through piles of physical copies of journals before they could find the paper of their interest. However, lack of information about the available resources in the internet is still a major issue not only for new and upcoming researchers but also for experienced ones.

Lots of databases which provide index and full text or link to the journals website are available online that are useful for searching and accessing the research papers. For example - pubmed, google scholar, science direct, clinical key, EBSCO, NepJOL, universities repositories, databases maintained by publishers etc.[1]

Pubmed and google scholar are most widely used. Abstract of most of the papers and full text for open access journals or links to journal website of the papers not having open access are provided. Some other databases are available through subscription either individual or institutional. We can get information about the databases subscribed by our institution from librarian. HINARI program is the initiative of WHO to provide access to researchers of low- and middle- income countries to gain access to large collections of biomedical and health literature.[2] Most of the developing countries including Nepal have free institutional access to this large database. There are other databases which are country specific journals online (JOL) project supported by International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publication (INASP) such as Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL), Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL), Latin America Journals Online (LAMJOL) etc.[3] NepJOL provides a free access database of academic journals published in Nepal including journals not available from other databases.[4]

All the databases have certain features to make the search easier and specific in order to find most relevant papers. We advise to go through the tutorials maintained at respective databases to get most out of them. We get access to many full text papers through pubmed, google scholar and HINARI but at times we come across pay walls while trying to access the full text. The copies of the papers may be found at research sharing digital platforms such as Academia, Research gate, Mendeley, Academic torrents, Figshare etc.[5–8] Sometimes copies of research papers can be found at author's personal website. If we cannot find the paper of our interest even in these platforms we can always write to corresponding author explaining your interest in their work and ask for a copy of their research paper.

Research gate and Mendeley are also a social media for researchers. Here researchers can create their profile, share their research, build a group and collaborate with other researchers, interact with other researchers. We can follow fellow researchers and renowned researchers around the world. These sites are very useful for searching literature as they have large collection of full text papers shared by the researchers. Once registered to these sites also keep records of readers and citations of the research papers so we can follow the stats of our papers.

Besides being a research sharing platform, social media for researchers mendeley is also a free reference manager compatible with Microsoft word, Mac Word, Libre office.[7] It is available across different operating platforms. It also manages pdf files, organizes papers and generate citations which can be easily changed from one form to other with a click. It is a very handy freely available tool for researchers in order to search literature, organize papers, generate citations while writing manuscript and sharing research work. In short it is all in one tool for researchers.

References

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