

ROAD: the Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources to Promote Open Access Worldwide

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Abstract. ROAD, the Directory of Open Access scholarly Resources, is a new service implemented by the ISSN International Centre. ROAD provides a free access to a selection of worldwide, multidisciplinary scholarly resources in open access that have been identified by the ISSN Network. This paper will present ROAD background, its innovative concept and how it is positioned in the open access ecosystem.

Keywords. open access, scholarly resources, serial publications, ISSN

1. Introduction

ROAD², the Directory of Open Access scholarly Resources, gathers all serial publications that can be identified by an ISSN such as journals, conference proceedings, monographic series, academic repositories and blogs. Launched in December 2013 by the ISSN International Centre³ and supported by the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO⁴, ROAD provides a free access to a subset of the ISSN Register⁵. This subset gathers nearly 14,000 bibliographic records describing and pointing to worldwide, multidisciplinary scholarly resources in open access that have been identified by the ISSN Network⁶. ROAD innovative concept is that ISSN bibliographic records are enhanced with external information aggregated from data sources like indexing and abstracting services, metrics and registries. These OA resources are thus selected for their compliance with the core components of the open access spectrum guide⁷.

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² <http://road.issn.org/en>

³ <http://www.issn.org/>

⁴ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/>

⁵ The ISSN international Register gathers 1,9 million bibliographic records available on subscription: <http://www.issn.org/understanding-the-issn/the-issn-international-register/>

⁶ The ISSN Network comprises 89 national centres worldwide: <http://www.issn.org/the-centre-and-the-network/our-organization/le-reseau-issn-en/>

⁷ In terms of readership, reuse, copyright, author and automatic posting, and machine readability, according to the guide How Open Is It? <https://www.plos.org/open-access/howopenisit/>

2. Project background

A significant growth of open access scholarly resources have been observed over the previous years.

2.1 *The needs of the scholarly community*

Scholars and librarians have increasing difficulties to select reliable, open access resources for their research in this ocean of publications. The ISSN standard (ISO 3297 : 2007) mainly used to identify serial resources in an unambiguous way and like ISBN⁸, it does not guarantee any scientific and editorial quality. However, a key role remains to be played for the ISSN Network. Facing the emergence of questionable publishing practices, ISSN national centres receive recurring questions about the reliability of OA journals, and there is some confusion around ISSN being mistakenly associated to a quality label by some young researchers (Pelegrin 2014). There is also a need for scholars:

- to find out how many journals are indexed or ranked in their country,
- which OA scholarly resources are available in their discipline in a specific language.

And of course, scholars need to be guided to select the trusted journals they should submit their research to.

2.2 *The gaps to be filled*

In 2013, despite the existence of many complementary (Stenson 2012) directories like the DOAJ⁹, the DOAB¹⁰, OpenDOAR¹¹, there was no global system referencing both, on the one hand, the resources published through the green and gold open access models, and on the other hand, the digitized versions of dead print scholarly journals made available online for free by institutions. As a matter of fact, the scope of these existing directories is focused on a certain type of resources, and consequently, of disciplines, STM being predominant in journal publishing, whereas humanities and social sciences are monograph-centred. Some other directories like AJOL¹² and Latindex¹³ have a specific specific geographical coverage.

Referring to scholarly communication evaluation, in 2013, there was no comprehensive, global and multidisciplinary directory enabling to know in which indexes or databases a given publication appears in. Conventional indicators of reputation are traditionally very narrowly defined, and built mainly around one scholar activity. And the numerous emerging reputation platforms like ResearchGate or Kudos are still in their infancy, and none cover the whole gamut of activities (Nickolas 2015).

⁸ International Standard Book Number: <https://www.isbn-international.org/>

⁹ The Directory of Open Access Journals: <https://doaj.org/>

¹⁰ The Directory of Open Access Books: <http://www.doabooks.org/>

¹¹ The Directory of Open Access Repositories: <http://www.openoar.org/>

¹² African Journals Online: <http://www.ajol.info/>

¹³ Latindex: <http://www.latindex.org/>

Existing tools (directories, abstracting and indexing services, metrics) may lack accuracy in the bibliographic description, relying on the metadata provided by the publishers.

Finally, UNESCO needed some global, worldwide statistics about open access scholarly communication.

These are the reasons why ROAD was conceived.

3. ROAD's main innovative features

3.1 *Identifying scholarly resources is a constant priority for the ISSN system*

The ISSN Network, along its 40 years of expertise in identifying serials and maintaining the authoritative database for serials¹⁴, has gathered 1,9 million records, and among them, 160,000 online publications. Identifying scholarly resources has been a constant priority, as the 89 ISSN centres are hosted by National libraries and National Centres for Scientific Information and Technology. Thus, a strong relationship exists between the ISSN Network and the scientific community, through a widespread use of the ISSN. As seen on **Table 1** and **Figure 1** below, the cooperation of the ISSN national centres is essential to make ROAD a unique service based on a continuous identification of 5 types of multidisciplinary resources. Not only content criteria for inclusion in ROAD are strict¹⁵, but also, in a second phase of acceptance, ISSN IC performs some quality control on the metadata in terms of bibliographic accuracy, updates and relevancy to meet the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Top 10 participating countries in ROAD

Countries	No of resources
India	1400
Brazil	1126
United Kingdom	817
United States	793
France Poland	551
Germany	478
Russian Federation	466
Iran	448
Spain	448
	423

Source: ISSN Register

¹⁴ The ISSN International Register: <http://www.issn.org/understanding-the-issn/the-issn-international-register/>

¹⁵ Criteria applied: open access to the whole content of the resource, no moving wall, the resources comprise research papers addressed to the scholarly community.

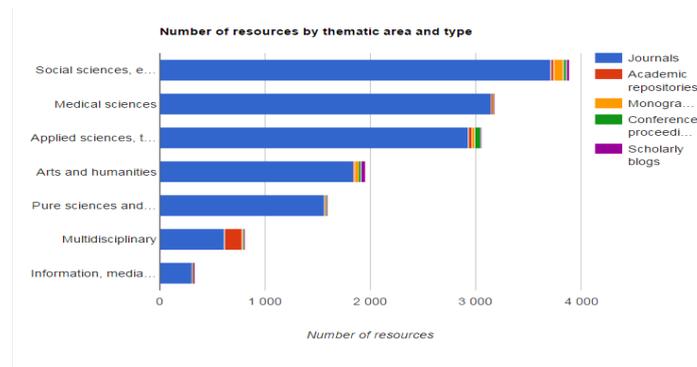


Figure 1. Number of resources in ROAD by thematic area and type as of December 2015.

3.2 Partnering databases

Another strength of ROAD is that ISSN bibliographic records are enriched by external data sources¹⁶ through long-standing ISSN partnerships like with Edina¹⁷ and Latindex, or through new collaborations with DOAJ and Scopus for instance. Indexing and abstracting services, evaluation services and registries complete the bibliographic metadata provided by ISSN centres, adding publishing information not traditionally collected by libraries, like business models, article processing charges, re-use licences and metrics about the visibility and the quality. All these external databases aggregate peer reviewed content harvested by the ROAD system. Partnering databases are chosen for their specialized scopes, the learned societies they are supported by, and for their positive, white list approach.

3.3 Statistics

On UNESCO's request, ROAD provides statistics computed through automated searches against the database. They cover all types of OA resources, showing the evolution in the number of publications per type, geographic and thematic area, and countries, as well as the coverage of the resources by indexing and abstracting services.

¹⁶ data sources so far have been associated to ROAD: see [http://road.issn.org/ Data Sources](http://road.issn.org/Data Sources)

¹⁷ Edina maintains The Keepers Registry: <http://thekeepers.org/registry.asp>

¹⁸ The Global Open Access Portal (GOAP), <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/portals-and-platforms/goap/>

4. Current status and future steps

The ISSN International Centre is well positioned to create a global, comprehensive, multidisciplinary portal of open access continuing resources. The support of UNESCO was crucial, ROAD being complementary with, and accessible through the Global Open Access Portal.¹⁸

ROAD development strategy is oriented on diversifying the thematic content and balancing the non-journals resources through ISSN assignment campaigns among the network and through implementing a data quality plan, to strive to become the authoritative, global database about open access resources.

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