

The endless life of OA Journals from myth to reality: the survey on present status of vanished OA journals in Iran and future prospect

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Abstract:

Open access journals in Iran were created in line with the open access movement in the world and their number is increasing day by day. In Iran ROAD is recognized as an important resource for identifying and tracking open access journals for publishers, users and researchers. In monitoring the Iranian open access journals of ROAD database, we recognized that the URL of some of these journals is not active. As we know there is no guarantee for long-term access to open access journals on the web & Iran doesn't have Internet archives, the importance of investigating this issue becomes more. The primary aim of this study for the first time is to explore the phenomenon of vanishing OA journals in Iran on ROAD by tracking all Iranian open access journals in this database in the period from 2010 - 2020 in all subject area such as social science, applied science, medicine & etc. the journals were sorted by year, and in each year they divided into three categories base on type of publishers: academic publishers, non-academic publishers and self-publishers. After checking the ROAD URLs, if the address is not active, title and URL of the journals were searched in all kinds of search engines and Wayback Machine. Our result shows that the highest percentage of vanished journals belong to the category of self-publishers and non-academic publishers, respectively, and academic journals have the lowest percentage of vanished. Surveys show that between 2010 and 2020, a total of 110 open access journals were vanished, including 38 self-publishers, 25 academic publishers and 47 non-academic publishers.

Keywords: Iranian open access journals, Vanished OA, ROAD, Iran ISSN National Centre, ISSN international Center

Introduction

Scientific journals are one of the main channels of communication between researchers and experts. Researchers publish the results of their research in relevant and reliable scientific journals. In many countries, the credibility and effectiveness of researchers is evaluated based on the quantity and quality of their articles published in scientific journals. The history of the invention of the first scientific journals dates back to the 17th century¹

In the past, people had access to scientific journals in print and through the payment of a subscription fee, but in recent years, many of the features of scientific journals have changed. The publication of online magazines, which began in the early 1990s with the development of the World Wide Web, is considered to be the most influential of these developments. Also, the expansion and dissemination of free and unrestricted research outputs in the form of the Open Access Movement. Today, some of the scientific articles in scientific journals are published in the field of science beyond open access. It's been just over a decade since the concept of Open Access (OA) first captured the attention of the scientific and scholarly research community, bringing with it the promise and potential of a shining new digital landscape, in which knowledge is freely shared and freely used, and the pace of scientific discovery is accelerated for the benefit of all. ²

The Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) is a public statement of principles relating to open access to the research literature, which was released to the public on February 14, 2002. It arose from a conference convened in Budapest by the Open Society Institute on December 1–2, 2001 to promote open access which at that time was also

known as Free Online Scholarship. This small gathering of individuals is recognized as one of the major defining events of the open access movement. The text of the initiative was translated to 13 languages.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the initiative in 2012, the ends and means of the original initiative were reaffirmed and supplemented with a set of concrete recommendations for achieving open access in the next 10 years.³

In 2012, the ISSN International Centre, under the guidance of its Governing Board and largely inspired by the ventures mentioned above, posited that it could play a useful part in the promotion of Open Access scholarly resources. With the support of the 89 national centers which comprise its network, the ISSN International Centre is indeed in a good position to provide an overview of the development of OA scholarly resources worldwide. With backing from UNESCO’s Communication and Information Sector, the ISSN International Centre opened in 2013 a web service called the Directory of Open Access Scholarly which is fed by national ISSN centers supplying their bibliographic records that are further processed to be made available on ROAD in various formats including RDF. A unique feature of ROAD lies in the provision of global statistics thus allowing users to monitor the development of OA resources across the globe.⁴

e-journals in Iran

Along with the emergence of electronic journals in the world, Iranian e- journals also grew day by day. Statistics show that the number of e-journals is increasing every year compared to print journals.

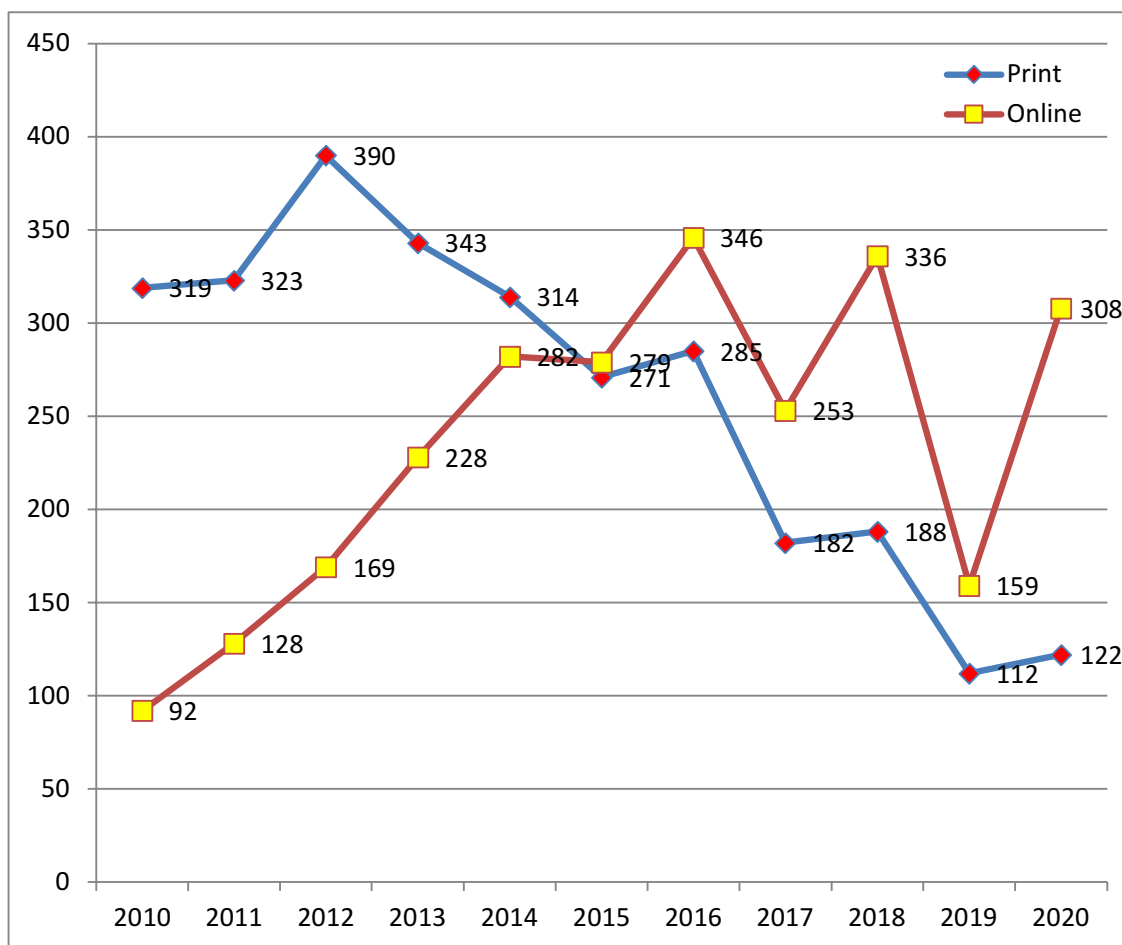


Figure 1- Increase in the number of e-journals 2010 - 2020⁵

Moreover, special features of open access publications have led many publishers to move towards the open access of their information resources. This process is accelerating and the number of open access journals is increasing every day. The short distance between the completion of the research and its publication and the possibility of wider access of

the scientific community to open access journals has caused more success and attention to it.

Open Access background in Iran

Since 2013, Iran ISSN National Center along with the establishment of ROAD, like other ISSN network centers, start cooperated with ROAD. According to ROAD activity report for 2018, Iran is one of the top ten contributing countries in OA publications.⁶

Table 1. Top 10 participating countries (ISSN National Centres

Indonesia	4920
France	2912
India	2410
Turkey	1749
United Kingdom	1666
United States	1655
Iran	1456
Brazil	1286
Poland	1219
Spain	926

ROAD statistics until the end of 2020 shows:

- 2163 journals are published as open access.
- 84 journals are archived in Keepers Registry
- 66 titles have been Ceased

The subject coverage of open access journals is as follows:

- SOCIAL SCIENCES (1408 Title)
- APPLIED SCIENCES. MEDICINE. TECHNOLOGY (934 Title)
- MATHEMATICS. NATURAL SCIENCES (212 Title)
- RELIGION. THEOLOGY (148 Title)
- LANGUAGE. LINGUISTICS. LITERATURE (127 Title)
- THE ARTS. RECREATION. ENTERTAINMENT. SPORT (90 Title)
- PHILOSOPHY. PSYCHOLOGY (87 Title)
- GEOGRAPHY. BIOGRAPHY. HISTORY (87 Title)
- SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE. ORGANIZATION. COMPUTER SCIENCE. INFORMATION. DOCUMENTATION. LIBRARIANSHIP. INSTITUTIONS. PUBLICATIONS (68 Title)

The number of journals that are indexed in indexing databases by type of database is as follows:

- ROAD (2163)
- DOAJ (451)
- CROSSREF (380)
- SCOPUS (129)
- CABABSTRACTS (84)
- THE KEEPERS (84)
- GLOBALHEALTH (75)
- PUBMED (54)
- PUBMEDCENTRAL (32)
- ECONLIT (9)
- MIRABEL (7)
- MEDLINE (4)
- PSYCHINFO (3)
- CIRAD (OU PUBLIER) (3)
- GEOREF (3)
- LINGUISTICS (1)

Methodology

- At the first we define a “vanished” OA journal as a journal that published at least one volume as immediate OA after which production ceased, and the journal, together with the published full-text documents, disappeared from the web.⁷ In cases, individual issues of the journals are still exist on the web, through local and international indexing open access database, we do not count the journal as a vanished journal. Also, if a URL is searched in the wayback machine and full-text volumes and articles are found, it will still not be considered as vanished journals.
- The research population includes all Iranian Open access journals in the ROAD, for identifying vanished OA journals in this research we focus on vanished open access journals in ROAD database & we selected all number of Iranian OA journals between the years 2010 - 2020 in all subject area such as social science, applied science, medicine & etc.
- Journals were sorted by year, and in each year we divided them into three categories by type of OA publishers: academic publishers, non-academic publishers and self-publishers.
- We focus on journals instead of articles for methodological reasons then we start to examined ROAD URLs, if the journals URL is not active, we searched both title and URL of the journals in search engines and Wayback Machine. through various searches we found that in some cases only the URL of the magazine has changed and the magazine is still active and current, so we were recorded the number of these records by category as a magazine with changed URL and also listed journals that were completely vanished by category. After a month URL of vanished OA Journals In the first review have been re-checked to make sure whether they were really vanished or not.

Findings

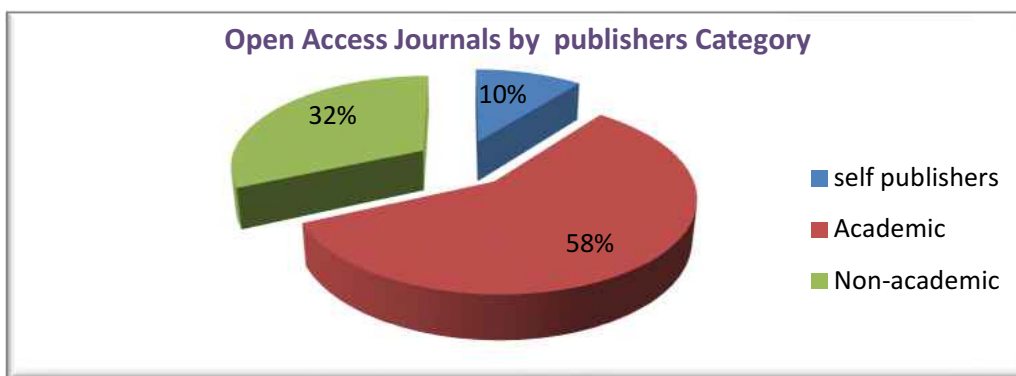


Figure 2 - Open Access Journals by publishers

Analysis of open access journals published between the years 2010-2020 showed that these journals were published by publisher type as follows:

- 10.63% self-publishers
- 57.65% Academic journals
- 31.71% non-Academic

Table 2 - Review statistics of open access journals by year

Year	Sum	Publishers											
		Self-Publisher				Non-person publishers							
						Academic publishers				Non-Academic publisher			
		Vanished	Changed Address	Current	Total	Vanished	Changed Address	Current	Total	Vanished	Changed Address	Current	Total
2010	40	0	0	1	1	0	2	28	30	0	0	9	9
2011	57	1	0	5	6	0	3	39	42	0	0	9	9
2012	61	0	0	0	0	0	5	34	39	3	3	16	22
2013	120	3	0	7	10	1	3	69	74	5	3	31	36
2014	229	3	1	17	21	6	10	112	128	6	1	83	90
2015	250	6	2	10	18	5	9	128	142	6	4	75	90
2016	312	9	5	25	39	3	6	177	186	6	3	78	87
2017	317	6	5	15	26	4	12	188	204	11	8	68	87
2018	324	9	0	143	52	2	6	163	171	5	2	105	101
2019	159	1	0	18	19	2	3	71	76	3	0	61	64
2020	284	0	0	38	38	4	0	151	155	2	0	89	91

- ✓ A review of 2010 journals found that 75% of them were academic, 22.5% were non-academic, and 2.5% has self-publishers. 6.6% of academic publishers have changed URL.
- ✓ Among open access journals in 2011, 68.73% were academic, 28.15% were non-academic and 2.10% were self-publishers. 7.14% academic publishers have changed their address, 16.66% of self-publishers have been vanished and could not be retrieved in internet search.
- ✓ In 2012, 63.99% of open access journals have academic publishers and 36.65% of them had non-academic publishers and there were not self-publishers. The study showed that 12.82% of academic journals and 13.632% of non-academic journals have changed

their addresses, and finally 9.09% of journals with non-academic publishers have been vanished.

- ✓ A review of 2013 shows that 61.66% are academic publishers, 30% are non-academic publishers and 8.3% are self-publishers.

In this year 2.7% academic publishers, 11.11% non-academic publishers and 30% self-publishers have vanished & 4.05% academic publishers, 8.33% non-academic publishers Have changed the URLs.

- ✓ There were 55.89% journals with academic publishers, 39.30% of with non-academic publishers and 4,080% of self-publishers in the year 2014. Of these, 4.68% academic publishers, 1.11 non-academic publishers, and 4.76% self-publishers journal have vanished. 7.8% academic publishers, 7.77% non-academics, and 14.28% self – publishers have changed Address.
- ✓ In 2015, 250 open access journals were published, of which 56.8% were academic, 34% non-academic and 9.2% were self-publishers.

3.52% of academic journals, 6.66% non-academic journals & 33.33% self-publishers have vanished. In 6.33% academic journals, 4.44% non-academic journals & 11.11% URL change observed.

- ✓ Among the 2016 open access journals, 59.61% academic, 27.88% non-academic and 12.5% self-publisher have observed.

1.61% academic journals, 6.87% non-academic journals & 12.82% self-publishers have vanished. URL change was observed in 2.67% academic 3.44% non-academic and 10.25% of self –publishers.

- ✓ In 2017, the number of open access journals reached 317, 64.35% were academic, 27.44% were non-academic and 7.95% were self-publishers. 1.47% of academic journals, 13.79% of non-academic journals and 23,076% of publishers have vanished, respectively.
- ✓ Among the open access journals in the year 2018, 52.77% were academic, 31.7% were non-academic and 16.04% were self-publishers. After reviewing the URLs of magazines published in this year, it became clear that 4.95% non-academic publishers & 17.3% of self-publishers have vanished in this year. 3.50% journals with academic publishers, 1.98% non-academic publishers & 3.84% of self-publishers had changed URL.
- ✓ Among published open access journals in the year 2019, 47.69% were published by academic publishers, 40.25% by non-academic publishers and 11.94% by self-publishers. 2.64% open access journals by academic publishers, 4.68% by non-academic publishers and 5.26% by private publishers have vanished.
- ✓ Among 284 open access journals in the year 2020, 54.57% belongs to academic publishers, 32.04% non-academic & 13.38% were self-publishers. In this year just 1.29% of journals with non-academic journals vanished.

Results

Studies show that the highest percentage of vanished journals belong to the category of self-publishers and non-academic publishers, and academic journals have the lowest percentage of vanished.

Number of vanished OA by publishers category

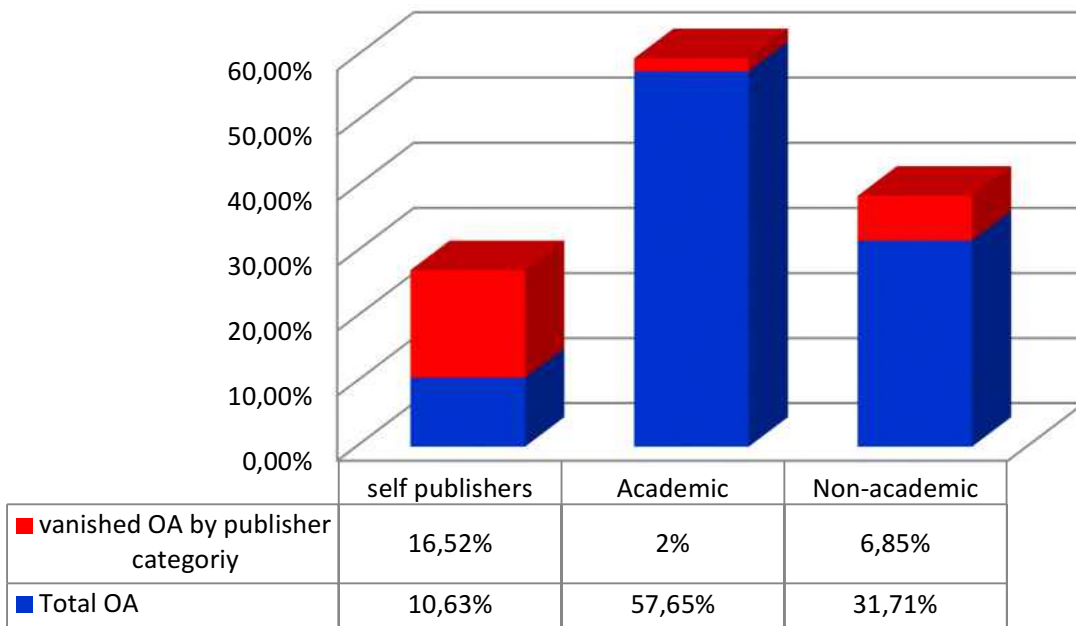


Figure 3 - Number of vanished OA by publishers category

Academic journals in 2014, non-academic journals in 2017 and self-publishers in 2015 had the most vanished OA journals. Surveys show that between 2010 and 2020, a total of 110 open access journals were vanished, including 38 self-publishers, 25 academic publishers and 47 non-academic publishers

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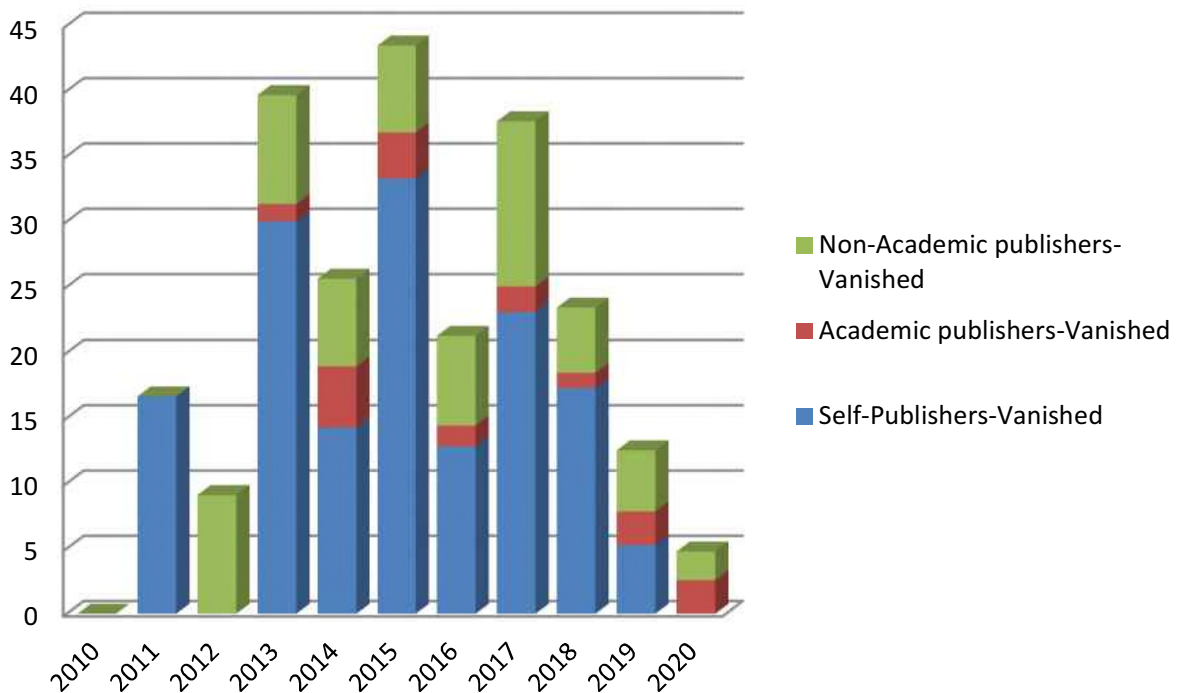


Figure 4 - vanished OA by publishers category

The most URL changed belongs to Self-publishers and non-academic publishers.

URL Changed by Publishers Category

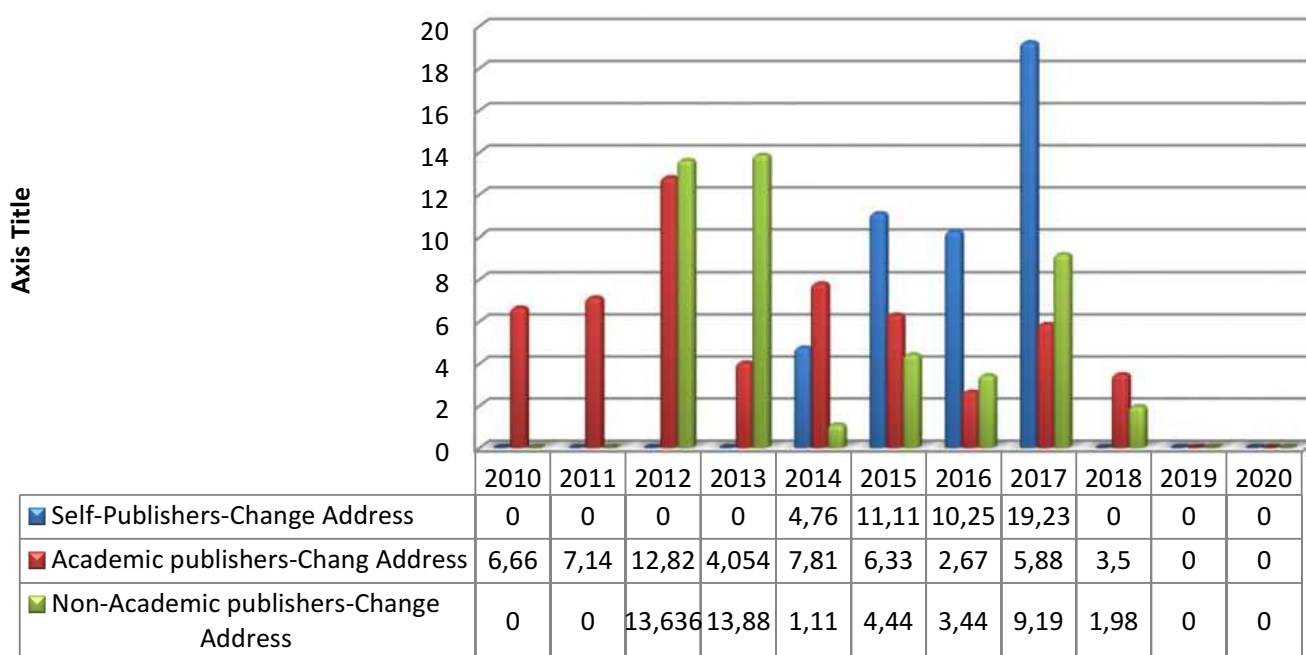


Figure 5 - URL Changed by Publishers Category

Conclusion

- ✓ Preserving OA journals is big financial challenge for publisher so it seems the highest percentage of vanished OA journals belong to the category of self-publishers.
- ✓ Academic journals not only have less financial challenges but also have a more consistent policy.
- ✓ The criteria for assigning ROAD code to OA journals are updated annually and announced by the ISSN International Center to the ISSN networks, the Iran ISSN Center also follows these criteria, It seems that the use of these criteria has helped to reduce the number of vanished OA in recent years.
- ✓ None of the vanished journals were indexed in any of the international or local indexing databases
- ✓ The vanished journals were completely removed from the web and it was not possible to contact them to find out how many issues had been published.
- ✓ keepers Registry can protect e-journals which are “at risk of loss” and need to be archived.⁸
- ✓ In fine, implementing the National Web Archives in Iran is essential.

¹ Bill Cope, Angus Phillips. The Future of the Academic Journal. Elsevier Inc.

² Heather, Joseph, The Open Access Movement Grows Up: Taking Stock of a Revolution

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budapest_Open_Access_Initiative

⁴ Béquet, Gaëlle. Questionable Practices in Scholarly Publishing: the Stance of the ISSN Network .IFLA Library , 2016

⁵ Portal.issn.org

⁶ <https://www.issn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ROAD-statistics-for-2018.pdf>

⁷ Laakso, Mikael, Matthias, Lisa. Open is not forever: A study of vanished open access journals. Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology Volume 72, Issue 9 p. 1099-1112

⁸ <https://keepers.issn.org/keepers-registry>