

LIBRARY CONSORTIA: an overview

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Abstract: Information society is a society where one needs information at every walk of life. Information should be communicated and shared for creating new knowledge. Information explosion has challenged the ways modern library functions and provides services to its users. No library can acquire all the documents that are being published till date. Hence, libraries are unable to meet the varied needs of its users. This has compelled the libraries to explore alternative ways of collection development, which will be both cost effective and economic. Recently, open access information resources have proved to be useful for research and study. At the same time, demand for the use of licensed information resources continues. Under these circumstances, library consortia came as a relief to the library community. An attempt has been made to briefly discuss the concept, the need, the advantages and disadvantages of library consortia and various consortia initiatives in India, helping towards resource sharing and propagation of knowledge.

Keywords: Information explosion, Information society, Library consortia, E-resources.

INTRODUCTION

‘Electronic resources’ is a term with which we all are well acquainted with. Electronic resource is defined as a resource which requires computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data over the internet (Saini, 2017). There has been a sudden spurt in the production of electronic resources and it has also been noticed that dependence on electronic resources has increased tremendously. Individual need information primarily for study and research. There are two ways to have access to the electronic resources, the first one is open access resources which do not required any subscription and the second one is subscription-based resources which is subjected to licence agreement. Though open access resources disseminate valuable information but it has been often observed that the information desired by library users falls under subscription-based resources. The

subscription rate of electronic journals or books is too high for an individual to subscribe them. Inevitably information seekers look up to the libraries for gaining access to e-resources.

On the other hand, libraries have to deal with many challenges while catering to the users need. Information explosion or over-load makes it very difficult for the libraries to decide what to include in their collection development and what to exclude. Secondly, users visiting libraries has a very diverse information needs and to meet those needs libraries cannot depend on printed resources solely. Hence high expectation from the user end prompted the libraries to go for subscription of e-resources. Thirdly, budget constraint and rising cost of subscription rate turned out to be a serious concern for libraries, willing to subscribe electronic resources. Fourthly, the emergence of e-resources has led to a changing concept of 'library ownership of resources' to a concept of 'library gaining access to resources'. Consequently libraries have evolved a new strategy to counteract with these problems. Consortia based subscription of e-resources comes as a relief amid the crisis.

What is Consortia?

The term 'consortia' is a Latin word meaning fellowship or partnership. It is the plural form of consortium but is often used in in place of singular form. Consortium is an association of two or more individual companies organisations or government (or any combination of these entities) with the objective of participating in a common activity for pooling their resources for achieving a common goal. (Kumar, 2014)

Library Consortia refers to the cooperation coordination and collaboration between and among libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. (Moghaddam and Talawar, 2009)

The aim of consortia is to achieve something that members of the group cannot achieve individually. Consortia reflect a real transformation from organizational self-sufficiency to collaborative resource sharing by the libraries. It enables paradigm shift from the concept of individual institution ownership to a collective access of distributed network resources. In fact A Consortium is not just limited to realise the financial restaurants of modern libraries but expanding is agendas for action in in multiple dimensions. (Pal, 2016)

In a nutshell, library consortia is a group of libraries coming together to realise a common goal. The main objective is to achieve what the members of the group cannot achieve individually. The purpose is sharing of resources, money and manpower.

Why Library Consortia?

Manjula and Bhuvana(2017) has identified the following needs for forming library consortia-

- Increased production of scholarly literature
- Diversity of user needs
- Impossibility of self sufficiency for individual libraries
- Budget constraints
- Modernization of library services

Objectives of Library Consortia

- Provides access to qualitative information at a lower rate of subscription
- To strengthen the resources and services offered by the participating libraries
- Collective representation of the common interest of all the member libraries
- Speedy and efficient dissemination of worldwide literature to students, teachers, scholars and researchers devoted to various discipline
- Providing constant support and training session for member libraries
- Standardization of prices of various information products marketed by Publishers
- Bridge the digital divide and pave the way for an information rich society

Advantages of Library Consortia

- Information resources can be accessed from anywhere at any time
- It provides access to wider range of information resources at a very reasonable and affordable cost
- It helps in maximum utilisation of allotted fund for purchasing e-resources

- It helps in building a digital library and a comprehensive collection of electronic resources, which otherwise, was not possible for an individual library
- It places emphasis on collective access of information resources than individual ownership
- It helps to save human efforts which was earlier required for cataloguing and providing abstracting and indexing services to the users visiting the library for printed journals.
- Better and enhanced library services add to the image and prestige of the library.

Disadvantages of Library Consortia

- Online access of resources led to non-possession of printed copies of journals, lack of archiving and back files for individual library
- Combination of essential and nonessential journals provided by publishers through consortia often do not suit the participating library purposes
- Specific hardware requirements and internet connectivity for libraries is must for participation in library consortia

Active Consortia in India

- **E-ShodhSindhu (Consortium of Higher Education e-Resources)**

<https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in>

An initiative by Ministry of Education, Government of India and it is being executed by INFLIBNET Centre. e-Shodhsindhu has been formed following the recommendations made by the Expert Committee under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, by merging three separate consortia, namely, UGC INFONET Digital Library Consortia, NLIST and INDEST- AICTE Consortium. The primary focus is to provide access to more than 10000 crore electronic resources in various disciplines from a large number of publishers to its member institutions, which includes universities, colleges (covered under 12B and 2F section of the UGC act) and centrally funded technical institutions in India.

- **NLIST (National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly e Content)**

<https://nlist.inflibnet.ac.in>

A college component of E-ShodhSindhu, which provide access to selected electronic resources to its member institutions, which includes all the government, government-aided and non-aided colleges (covered under section 12B of the UGC Act) except Agricultural, Engineering, Management, Medical, Pharmacy, Dentistry and Nursing colleges. It provides access to more than 6000 electronic journals, 164300 electronic books under NLIST and 60000 electronic books through National Digital Library of India, in various disciplines and subjects.

- **National Knowledge Resource Consortium (NKRC)**

<http://nkrc.niscair.res.in>

An initiative of National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) and is operational since 2009. It is a network of libraries and information centres of 43 CSIR and 26 DST institutes. Its origin goes back to the year 2001, when CSIR set up the Electronic Journals Consortium to provide access to the journals of Elsevier Science to all its users. It provides access to more than 5000 electronic journals, patents, standards, citation and bibliographic databases related to the field of engineering, science and technology.

- **IIM Libraries Consortium**

www.iimlibrariesconsortium.ac.in

The concept of forming a consortium of management institutes libraries was initiated in the year 2000. Presently twenty management institute libraries from all over India are the member of this consortium. It provides access to electronic resources related to the field of management science.

- **ERMED (Electronic Resources in Medicine) Consortium**

[Awww.irmed.in](http://www.irmed.in)

An initiative of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOH & FW), Government of India. It is managed by National Medical

Library, New Delhi. It provides access to information resources in the field of medicine for delivering effective health care services. Presently seventy state and centrally funded government institutions including all AIIMS are its members. There is no membership fee charged from its members and the MOHFW has provided funds required for the purchase of electronic journals under NML-ERMED Consortium.

- **CeRA (Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture)**

It is a Consortium of Agricultural Libraries under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, for National Agricultural Research and Education System (NARES) Libraries. It is operational since 2007 and is considered the first of its kind. It provides access to selected journals in agriculture and allied sciences. It has 152 consortium members which consists of ICAR Institutes, NRCS, Directorate, Project Directorate, National Bureau and state agricultural universities. The aim is to enhance agricultural education and research as well as achieving excellence and setting high standards in service to the society at large.

- **DeLCON (DBT-Electronic Library Consortium)**

<http://delcon.gov.in>

An initiative of Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. It is operational since 2009. It has 17 DBT institutes including ICGED, New Delhi and 18 North Eastern Region (NER) institutions as its members. The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), New Delhi is also a part of DeLCON. It provides access to selective journals in order to promote Research and Education in biotechnology.

- **NSTC (Nano Science and Technology Consortium)**

<http://nstc.in>

It is a non-government initiative for supporting, developing and promoting research, education, training and innovation in nanoscience and technology industry. Private as well as public sectors including SMEs and MNCs, research institutes, academicians and the students are its members it is operational since 2005.

Licence Agreements and Guidelines for Fair Use

This is one of the vital aspect of consortia formation. All the consortia based subscription of electronic resources are governed by licensing agreement. It is nothing but the terms and conditions regarding the use of information resources , which are clearly spelt out in the licence agreement. The Consortium takes utmost care to guard the rights of the member institutes before signing the agreement with the Publishers. The Consortium website provides detailed information on licences and fair use. Fair use is concerned about the usage of information resources for personal, educational and research purposes by the authorised users only and hence abstain themselves from any commercial use. Guidelines for fair use delineates what an authorised user is permitted to do. In case of any violation of license agreement publishers can adopt stringent measures against the violating member institute. Awareness program for librarians and users are regularly organised by the Consortium in order to educate them on the issues of licence and agreement.

Conclusion

It is believed that library consortia can bring equality and economy in information availability and usage. It has helped the libraries to provide access to worldwide scholarly information at an affordable price. Members of a consortium belong to different parent institutions with different organizations and rules, and administration of a consortium is not an easy task. (Satiya and Kaur, 2009). The consortia organisers must have a systematic planning, suitable partners with long term commitment as well as sustainable strategies to succeed. (Pal, 2016))

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