

Library Consortia: A Step forward the Information Society

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Abstract

The increasing price of electronic journals, indexing and abstracting databases along with the traditional published print subscriptions has forced library community to explore alternative means of subscription. The emergence of library a very promising development in this direction. The Phenomenon of consortia or group of libraries maintaining information resources together has become very common these days, In India, during last few years we witnessed many consortia based subscription. This paper briefly discusses the concept, need, advantages and also the major consortia initiatives in India.

Keywords: Library Consortia/ E-Journals/ INFLIBNET/ UGC-INFONET/ ERNET/ CSIR/ FORSA/ HELNET/ IIM

Introduction

It is not possible for one library or information centres to hold the full stock of information resources or to procure all information, which may be in demand by its clientele. Even not a single library or information center can meet the thrust of knowledge of all the readers from its holdings. To solve this problem, library cooperation started long ago, such as Inter-library loan, document delivery, library networks, etc. At present, the more accepted system of resource sharing is called library consortia. Consortia approach is one of the many ways of maintaining cooperation and coordination among the libraries and in fact, it has emerged as the ‘state of the art’ in library cooperation in recent years. The aim of the consortia is to achieve what the member of the group cannot achieve individually. A consortium is said to be “a cooperative arrangement among group of institution,” or “an association or society” (American Heritage Dictionary). Consortia are commonly formed to increase the purchasing power of the collaborating institutions to expand the resource availability and to offer automated services.

The idea of consortium is not new. There were instances of several libraries coming together voluntarily for the mutual benefit of respective users just like cooperatives, it was the earliest

stage of library cooperation. In the second stage, computerized networks come into vogue for sharing of resources. Till this period, the library resources were mainly in traditional printed format. The networks created their bibliographical databases. The users of the participating libraries could get the required documents from other libraries through document delivery services. With the advent of e-resources, the concept of consortia has been mooted mainly for acquisition of e-journals. As the resources that are procured today through the consortium are mainly e-resources, it has become possible for the users to access and download the required materials without even going through the elaborate process of inter library lending. Though library consortia have been created with narrow purpose, these can be turned into efficient instruments for sharing all types of library resource.

➤ **Consortia Models**

The types of consortia are generally based on various models evolved in India in variety of forms depending upon participations' affiliation and funding sources.

▪ **Open Consortia**

This type of consortia is very flexible and it is the wish of members of consortia to join and leave at any time when they please. INDEST Consortium is an example to this.

▪ **Closed Group Consortia**

It is within defined group either by affiliation and collaboration, among them like CSIR, DAE, IIM Consortium and the formation and operation of the consortia guidelines and its administration are fairly simple and easy.

▪ **Centrally Funded Model**

In this model, consortium will solely depend on the parent body. A few examples are INFONET by UGC, ICMR, CSIR by DSIR.

▪ **Shared-budget Model**

In this model, the participating libraries take the lead and form the consortium. IIM and FORSA are examples of this model.

▪ **Publisher Initiatives**

The Emerald Full-Text Library published by the Emerald Publishing Group (formerly MCB University Press) is recent example. Here, consortium members will get deep discount price to the participating libraries.

- **National Consortium**

The end of this model is national level licensing of products, like INDEST, UGC INFONET.

- **International consortium**

In this consortium, libraries belonging to different countries participate. This may be formed either by individual libraries, such as OCLC, or by bringing different national consortia under one umbrella. Such federation of consortia is known as Meta consortia, such as International coalition of library consortia, which comprises nearly 150 library consortia from around the world.

- **Need of Consortium**

Access to resources is now considered more important than the collection building. The consortium facilitates the libraries to get the benefit of wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost and at the best terms of licences. A consortium, with the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it, is in a better position to resolve the problems of managing, organising and archiving the electronic resources.

Some of the major issues that address the need for consortium are:

- ◆ Indian Universities are finding it hard to maintain the subscriptions even for core journals due to ever increasing cost of the journal subscriptions and also a shrinking budget.
- ◆ Academic and research users can now hope to have access to their learned journal articles in electronic form.
- ◆ The average number of subscriptions to international journals by Indian universities is very less than the western countries.
- ◆ There should be an increase in the availability of information in electronic form with more and more literature published in e-form.

- ◆ Reduction in the staff strength and cost savings for library budget would be useful.
- ◆ Greater buying and increased access to sources would be beneficial.

➤ **The major issues of consortia approach are:**

- ◆ Selecting a coordinating agency to deal on behalf of the entire group of participants and executing and monitoring the work.
- ◆ Sources of funding to meet the subscription cost.
- ◆ Identifying and negotiating the potential publishers/vendors or aggregators to provide access under consortia purchase.
- ◆ Source of funding to meet the subscription cost.
- ◆ Legal issues involved in contracts and usage of material within the consortia.
- ◆ Identification of libraries interested in participating and agreeing on common terms and conditions.
- ◆ Identifying the necessary infrastructure for electronic access to resources.
- ◆ Issues related to backup and archival of databases.
- ◆ Documentation and training to staff.

Advantages of consortia

The advantages of Consortia are many:

- ◆ A comprehensive collection is possible
- ◆ Building communication among different libraries
- ◆ Avoid duplication of core collection specially for core journals
- ◆ Scope of electronic archives

- ◆ Easy access to resource sharing on Internet by developing common resources database
- ◆ Reduce cost of information and time saving
- ◆ Improved resource sharing
- ◆ More professional services to users and help to develop a competitive professionalism among LIS professionals.

➤ **Consortia initiatives in india**

1. Indian National Digital Library of Engineering, Sciences, and Technology (INDEST), is a consortium set up and funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in India. The ministry provides funds required for providing differential access to electronic resources subscribed to the members. It has its headquarters at IIT Delhi. Its members include 38 core institutions viz., Indian Institute of Science, IITs, IIMs, IITs. NITs and a few other centrally funded Government institutions. The membership is open to all other educational institutions under its self-supported category. The access to the resources is being provided directly from the publishers websites. The consortium offers a price advantage on subscription to e-resources that exceeds 80%. Electronic resources subscribed by INDEST consortium are full-text e-resources like (ASCE) American Society of Civil Engineers , ACM Digital Library, EBSCO databases, Elsevier's science, Emerald full-text etc. and bibliographical databases like INSPEC, J-Gate, MathSciNET, Web of Science, Scifinder Scholar etc. The consortium is also a member of International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC).

2. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has also formed a Consortium for which National Institute of Science, Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR), a constituent establishment of CSIR formed with the merger of INSDOC and NISCOM, has been identified as the nodal agency. To augment CSIR research and development activities, NISCAIR implemented an agency for the process of providing access to globally available electronic journals to the entire S&T staff of CSIR. On behalf of CSIR, it has entered into an agreement with Elsevier science to access its odd 1,500 e-journals and intends to strengthen further its information resources base by subscribing

access to more journals published globally. CSIR consortium extended its access by creating appropriate on consortium basis with the other providers of e-journals.

3. UGC-INFONET

The University Grants Commission (UGC), India has launched a consortium of e-journals for its member universities to provide access to journals through its nationwide communication network, **UGC-INFONET**. It is overlaid on Education and Research Network (ERNET) infrastructure to provide assured quality of service and optimal utilization of Bandwidth resources. On behalf of the UGC, the INFLIBNET is executing the UGC-INFONET project in collaboration with the ERNET. This Consortium aims to promote the use of electronic database and full text access to journals by the research and academic community in the country. Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre, is the nodal agency for coordination of the UGC-INFONET. It facilitates linkage between UGC, ERNET and universities and coordinates the programme. It is also administering the entire programme including monitoring of bandwidth utilization and releasing the annual recurring cost of 149 universities. This Consortium subscribes to journals published by American Chemical Society, American Institute of Physics/ American Physical Society, Institute of Physics, Annual Reviews, Cambridge University Press, Project MUSE, Royal Society of Chemistry, etc. In all areas of learning like Science, Technology, Medicine, Social Science and Humanities. UGC-INFONET is a boon to the higher education system in the country. The programme helps in mitigating the severe shortage of periodicals faced by university libraries due to the ever widening gap between the growing demand for literature and the shortage of available resources. The consortia model gets the discount of 85% to 90% of list price. As per 2006 statistics, it offered e-resources from 25 major publishers/ vendor aggregators content to 100 universities and the consortia members have downloaded 2945074 full text articles in 2005. In the year 2006, there is tremendous growth in over all usage of e-resources.

Besides these, many consortia are being run successfully by different

organization also These include:

- FORSA (Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy) [<http://www.iiap.res.in/library/forsa.html>]
- IIM LIBRARY Consortia, [<http://www.iimb.erner.in/>]
- ICICI Knowledge Park, [<http://www.iciciknowledgepark.com>]
- DAE Library Consortium, [<http://www.rifr.res.in/~libws/>]
- ICMR Library Consortia, [<http://www.jccc-icmr.informindia.co.in/about/about.sap>]
- HELINET (Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Karnataka) [<http://www.rguhs.ac.in/hn/newhell.htm>]

➤ **Conclusion**

The advent of e publishing has brought a revolution in journals publication, subscription as well as access to the scholarly literature. The age of library consortia is at the doorsteps to prove the library cooperation locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It is the one of the emerging tool kit for the maximum libraries to survive if the libraries have to provide information to their users.

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