Resource sharing and networking of engineering college libraries

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Why resource sharing?

1. Need for enhanced access to information
2. Non uniform distribution of resource – wide disparity in availability of resources
3. Need for optimisation of under-used resources - measures of use, spare capacity, identification of less used resources & cost consideration become necessary
4. Diverse, inter-disciplinary and ever expanding requirements of users
5. Avoid unnecessary duplication of resources
6. Economy in cooperative common operations - divide up work and share results
7. New technologies open up new avenues

Inherent limitations

1. Local non availability of item being shared (a) affects ‘current approach’ of primary users *(b) leads to loss of browsability and serendipitous value
2. Delayed document delivery is inevitable
3. Duplication of resources is inevitable
4. ‘Resource rape’
5. Difficult to measure use and identify less used material
6. Sharing shortens life through physical wear
7. Lack of up-to-date access tools
8. Not always cost efficient

Note: Digital collection can overcome some but pose its own limitations like DRM, format, user acceptance, etc.

Some buzz words

A. E-revolution related:
   - Paperless society & scholar’s workstation
   - Library as a window for access than a fortress; Shift emphasis from ownership to access; Pay for use of information
   - Library without walls & the traditional library will not scale into the next decade
B. Cooperation related:
   - Collective/ joint ownership of information resources
   - Starve and die individually in the information drought (or hang together in the network !)
   - Exchange of notes and rationalisation of acquisition
   - Common borrower cards for libraries
   - Consortia approach

Resource sharing: facts & hurdles

A. Ownership related:
   - Ownership paradigm - ‘Ownership’ continued to be the most effective means of bringing user and information together
   - ‘More is better’ belief and self sufficiency goal i.e., the more information owned the better the chance of meeting needs of users
   - The less important the subject the more likely to agree for relying on others i.e., inter library cooperation than inter library threat
   - Mc Donald’s mentality of wanting fast & immediately i.e., Urgency of user requirements
Resource sharing

**Resource sharing : facts & hurdles (2)**

B. Cooperation process related:
- More talked and less acted area
- Psychological and egoistic barriers - passive resistance is more difficult to overcome than active opposition
- More the number of people involved in decision making, the more difficult it becomes to achieve agreement
- Social loafing & ‘Something for nothing’ syndrome
- Abuse of potential for access i.e., power acquired through network resource & covert move for centralisation

**Resource sharing : facts & hurdles (3)**

- Institutional competitiveness & size and status consciousness
- Fear of centralisation vs. Desire for autonomy
- External interference/ impositions often fails
- Difficulties of mutually agreeable collecting responsibilities
- Discouragement from past efforts
- Traditional bureaucratic/ procedural/ institutional
- Physical, geographical, political and legal

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**Cost vs. use considerations**

- ILL is a marginal activity
- ILL cost < Acquisition cost
- ILL cost < Circulation cost (i.e., cost per use)
  (ILL cost for RLG is $40-45 & that for OCLC is $55)

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**Resources vs. need considerations**

- Rich resources
- Weak needs
- Strong needs
- Poor resources

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**OCLC transactions**

- 1146 m messages / year
- 8.7 m online ILL transactions / day (96 /sec in peak)
- $7.2 m transferred as ILL fee management / year
- 3.86 m total transactions / day

**Areas for resource sharing**

1. Physical, bibliographic, full text & e-access
2. Lending (ILL) & document delivery
3. Reference, referral & literature search
4. Collection development (case)
5. Processes : data capturing/ entry for OPAC/ databases, processing
6. Abstracting, indexing & publications
7. Expertise, consultancy, continuing education
8. User education (case)
9. Storage/ archiving

**Conclusions**

1. Healthy skepticism is better than cheap cynicism
2. Any effort is neither first nor final but evaluation & consolidation of past efforts necessary for incremental growth
3. Bibliographic access alone is not enough, access to full texts/ documents, ‘courtesy visitation rights’ & handling access restrictions necessary
4. Cooperative collection development and ‘conspectus’ are proactive whereas elimination of duplication (rationalisation) is post-mortem & just exchanging ‘profiles’ will not serve the purpose
5. Every participating library must have infrastructure
6. Need an ILL Management which can create, send & handle ILL requests, manage fee, monitor document delivery, etc.
7. Need common ‘courier service’ for quick document delivery
Some suggestions

- Networking of minds is more important than technology
- Segregate large part of not-to-be shared resources like textbooks
- Concentrate on process cooperation like development of databases (textbooks, project reports, etc.), TOC service, user orientation module, harnessing web resources
- Let someone not make decision for you
- What is not used in print is unlikely to be used in e-version except reference tools, databases and the likes
- Do not get carried away by large chunk of irrelevant made available in ‘bundles’

References


Thank you

About the Author

Dr. M.S.Sridhar is a post graduate in mathematics and business management and a doctorate in library and information science. He is in the profession for last 35 years. Since 1978 he is heading the Library and Documentation Division of ISRO Satellite Centre, Bangalore. Earlier he has worked in the libraries of National Aeronautical Laboratory (Bangalore), Indian Institute of Management (Bangalore) and University of Mysore. Dr. Sridhar has published four books (‘User research: a review of information-behaviour studies in science and technology’, ‘Problems of collection development in special libraries’, ‘Information behaviour of scientists and engineers’ and ‘Use and user research with twenty case studies’) and 74 research papers, written 19 course material for BLIS and MLIS, presented over 22 papers in conferences and seminars, and contributed 5 chapters to books. E-mail: sridharmirle@yahoo.com, mirle sridhar@gmail.com, sridhar@isac.gov.in ; Phone: 91-80-25084451; Fax: 91-80-25084475.