Library Consortia: Issues and Challenges with Special Reference to INDEST-AICTE Consortium

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Abstract

Due to ever increasing prices of journals, publishers and vendor dominated market, change in demand of the users, lack of competition, and for various other reasons, no library is in the position to fulfil all the demands of the users. This has given the concept of library resource sharing. This has led to the establishment of many technical and specific subject related consortium approaches in pursuit of optimizing the libraries' resource base while achieving substantial savings through combined and coordinated bargains with publishers. Consortium based library subscriptions to e-journals and electronic full-text databases are picking up good momentum in India. INDEST-AICTE consortium, CSIR consortium, IIM consortium, IBFLIBNET's UGC-INFONET consortium, DRDO consortium etc. are successful ones to name a few.

At the same time Library Consortia are not free from problems. There are various issues relating to consortia like uninterrupted online access, perpetual access to back issues, pricing, licensing, copyright and archival solutions etc. These need to be strategically tackled and well addressed to get the best out of the consortia.

This paper discusses the types, needs, models and advantages of consortia subscriptions in general. It also discusses the challenges and issues faced by library consortia with special reference to INDEST-AICTE consortium.

Keywords: Library Consortia, Consortium, INDEST-AICTE Consortium, Resource Sharing, Collection Development

1. Introduction

The success and survival of libraries will much depend on how much and to what extent the libraries cooperate with each other in future. (Allen Kent)

Information explosion, evolution of multi disciplinary subject areas and ever increasing cost of library resources have changed the way of developing library collection. Libraries today are facing unprecedented challenges not only to provide customer-responsive services, but to do so in the face of constant change. Modern libraries are facing such circumstances where it is not just enough to what you own in your library, but equally important is, what your library is able to provide access to. Acquiring all the materials and providing access to all the information as to meet the needs of the users is a great challenge. To meet the demand of the users at less cost, libraries are collaborating with each other. The cooperation among the libraries to get access of maximum required has given the birth of consortia.

Consortia

A Consortium may be defined as the association of two or more organisations with clear similar goal. They come together to fulfil a common objective that requires co-operation by way of sharing of resources. The aim should be to deliver "**more than the sum of the individual parts**". It allows publishers to sell their e-journals in big packages to several institutions at the same time, reaching out to more institutions than they ever had before**.** It is also called "big deal." A library consortium formation can be local, regional, state, national and inter institutional level.

2. Types and models of consortium

Based the formation, funding, membership criteria, geographical coverage etc. consortia can be classified into different categories. In Indian context some of the important consortia are—-

i.   Central Funded Consortium

❖   INDEST-AICTE Consortium

❖   CSIR E-Journals Consortium

❖   UGC Infonet Digital Library Consortium

❖   MCIT Consortium

ii.   Open Consortia and shared Budget

❖   FORSA

❖   IIM Libraries Consortium

❖   HELINET

❖   BJ Medical Library Consortium

iii. Closed group

❖   CSIR/ DST , DRDO, DAE etc

3. Need for Library consortium

Some of the important reasons for which consortia is the need for today are as follows:

i.   **Information explosion**: There has been the sudden onslaught of new materials and electronic versions of old materials resulting in the availability of information in numerous forms. A consortium, with the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it, is in a better position to address and resolve the problems of managing, organizing and archiving the electronic resources.

ii.   **Diversity of user needs**: With the evolution of multi disciplinary subjects and impact of ICT, the information seeking behaviour of the users has changed. Now their information needs are diversified. A single library is not in position to satisfy the needs of users. Hence consortium is needed.

iii. **Financial crunch**: The budget of the libraries is either decreasing or static in most of the cases. At the same time the price of both printing and electronic resources is increasing at very fast pace. Hence consortium approach is the best approach to meet the needs of the users.

iv.   **Impossibility of self-sufficiency**: With the proliferation of information in myriad forms, it is difficult for any library to be fully sufficient to cater to the information needs of its user community.

v.   **Negotiation for best price**: As a group, Libraries can negotiate with publishers to get the best price for the subscribed resources.

4. Advantages of Consortia

Some of the important advantages of the proposed library consortium are as follows:

i.   Consortia-based subscription to electronic resources provides access to wider number of electronic resources at substantially lower cost;

ii. Electronic Journals consortium can save the space problem, shelving, binding, lending and related aspects of member libraries.

iii. The consortium have been offered better terms of licenses for use, archival access and preservation of subscribed electronic resources, which would not have been possible for any single institution

iv. Optimum utilization of funds.

v.   Facilities to build up digital libraries

vi. Helpful to provide better library services.

vii. Cost sharing for technical and training support

viii. Available 24 x7x365 basis

ix. Economy in maintain

5. Disadvantages of consortia

i.   One of the disadvantages of consortia is non-payment of allotted portion of the cost by member libraries or abide by the decisions that were taken by the negotiating committee/body, in maintaining the committed print subscriptions, etc.

ii. It requires high initial investments among licensees towards infrastructure, internet connectivity, and other accessories.

iii. It requires training of staff and updating their skills from time to time.

iv. Problems like copyright/excess download from the publisher.

v.   Content provider/publisher combines both essential and non-essential journals as a package, whereas in print collection, the selection is done by subject expert(s) and only journals of core area are subscribed.

List of some important Consortia in India

Sl. No.	Name of Consortia	Funding Agency/ Operational Headquarter	Members	URL
1.	UGC-INFONET	UGC	Universities/colleges (With MOU)No,...	http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/econ/
2.	INDEST-AICTE Consortium	MHRD	Centrally funded Technical institutions, AICTE 9No.......)recognized institutes and self financed institutes	www.paniit.iitd.ac.in/indest/
3.	CSIR	DSIR	40 CSIR and 26 DST institutes	http://nkrc.niscair.res.in/ indexpage.php

4.	DAE Consortium	Department of Atomic Energy	36 institutions including BARC, TIFR and SAMEER	http://www.csr.res.in/
5.	MCIT Library Consortium	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology	DIT, DOT, DOP and their related organizations and PSUs	http://mcitconsortium.nic.in/
6.	IIM Consortium	MHRD	All IIMs	http://www.iimsworld.in/consort.htm
7.	DRDO Consortium	MoD	DRDO Labs	www.dsl.drdo.gov.in
8.	RGUHS-HELINET Consortium	MoHFW	All the affiliated colleges of RGUHS	http://www.rguhs.ac.in/
9.	DeLCON Consortium	DBT	16 DBT Institutions including ICGEB, New Delhi and 18 North Eastern Region (NER) Institutions	http://www.delcon.gov.in/
10.	ERMED Consortium	MoHFW	72 Government Medical Colleges/Institutes including ICMR affiliated research institutes	http://www.nml.nic.in/
11.	Consortium E-resources in Agriculture (CeRA)	Min. of Agriculture /ICAR for	123 agricultural / animal science Universities /Deemed Universities / Research Institutes of the Indian Council of Agriculture (ICAR)	cera.iari.res.in/
12.	N-LIST Consortium	UGC	Total number of 3924 colleges have registered themselves with the N-LIST programme including 3558 Govt. / Govt.-aided colleges	http://nlist.inflibnet.ac.in/

6. INDEST – AICTE Consortium

The "Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Sciences and Technology (INDEST) Consortium" was set up in 2003 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on the recommendation of an Expert Group appointed by the Ministry. The Consortium was re-named as INDEST-AICTE Consortium in December 2005 with the AICTE playing a pivotal role in enrolling its approved engineering colleges and institutions as members of the Consortium for selected e-resources at much lower rates of subscription. The Consortium enrolls engineering and technological institutions as its members and subscribe to electronic resources for them at discounted rates of subscription and favourable terms and conditions. The Ministry of Human resources and Development (MHRD) provides funds required for subscription to electronic resources for centrally-funded Government institutions including IITs, IISc Bangalore, NITs, ISM, IIITs, IIMs, ISERs and few other institutions that are considered as core members of the Consortium.

6.1 Objective of INDEST-AICTE Consortium

i.   To subscribe electronic resources for the members of the Consortium at highly discounted rates of subscription and at the best terms and conditions;

ii. To extend the benefit of consortia-based subscription beyond the core members to other engineering and technological institutions;

iii. To impart training to the users and librarians in the member institutions on subscribed electronic resources with an aim to optimise the usage of subscribed electronic resources;

iv. To find more avenues of cooperation and interaction amongst member libraries;

v. To increase scientific productivity of member institutions in terms of quality and quantity of publications;

vi. To help new engineering institutes and colleges to make the right choice of e- resources; and

vii. To find more avenues of co-operation and interaction with other consortia.

6.2 Activities of INDEST-AICTE Consortium

i. Subscription to identified electronic resources ;

ii. Identification of new resources ;

iii. Interaction with member libraries to ensure optimal utilization of subscribed electronic resources;

iv. Ensure access to subscribed electronic resources to member libraries as per their subscription;

v. Organizing training programme for the member institutions on use of electronic resources;

vi. Initiate additional activities complementary to the present activities of the Consortium; and

vii. Encourage interactions amongst member institutions.

6.4 Benefits of INDEST – AICTE Consortium

i. Getting deep discounts through joint pricing negotiations with most favourable terms of agreement for a wider range of e-resources – hence lower unit cost of information

ii. Acts as a single-window service for a large number of institutions to meet their diverse research and academic interest;

iii. A large number of electronic journals can be accessed through the membership of consortium

iv. Member institutions can get the electronic archives of the journals without any extra cost;

v. Availability and monitoring of usage statistics of the member institutions;

vi. Can be accessed 24x7x365 with simultaneous access

vii. Also allow the inclusion of audio-visual material as well as the other formats and technological innovations that are available on the Internet, such as keyword searching; articles include links to other cited journals, e-books, and other supporting material

viii. The Consortium is offered better terms of agreement for use, archival access and preservation of subscribed electronic resources, which would not have been possible for any single institutions

ix. Help member institutes in making research more convenient;

x. Reduced storage costs;

xi. Helpful in developing common resources databases;

xii. Effective document delivery systems;

xiii. A single interface and access point;

xiv. Enhanced search facilities;

xv. Better scope for developing a union catalogue among participating libraries,

6.4 Members

The INDEST-AICTE Consortium has three types of members based on funding.

Type I: Core members supported by MHRD

Type II: AICTE supported members

Type III: Self-supported members

All centrally funded technical institutions including IITs, IISc, ISM, IISERs, NITs, SLIET, NERIST, IIMs, NITIE, NITTTRs, IIITs and NIFFT are the core members of the Consortium.
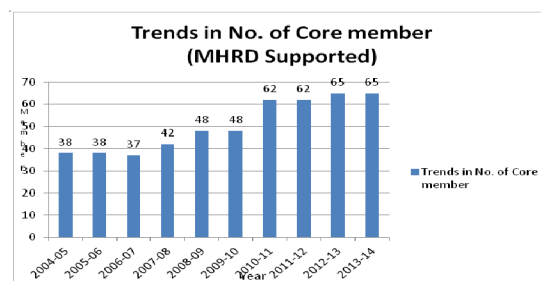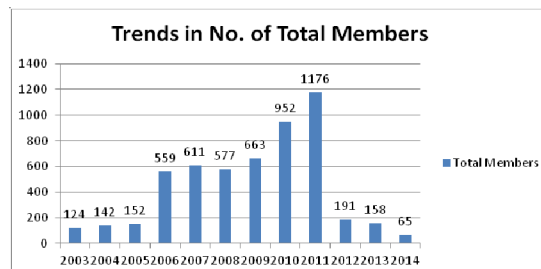
For AICTE supported members AICTE provided financial support to the Government/Government aided institutions and Technical Universities/ University Departments having programmes in engineering and technology.

AICTE approved and UGC-affiliated institutions are come in the category of self supported members.

6.5 Issues involved with INDEST-AICTE Consortia

i. **Increasing users' expectations and availability of limited budget:** With limited budget, one of the greatest issues involved is to meet the expectations of the participating institutes. Every participating institute has their own requirement. If a consortium has a good budget, then it can satisfy the needs of the mem-

Trends in Total and Core membership of INDEST-AICTE Consortium

ber institutes. In case of budget crunch, this issue becomes the prominent one.

ii. **Fair use:** Fair use is one of the challenges which are faced by INDEST-AICTE consortia. The consortia have developed the guideline for the fair use of the resources subscribed by it. The members of the consortia are expected to abide by these guidelines. The summary of the guidelines are as:

Permitted	Not permitted
· Viewing, downloading, copying, printing and saving a copy of search results·	· Use of robots or intelligent agents to do systematic, bulk or automatic downloading is not permitted·
· Viewing, downloading, copying, printing and saving individual articles·	· Systematic downloading or printing of entire journal issues or volumes, or large portions of other e-resources is not permitted·
· Using e-resources for scholarly, educational or scientific research, teaching, private study and clinical purposes·	· Using e-resources for commercial gain is not permitted (i.e. reselling, redistributing or republishing licensed content)·

· Sending a copy of an article to another authorized user (i.e. current faculty, students or staff)·	· Transmitting, disseminating or otherwise making online content available to unauthorized users (i.e. sending to mailing lists or electronic bulletin boards) is not permitted·
· Posting the URL to the publisher's version of the article on a class website (publisher links will allow only authorized users access)	· Posting the publisher's version or PDF of an article to an open class website is not permitted (instead, post the URL to the article which will allow only authorized users access)

iii. Licensing and copyright issues

Consortia licensing is a legal process of acquiring usage rights of the intellectual property governed by the copyright laws for a community of members. There are various points that should be considered in licensing agreement with the publishers. The standard license agreement should address the following clauses:

a) Authorized users

b) Restriction of commercial use

c) Course packs

d) Electronic reserves

(e) Fees, Members, secure network, subscription period, usage rights, ILL and other terms and conditions etc.

Some of the important issues that should be considered while signing license agreement with the publishers are as follows:

a) **Simultaneous Users**: There should be no limit on number of simultaneous user on any of the resources subscribed by the Consortium. Any number of users can access e-resources including e-journals and bibliographic databases at any given time.

b) **Walk-in Users:** Walk-in users, physically present at the subscribing institute should also be allowed to use the resources

c) **Inclusion of additional Titles:** The Licensor should provide access to new journal titles that are added during the contract period at no additional cost.

d) **Electronic Link:** Licensor should use suitable technology to establish electronic links to all the articles of licensed materials.

e) **Print Copy of Journal**: A print copy of the digital content should be kept as a backup of journals subscribed under the consortium

f) **Perpetual Access and Archival Rights:** In case of termination of the agreement or on the expiry of the agreement, licensor should extend perpetual access to e-resources for the paid period of subscription along with their back files offered during the subscription period

g) **Print-independent Subscription**: Subscription to e-resources should be print-independent. Discontinuation of print subscription which is available through consortium should not be binding to member Institutes.

h)   Protection on Increase of Price: There should be no annual increase of the price. Annual increment of the price should be below 5%.

i)   Inter Library Loan: Licensee should be allowed to fulfil ILL requests from non-authorized users using (Arial software) electronic copy of article downloaded from the licensor's Web site

iv. **Resources Identification**

Identifying the most suitable product which is agreed upon by all the members of the consortium is more or less a difficult proposition. This is mostly because each and every member will have their own wish list of information products and services, though the overlap between the products will be on the higher side in the case of an ideal homogeneous group.

v.   **Access related issues**

There are various access methods offered by publishers towards accessing their resources and it varies case to case. Access authentication could be User ID / Password based or IP based which are popular among them. Uninterrupted and hassle free access to the scholarly content is the ultimate objective of the consortium.

vi. **Archival Issues**

This is an area which needs utmost attention and unfortunately this is yet to be attended to by the consortia in India. Long term preservation of the invaluable wealth of information being accumulated by the consortium is to be archived and preserved for posterity. As the technology is fast progressing and also getting obsolete almost at the same pace, it is high time that these costly information resources are carefully archived and preserved on a long term basis.

vii. Sustainability issues

Designing and launching a library consortium is perhaps the easier part when compared to its long term sustenance and longevity. The management and the members of the consortium have to strive hard in formulating and establishing robust models towards achieving the above goals.

viii.   Usage and Usability Issues

The ROI (Return on Investment) of the consortium is measured in terms of the increased usage, usability of the costly information products which is ultimately reflected in the scientific productivity of the host institutes. It is the earnest efforts of the consortium, the management, the researchers and faculty and the librarians which determine the success or otherwise of any consortium.

ix. **Technology Infrastructure**

 Long range planning and sourcing of the appropriate IT and Communication infrastructure conducive for proper delivery of information resources is pre-requisite for every participating library.

x.   **Pricing**

There are no standard practices or processes being followed by majority of the publishers of scholarly literature and hence this is a gray area all together. Publishers are invited for negotiations and asked to offer their best prices to the consortia. Several methods of pricing are followed, but what is important is that finally the price offered by the publisher should be economically viable for the participating libraries. And it should also ensure uninterrupted and perpetual access to the resources.

xi. Training

Training to the users is another issue that one has to give proper consideration. Usually the users are habituated to handle the traditional resources of information. They are reluctant to sudden change in the handling of information. So, it is the library that has to train the users to face the new media, highlight the benefits through orientation and training programmes.

7. Conclusion

With decreasing library budget, the judicial use of money to satisfy the need of maximum users is the need for the time. With availability of ICT and internet technology, library consortia are one of the ways to tackle this problem. Library consortia are really helping the researchers, faculties and the students to retrieve the information and save their time. It benefits the libraries to procure more electronic resources in the library with limited library budget and this is what the libraries require in the present scenario. Formation of a Consortium and collective and logical negotiation with the publishers to get the maximum required resources at the minimum price is a way by which librarians can optimise the use of resources. There are various issues involved with consortia, but these issues can be tackled by adopting right approach and following the right procedures with the coordinated approach of the members of the consortia.

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