Planning a Consortia Among the Campus Libraries of

University of Madras

By

R. Ambuja

Deputy Librarian

Dr.ALM.Post Graduate Institute of Basic Medical Sciences

University of Madras,

Taramani, Chennai – 600113

E-mail: ambuja@vsnl.com

<u>ABSTRACT</u>

University Libraries, with the dawn of Internet era, are compelled to provide relevant information essential to its end users within a short span of time either from its in-house holdings or from resources available in other libraries. This could be made possible only by way of Library Consortia (LC). This paper discusses the planning of LC among the major Campus Libraries of University of Madras. It identifies the need, prerequisites, problems and solutions involved in consortia formation.

KEY WORDS: University Campus Libraries – Consortia; Consortia Planning; Resource Sharing; Library Cooperation

0. INTRODUCTION

University Libraries forever try to find the ways by which they can satisfy information / research needs of their faculty and students. In addition, they are forced to manage new technologies, increasing workload and above all decreasing staff numbers. To overcome such a situation they resort to Library Consortia (LC), which is sharing of available resources with the member libraries. The main purpose of library consortia is to facilitate easy access to resources and services to a wider category of users. Rapid expansion of knowledge in each discipline and proliferation of literature through which it is disseminated are some of the major factors that influence in making LC a necessity. In addition, inter-disciplinary nature of research, technological advancements that offer newer methods of information retrieval / dissemination and above all decreasing library budget and increasing cost of resources also warrant LC.

Main objectives of library consortia are to maximize availability and accessibility of resources and services to a wider category of users. In addition LC, also helps to coordinate in development of library facilities and services.

1. AREAS AMENABLE FOR LC

Libraries before forming consortia must identify areas amenable for LC. Following broad areas can be selected for Library Consortia:

- Integrated library system (network)
- Use of in-house databases, union catalogues
- Collection development.
- Subscription to electronic journals and
- Professional staff development.

Integrated Library System or networking is a modern form of resource sharing. Application of

computers and telecommunications link enhance transfer of information from one library to another. OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) is an important tool to know the availability of resources in a library. Databases of in-house resources of several libraries put together result in formation of union catalogues. Co-operative collection development policy particularly serials and primary documents can be undertaken by LC. Library personnel must be given intensive training in using modern gadgets in information retrieval and handling and also in creating databases by using the software acquired.

2. UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS CAMPUSES

University of Madras has four campuses, viz., Chepauk, Marina, Guindy and Taramani, which have 68 departments of study and research. Guindy and Taramani campus are over 9 km away from Chepauk or the Main Campus. No other University in India has such a wide spread of campuses. Data pertaining to each campus is given below –

2.1 Chepauk Campus

Chepauk campus is the Main Campus in which departments pertaining to Humanities and Social Sciences are housed. The Campus Library, which is popularly known as "Madras University Library" has a total budgetary provision of Rs.41.9 lakh that is inclusive of all departments for the year 2002-2003. Library has a total collection of over 5 lakh books and 590 periodical titles. There are over 18,000 library members.

2.1.1 Marina Campus – Departments pertaining to oriental languages are housed in Marina campus, which is situated near Chepauk Campus. The Marina Campus Library comes under the purview of Chepauk Campus Library and has a collection of about 15,000 books.

2.2 Guindy Campus

The Guindy campus has 14 departments in the field of Pure Sciences. Campus library has a total allocation of Rs.45.7 lakh from the University budget. There are over 85,000 books and bound volumes of periodicals, 4900 theses on Science subjects in the library. Around 70 journals are subscribed per year. Total membership amount to 1,100.

2.3 Taramani Campus

Taramani Campus houses the Dr.A.L.M.Post Graduate Institute of Basic Medical Sciences (PGIBMS), which comprise of 8 departments. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has recognized the institute as one of the Institutes of Excellence in Health Sciences   The Taramani Campus Library also known as PGIBMS – Library has a total collection of 10,000 books, 6500 back volumes of periodicals of 315 journal titles and 460 theses. University of Madras Library budgetary provision for the year 2002-2003 is Rs. 25.4 lakh, which subscribes to 65 journals in the field of basic medical sciences.

3.   CONSORTIA OF CAMPUS LIBRARIES

3.1   Prerequisites for Consortia Formation

Affordable computer technology, rapid change in telecommunication and emerging Internet infrastructure play a dominant role in formation of LC. Application of computer technology in libraries has resulted in creation, integration and utilization of databases of in-house resources in addition to other Internet based services. Prerequisites essential to form a LC, are Hardware, Software, Netware, Human ware, Integrated Library System and a Coordinated Acquisition Policy.

a.   Hardware - must necessarily be a Pentium PC / Server which would support modular enhancements like CD Writer, Document Scanner, CD Net and other network elements.

b.   Software - composed of different components like operating system, which could be either commonly used Windows or Unix, Linux etc and any library software which would enhance handling in-house resources in an information center.

c.   Netware – One of the major elements for a successful LC, is a good network infrastructure. In addition to LAN (Local Area Network) in the campus, Internet connectivity with a decent bandwidth has to be provided. This could be made possible only with a dedicated telephone line and must also be supplemented by fax facility.

d.   Human ware - Library personnel need to be trained in using the latest gadgets with which relevant information is stored, analyzed and disseminated to potential users.   Training must also be given to library staff to create databases of library documents.

e.   Integrated library system – A library without network cannot venture into entering a

consortium. Integrated Library System enables a library to create an OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) – a database of resources available in the library. Databases form a major element of LC as they help in identification of the potential libraries capable of satisfying information requirements of its users. These can be categorized into three types namely,

i.   OPAC – Online Public Access Catalogue of in-house and collaborating libraries.

ii.   Union Catalogues - to know the availability of documents of regional and national collection.

iii.   Commercial Databases - for selective access to published literature in the relevant field of interest.

f.   Coordinated Acquisition Policy – Participating libraries must adopt a coordinated acquisition policy with regard to collection development of documents. Based on analyses of the requirement of target users, acquisition policy must be adopted be it the journals, primary documents or CD –ROM databases.

3.2   Work in Progress

Databases pertaining to the library holdings are being created as per the international standards in order to enable all the campus libraries to share their resources. Databases of books, theses and periodical holdings would serve as an important tool to know the availability of resources in the affiliating libraries. Automation process that is being carried out in three campus libraries in accordance with each of its component is given below:

a.   Hardware – Three campus libraries namely, Chepauk, Guindy and Taramani have a minimum of 6 Pentium PC and 1 Pentium Server, CD Writer. Document scanner is available at Chepauk and Taramani Campus Libraries.

b.   Netware – University of Madras has a WAN connection with 2 Mbps through a dedicated leased line from BSNL. Guindy and Taramani campus has a LAN connection to all Departments and Library, which in turn is connected by a bandwidth of 128Kbps to the WAN at Chepauk Campus. At Chepauk Campus, being the biggest of all, with over 35 departments, LAN connection is being done in stages. Chepauk Campus Library is also yet to be connected to the WAN that is available in the same campus.

c.   Software – As far as software is concerned, all campus libraries have CDS / ISIS which has been

developed by UNESCO. During year 2000, INFLIBNET provided SOUL software to Chepauk Campus Library as a gift. In the year 2002 Taramani Campus Library acquired SOUL software. SOUL software has to be provided to Guindy Campus Library. Only, if the same software is used by all the three-campus libraries, compatibility could be achieved.

d.   Humanware – Most of the professional staff in all campus libraries have been trained in using CDS/ISIS software. INFLIBNET provided intensive training to library professionals from select University Libraries in library automation and use of SOUL Software at Ahmedabad. The training benefited four professional staff from Chepauk Campus Library and they in turn familiarized SOUL software to other professional staff of the University.

e.   Integrated Library System – Initially, Campus Libraries were using CDS/ISIS software to automate the in-house resources. Database of theses holdings was created both at Chepauk and Guindy Campus libraries in CDS/ISIS. Subsequently, Libraries were provided financial assistance for automation purpose called "RECON – Project" by INFLIBNET to Chepauk Campus Library and "SCAP – Project" by Science City to Guindy and Taramani Campus Libraries which is mentioned below in detail.

RECON – Project: Chepauk Campus Library popularly known as Madras University Library (MUL) has been identified by UGC-INFLIBNET as one among the five major libraries for Retrospective Conversion of Library Collections (RECON). The project aims in the conversion of library book catalogue, which is in the card form to machine-readable form as per the Common Communication Format and other standards prescribed by UGC-INFLIBNET. Major objectives of the project are to create quality databases of holdings in Universities, Colleges and other libraries, which would enable compilation of Union Catalogue that could be made available at INFLIBNET. It helps to share the bibliographic data with all the other participating major libraries. In the first phase of the project, MUL has been identified to concentrate on the subjects namely, Psychology, Public Administration, Sociology, Education, Commerce, Geography and History. The project will be extended to other campuses after completion of databases on these subjects. UGC-INFLIBENT has released Rs.2.5 lakh as first installment out of Rs.10 lakh sanctioned to undertake the project. The Library has completed the first phase of the Project by way of entering bibliographic details of 51,000 books and has sent the same to INFLIBNET for merging it with the Union database for Books. At present, as and when newly acquired books are processed, bibliographic details of the same are entered into SOUL database.

SCAP- Project - Government of Tamil Nadu under the Science City Automation Project (SCAP) have identified 44 libraries in the field of social, pure and medical sciences within a radius of 20 km in Chennai and have provided funds for automation of its collection. It has been decided by Science City to automate library holdings of all science libraries as per Common Communication Format (CCF) using CDS / ISIS software designed by UNESCO.

A sum of Rs.4 lakh has been provided by Science City to Guindy campus for library automation. In the Guindy Campus Library, database pertaining to Theses in the field of Pure Sciences submitted to the University has been created and that of books and periodical holdings is being created.

Taramani Campus Library popularly known as PGIBMS (Post Graduate Institute of Basic Medical Sciences) Library was given 1.25 lakh of rupees for automation work by Science City.   Database of Theses submitted to the University of Madras in the field of Basic Medical Sciences have been created in addition to periodical holdings database. Theses Database as well as Periodical Holdings database consisting of 6500 back volumes of a total of 315 journal titles have been created using window version of CDS / ISIS. At present Taramani Campus Library has acquired SOUL software from UGC – INFLIBNET and a database of books is being created wherein bibliographic data pertaining to five thousand books have been entered. Library membership data have also been entered using SOUL. The Taramani Campus Library would be fully automated by the end of March 2003.

f.   Coordinated Acquisition Policy - Acquisition of documents in all three-campus libraries can be coordinated based on the information requirements of its users. Research that is being carried out in the University of Madras has become more and more of interdisciplinary in nature. This has resulted in a sea change in resource / service requirements of academia, researchers and students, which warrant Library Consortia. It can be planned as mentioned below:

Documents, namely monographs, journals and CD ROM databases that are frequently referred by other campus users could be listed. Such of those documents, which are often referred by other campus users, could be acquired in electronic format, if available, so that other campus users could access through Internet from their own campus library. Journals like Science and Nature can be subscribed in electronic format that could enable wider access that readers from all three campuses could be benefited. In addition, electronic version of journal subscription would enable quick and easy access by readers of all campus libraries. By doing so it would enable to over come delay in accessing the journals.

Similarly CD-ROM databases, which are being referred constantly by other campus users, could be listed and could be searched by users from all campus libraries, if they are made available in WAN. If sufficient funds are available online version of Databases that are frequently searched can be subscribed. While doing so, care must be taken after analyses of use statistics whether it could be

Ø   Single site double user

Ø   Single site multi-user.

4.   PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Major problems that all campus libraries would face while forming LC are insufficient funds and lack of trained professional staff. Other problems that would affect consortia formation are listed below along with solutions for the same.

4.1   Hardware

Problem - Personal Computers that are available in each campus library is not sufficient to meet the requirements of its users. Only, if the local requirements are satisfied can the campus library go in for a consortium. Users who are doing CD ROM search namely Dissertation Abstracts International at Chepauk Campus and Medline CD Search at Taramani library have to wait for days together in order to get their turn.

Solution - The authorities must provide necessary infrastructure that is essential to provide effective service to the users. Care should be taken to ensure that adequate number of computers must be provided to each campus library.

4.2   Netware

Problem – Network is the backbone in library consortia, which warrant efficient governance. But LAN that is available to all Campus Libraries does not cover all sections. Chepauk Campus Library is yet to be connected to the WAN that is available in the same campus.

Solution - LAN connectivity in each campus must be extended to all sections of the respective Campus Library before venturing into Library Consortia.

4.3   Software

Problem - Standardization of library organizational practice is a must for Library Consortia. But SOUL software is available only at Chepauk and Taramani Campus Library. Only if same software is used in all the three campus libraries compatibility could be achieved and sharing of bibliographic details of in-house documents could be made possible.

Solution - SOUL software has to be provided to Guindy Campus Library.

4.4   Humanware

Problem – Lack of professional staff and ignorance of the use of software and the latest gadgets that are acquired in the library.

Solution - Unless professional staff in all campus libraries are trained in using SOUL software and also be familiarized with the latest gadgets that are acquired consortia will not be possible. More professional staff must be appointed.

5.   CONCLUSION

Following the Five Star Level accreditation of the University by National Assessment & Accreditation Council (NAAC), UGC has awarded the status of "University with Potential for Excellence" to the University of Madras. Campus Libraries of such a prestigious University must necessarily resort to consortia in order to optimize the infrastructure and increase wider access to much needed information by its academia and students whereby fulfilling the major objective of INFLIBNET.

References:

[1]   **Annual Report of for the Academic Year 2002-2001. Chennai, University of Madras, 2002.**

[2]   **Pramod Kumar and Kumbar TS. "Networked information services and resource sharing: the INFLIBNET Approach." In Information Services in a Networked Environment in India- CALIBER 2000, Chennai, pp1.46 - 1.55.**

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR

Ambuja is the Library Head of PG Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Madras. She received her Ph.D degree in Bibliometrics from University of Madras in the year 2000. She has over two decades of work experience in Libraries. Her research interests lie in Scientometrics, Collaborative Research, and Digitizing Library Collections. She is presently working on automating PGIBMS Library.