

Resource Sharing and an Appraisal of Library Networks in Developing Library Collection

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Abstract

The collection building in a library is a primary activity, the rest of all being secondary as these are directed towards making the collection more accessible. Several factors compel the libraries to go for resource sharing for building their collections. Networking is one of the most effective ways of sharing the resources among a group of libraries / information centres, to provide maximum service to the users. The authors have listed several reasons why the libraries should go for networking of resources. In the context of collection development, networking facilitates cultivation of specialized areas, cooperative storage, electronic publications, and rationalisation of documents. Networking facilities have totally revolutionised the methodology of resource sharing and its impact is now being greatly felt.

Introduction

Telecommunication facilities have enabled proper linkages between information centres irrespective of their locations and offer online access to computerized local and foreign databases to library users as and when required and the scheme is referred to as networking of libraries. We have to reckon with the fact that such co-operative system to share the resources of each other holds the key to developing effective acquisition policies or collection development programmes.

The collection building in a library is a primary activity, the rest of all being secondary as these are directed towards making the collection more accessible. However, the task of a need based, balanced and upto date collection building is not an easy task. Every library of repute makes herculean efforts to collect all sorts of documents containing information to feed their clientele.

Need for Resource Sharing

The need for resource sharing is based on several factors. Firstly, no single library can incorporate all the information required. Secondly,

information is a social wealth which knows no boundaries, hence it is obvious and makes sense to share what others generate in their own countries. Thirdly, inadequate library budget, more specifically funds not sufficient to acquire costly resources. Fourthly, to avoid duplication of documents which might be otherwise available in other libraries, be in its vicinity or held by libraries located thousand of miles away and still the required document can be had physically or in reproduced format.

The need for sharing of resources has been necessitated by other reasons too, such as information explosion; inflation; inadequate space in the libraries; proliferation of subjects; increased awareness among the users about library resource sharing; influence of technological advances on the communication; collection, storage and dissemination of information; universal bibliographic control and growth of library networks.

Networking of Libraries

Until recently at the professional platform, the term Inter-Library Loan, Inter-Library Cooperation or Resource Sharing was discussed. But today the term 'Library Networking' is gaining world wide currency.

Networking is one of the most effective ways of sharing the resources among a group of libraries/information centres, to provide maximum service to the user. The term 'Networks' or 'Networking' when applied in the context of library/information centres usually implies computerisation. A network may be regarded as a formal arrangement, whereby materials, information and services are provided by the participant libraries to a variety of users, and computers and telecommunications are used as tools to facilitate communication links among the network members. It is a specialised type of library cooperation for centralised development of cooperative programmes and services, including use of computers and telecommunication, requesting the establishment of a central office and a staff to accomplish network programmes rather than merely to co-ordinate them.

Why Networking

Interestingly the major objectives of library networking itself is resource sharing. It delivers documents at a greater speed; it encourages smaller libraries to participate and benefit equally from the network resources; one can know without much effort as to what documents are available at one place on his area of interest; it aids in arranging the

transfer of information from one region to another, from one information unit to other; networks result in the creation of specialised bibliographies for use by users that are stationed at long distance; it also looks into the promotion of copyright rules among the participating libraries; it helps in promoting socio-economic development of a region by offering nascent information required in any development project; it speeds up library automation in individual libraries and ensures uniform standard bibliographic records for exchange of information; through networking of libraries resources can be rationalised, i.e. it helps in avoiding duplication of work, wastage of human and material resources of the country.

Networking in the context of Collection Development

Cultivation of Specialized Areas

Through resource sharing networks, each library in the network becomes familiar with the holdings of all participating libraries and in such network milieu, the library makes an attempt to cultivate its subject areas and eventually refine its library collections and look for resource sharing so far as the penumbral areas are concerned. By way of developing special collections, information units makes bilateral arrangements that also has other implications such as economy of space and proper utilization of limited funds and by extended access to a greater portion of world's literature.

Cooperative Storage

It has also been noticed that resource sharing has paved the way for cooperative storage. It is achieved by arranging the deposits of collections at local and regional levels. The method not only reduces duplication of documents, but offers more space for new arrivals to the participating libraries. Here, less utilized materials are shifted to a central place and information about the new location of materials is given in the catalogue. Whenever there is need for such materials, they are borrowed and returned after use. First requisite for such a planned cooperative acquisition scheme among libraries is networking.

Electronic Publications

Electronic publication is the outcome of another spectacular advances in information technology, i.e. the optical - disk based document image capture, storage, retrieval and display system. It comprises of a number

of devices that can scan paper copy or microform copy of the document. It then captures the document image and store them in digital format on optical disks. In the disk itself, the location index to each image is furnished. Such electronic document offer great promise to networking libraries in their resource sharing activities. A compatible CD-ROM drive reads the disk, searches the information and transmits the image on the display screen and a hard copy of the document comes out from the printer. Such telecommunication based electronic publication delivery systems are in its embryonic stages. Two best examples are:

- i) DOCDEL, which was launched in 1984 to deliver electronic journals comprising of text and graphics preparation, storage, electronic publications and distribution.
- ii) ADONIS, a trial project started in 1990 to offer full text databases of biomedical journals on CD-ROM's to prominent document delivery centres.

These document delivery centres use the disks containing full text articles from selected journals to satisfy requests for individual articles in the course of their other information services and programmes. Article Delivery Over Network Information System (ADONIS) is a joint effort of ten major technical publishers of biomedical journals such as Blackwell, Elsevier, Pergamon, Springer - Verlag and twelve text libraries from America, Europe, Australia and Japan.

Rationalisation of Documents

It should be noted that the increase in price of books and journals are badly affecting the collection development of a library. A study has unfolded that only 25% of documents are actually satisfying the needs of the library users and 17 to 28% of the journals are duplicated every year among 30 major libraries from Hyderabad city alone. To overcome such hurdle of purchasing less used documents and duplicate journal subscriptions, it is desirable that libraries should go for such cooperative venture as networking by which chances of undesirable duplication is reduced to a greater extent. Under a scheme initiated by NISSAT, DELNET saves about fifty lakhs through the rationalisation of foreign periodicals in Delhi libraries out of subscription for 1991 and 1992 and subsequently, some savings are also made in the other cities in India under this scheme. Such cooperative collection development has resulted in the rationalisation of library acquisition and in turn, it saves money and effective use of the available finances.

Conclusion

With the new tools of information technology, library networking has received a great impetus in recent times with the launching of INFLIBNET, DELNET, CALIBNET, three major library networks to promote sharing of resources among the libraries in India.

In the west, networking facilities have totally revolutionised the methodology of resources sharing and its impact is now being greatly felt in the developing nations. That is the reason why in developing nations the discussions and experiments for the application of computer and telecommunication technology to libraries is gaining momentum.

If a nation has to benefit in research; in education, in its scientific endeavours, socio-economic developments, creative pursuits or in other words for cultural upliftment, it must encourage, augment and aid information sectors catering to any branch of learning in implementing all resource sharing schemes.

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