A Study of E-resource Acquisition Policies in Consortia : A Possibility

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Libraries of various institutes generally develop their own e-resources acquisition policies which they follow for acquisition of e-resources. The main object of evolving this policy is to provide easy access to all the e-resources, provide Authentic Information to users and availability to anywhere. The e-resource Acquisition Policy should follow the Library Standards like BSI (Bureau of Indian Standards), ISO (International Standards Organization) etc., Law of IPR and Copyrights should be applicable. For acquisition of e-resources and for its uninterrupted optimum utilization, libraries develop their own acquisition policy which provide safeguard while acquiring e-re- sources and also in the event of dispute or odd situation. In this paper, we discuss broad features of the acquisition policy which generally cover the e-resources to be selected, acquired, mode of acquisition, infrastructure required for its optimum use, collection development, availability of funds, priority to be given to e-resources to be acquired, intellectual access, ILL, technical com- patibility, archival policy, contract negotiation and pricing policy, consortia acquisition, licensing, free e-resources, de-selection, exclusion of free e-resources, duplication, types of e-resources, digital collection, etc. To impart awareness among the learners and users located in remote areas, Government should take initiative to develop a network which provides information and other e- resources up to that level.

Keywords: E-resource, Acquisition Policy, Consortial Access, UGC-INFONET

1.   Introduction

In this era of rapid developments, progress and invention of newer technology every day, every one is striving and determined to keep pace with the technology and developments that take place everywhere in the world. In this period of time, traditional, conventional and old pattern of accessing information and knowledge is becoming outdated as accessing information, database and knowledge resource from a book collection in a library is more time consuming, troublesome and dependent on the place, person, and availability of concerned person and resource. Whereas the e-resource is easily accessible from anywhere round the world, it does not require availability of a specific person at a specific time. More- over, it saves time of user, service provider, librarians and is the fastest mode of transmitting acquired information from one to another. The requirement of e-resource becomes most important when same information is to be accessed/ required by many readers, users, persons located at various places in the world that too even at the same time; in that situation, e-resources play very important role to provide access to each and every user. Therefore, as compared to traditional library resource, e-resource is more

useful, time saving, and easy to access. This prompted people all over the universe to prompt towards e-resource and this has been proven the best source available to users.

Libraries of various institutes generally develop their own e-resources acquisition policies which they follow for acquisition of e-resources for the Libraries. The main object of evolving this policy is to provide easy access to all the e-resources i.e. electronic journals, publications, books and other resources available on line as well as in other formats such as, CD, DVD, (Audio & Visual) etc., or else where in the electronic format. Some of common types are:

- ➲ Indexing and abstracting database
- ➲ Full-text database
- ➲ E-journals
- ➲ E-books
- ➲ Reference databases (directories, dictionaries, encyclopedia, etc.)
- ➲ Numeric and statistical database

Selection of e-resource is based on the applicability, utility and requirement of e-resources by its users, faculty, students depending on relevance of the subjects on which the faculty, students, users are working.

The e-resource policy shall cover both free e-resources as well as purchased or subscribed by a library from a commercial source/vendor/provider, a non-profit organization, professional organization or any other institution.

2.   E-resources

Electronic resources mean materials that require electronic devices for access of data i.e. through micro-computer, mainframe or other type of computers or devices. The data (e-resources) may be stored at a remote server in electronic form and could be accessed electronically using internet.

3.   Acquisition

E-resources are acquired by libraries by various ways available, viz. through publishers, information/ service providers, vendors, consortia infonet [INFLIBNET, UGC Infonet, etc. in India], individual or asso-ciates of institutes, and institutional access to e-resources. The consortia infonet i.e. UGC Infonet, INFLIBNET, individual license, etc. is provided to libraries and its users at no charge. But, the publishers, service/information providers, vendors, provide the e-resources on payment for a specified period.

Apart from this, the library may accept donation of e-resource from a person having a license to access the e-resource subject to the condition that it does not violate or infringe the Copyright Laws of the land. Like a gratis item, in traditional library system, so many sites (e-resources) available from different organization/Institute which is available free of cost. As OJS from INFLIBNET Centre etc

4.   Selection of e-resource

While selecting e-resources, following points have to be considered –

- The e-resource must support syllabus/curricula and research need of the institute as required by users.
- The resource will provide deeper and wider knowledge on the subject than existing sources.
- A balance has to be maintained among various disciplines and levels e.g. science, commerce, law, etc. and levels like undergraduate, graduate, higher studies, faculty etc.
- The information to be selected should be updated and be maintained such all the time. [this shall not apply to archived e-resources].
- The contents of e-resources should be from renowned authoritative authors or publishers on the subject; with positive, peer and professional reviews.
- Its accuracy and completeness should be at par with print format, if any.

5.   Features that e-resource acquisition policy should have

With a view to safeguard the rights and interests of institutes, libraries and users, it is expected that any e-resource acquisition policy should contain following broad features:

5.1   Developmental Feature

Libraries are expected to provide a complete, effective and updated combination of print, non-print and electronic resources for the purpose of teaching, learning, and research in the University/institute. In today's fast era, traditional library is not able to cope with the fast developing technology. Therefore, libraries need to formulate a separate electronic e-resource Collection (acquisition) Development Policy to provide guideline in choosing and acquiring electronic resources and to establish consistency in priorities in managing these resources which are now considered to be a most important part of Library.

Development should be evolved and applied consistently to achieve the planned goals of a library. Students, faculty or end users should be able to retrieve, display and manipulate the information and knowledge acquired through e-resources. E-resources should fulfill the need and requirements of users

by providing various updated study materials, published papers, e-books, etc. E-resources availability should provide alternative awareness of learning to users on a 24/7 basis from on and off campus so that new users, students are attracted towards use of e-resources. An open access archive for electronic preprints of scientific papers is created by Cornell University Library, where preprints in the fields of Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science, Quantitative Biology, Quantitative Finance and Statistics are made available, which can be accessed by researchers via World Wide Web [http://arxiv.org].

While acquiring e-resources, requirements of various disciplines should be considered, but priority should be given to e-resources by which largest number of users, faculty and students would be benefited.

Online contents should contain the same contents as the print version, if any, including book review, editorials, graphs, charts, etc. It should retain original colours and presentations with a resolution of at least 600 dpi so that contents can be printed accurately and displayed. The online version should be available concurrently with print version. Information/e-resource provided should also provide usage statistics. Users, faculty, students should be notified sufficient in advance, generally with a month's prior notice, about any change in contents (addition or title withdrawal). If there is going to be significant change in overall contents of data base, its relevance, utility, appropriateness to library users, i.e. faculty, students, etc, should be re-evaluated.

5.1.1 Selection (Collection Development) Team

A Selection Team is constituted by the concerned authorities of an institute/university in which the Librarian plays an important role in collection and building of database of requirement. The team works in a coordinated manner and its members perform the duties assigned to them.

5.1.2 E-resources Fund Advisory Committee

This committee generally consists of representatives/faculty of different disciplines, Librarian and the Accounts/Finance authority. The Committee meets twice annually or as needed. It serves as an advisory committee to the Collection Development Team and Library Administration as regards the expenditure for development of libraries and acquisition of e-resources and to fix the priorities and needs of the institute/university/faculty/users.

This Committee generally takes into account

- ➲ Allocation of fund for ongoing, recurring and emerging needs.
- ➲ Assessing usage statistics

⮑ Consideration of acquisition of new products/resources.

⮑ Consortial agreement or collaboration, when available.

⮑ Future requirements of funds for different activities.

⮑ Requirement of funds for future development of various activities.

5.2 Archival Policy

Libraries have a legitimate interest in maintaining collection integrity through archives of the e-resources that have been acquired through licensed or otherwise. Easy and permanent access to archival electronic resources must be ensured so that libraries can fulfill their mission. Management of electronic information is essential to ensure permanence similar to that of print collections. External information providers cannot be relief upon as archival source. Thus, libraries must insist in agreement with providers that they allow the purchase of content and not just lease of information on temporary access to information.

Purchase of content should assure archival access even if a licensed e-resource is cancelled or removed. If provider's archive is used, they may charge a fee for access. In case the provider is unable to maintain archival access to content or does not host the content from its own server, libraries will be supplied with the content in the form of electronic data files to mount locally. Archival data files should be portable to all major computing platforms and networked environments. Electronic data (e-resource) should comply with appropriate standards used by specific library, e.g. Z39.50, etc. Libraries should be able to choose the format in which they wish to receive and store the content. Data files and contents should be available in various formats such as PDF, HTML, XML, doc, etc. All images should have an appropriate resolution.

5.3 Contract Negotiation and Pricing Policies

Information providers should offer a choice of pricing from which the libraries may select. The models/prices could be based upon various criteria including simultaneous use, user population, number of locations, library budget, etc. In general the following principles should apply:

i. Pricing models which are based upon campus, stream, faculty or system FTE often do not recognize that the content offered may have interest to only a limited segment of the total user population.

ii. Where a resource may not be of broad or general interest, pricing should be based upon more appropriate criteria such as size of the actual user community, projections of use based upon estimates or actual recorded usage, or shared simultaneous user ports.

iii. Discounts should be offered for volume purchase. If more campus/libraries sign up for a service, the cost per FTE or use should be lower.

iv. Purchase of print should be optional and contracts for electronic access should not be tied to print subscriptions.

v. The cost of providing access services and the basic cost of the content should be separate. The libraries should be free to negotiate a license for electronic content which is separate from the access service. If the same content is offered through multiple information provides, then the libraries should be free to choose which access service best meets its needs. The libraries should be able to change access providers, if necessary, without having to renegotiate a license agreement for content.

vi. The vendor should offer either a purchase option or a combined model with a one-off archive fee and a cost-recover annual access fee.

vii. A library should not be required to purchase both, the print and electronic versions.

viii. The cost of the electronic resource should not exceed that of the print counterpart.

The Institute/Library should generally negotiate/acquire e-resource through Consortia in order to take advantage of negotiated pricing agreement. In this, the vendor is generally prepared to offer consortia pricing and libraries/institutions get the e-resources at the lowest price.

5.4 Licensing

Information providers should employ a standard agreement that describes the rights of libraries and their authorized users in easy-to-understand and explicit language. The terms should reflect realistic expectations concerning the library's ability to monitor user and discover abuse. Agreements should contain consistent business and legal provisions; however, nothing should prohibit the library's rights under the local laws. Information providers must recognize and sign the Standard Agreement required for all contracts.

Authorization and authentication of users is a shared responsibility of both the information providers and the library. Authorized users are generally current students, faculty, staff, administrators and all other on-site users of the institute or university.

License shall permit fair use of all information for educational, instructional, and research purposes by authorized users, including viewing and output (downloading, email and printing). Incidental public use must be recognized and accepted.

Authorized sites should be defined and displayed clearly and library and & its authorized users should be permitted to access e-resource from anywhere via institute's site/network.

The license should reflect realistic expectations concerning the institute's/library's ability to monitor use and discover abuse. A standard agreement be entered that describes the rights of the Libraries in under-standable and explicit language.

Licenses shall not limit library's/institute's rights to enhance or reformat data, if content and integrity are preserved in order to make the data more visible or convenient for the library users within fair use. A library can discuss pricing with other consortia.

5.5   Acquisition Procedure

The ongoing subscriptions of e-resources are processed for renewal depending on the recommendation of the {renewal} committee appointed to review the usage database, relevancy, utility and other factors of the e-resources. To collect the usage, utility, relevancy information some forms are made available to users, students, faculty, associates etc. and based on their feed-back, recommendation for renewal of e-resources is formed by the committee.

Similarly, requisition for new e-resources required by faculty, students, users, etc. are also sought in a form and recommendation for that also made by the selection committee.

Requisitions are received from librarians and faculty members, students, users, throughout the year. E-resources that are considered urgent, should be acquired first on priority. Rest of the requisitions (which are not of urgent nature) are prioritized and processed subject to availability of funds. A priority list is submitted to concerned committee and authorities.

5.6   Shared E-resources Fund

If there is insufficient fund to meet a faculty's request for an e-journal/resource, other faculty's librarians together meet the faculties and departmental representatives to find a solution. For example, transfer of money from book or serial funds.

5.7   Selection of free e-resources

Free e-resources which are of value to the research and teaching of the institute/university will be identified and cataloged. Following selection criteria is to be applied and links to free websites be pro-vided in the Libraries network/website.

➲ E-resource should be provided or created by an authority or a reputed or reliable source on subject.

➲ Website is favourably reviewed by a reputed source.

➲ Site is accessible freely with browser/software and compatible with existing network environment/system.

➲ Site is stable and reliable with infrequent/less down times.

➲ Site is reviewed and updated periodically with dates of update displayed.

➲ Website is well designed with visual appeal and easy navigation i.e. site index or search engine.

5.8 Duplication

E-resources which are in duplication to an existing print resource can be accepted if no fee is charged as its inclusion would provide greater access and convenience than the single point access which a print resource provides.

Generally, due to scarcity of library space, e-format is preferred over the print format. The libraries can duplicate print resources with existing free e-resources when:

➲ One format is unstable, unreliable and retention is expected or required.

➲ Multiple formats would meet the requirements of different users.

➲ The print format is needed for archival due to its significant historical value.

5.9 Copyright for e-resources

In order to protect the libraries and its users from infringement of copyright while establishing hyperlinks to e-resources, the following policy should be observed:

➲ The owner/creator of the e-resource should be identified and acknowledged.

➲ Hyperlinks to the e-resource should not be set up in a way that it would give an impression that the institute/library has created the resource.

➲ Institute/Library should display a 'disclaimer' on the link of e-resource announcing who may link to our information. Any hyper links made to remote resource be removed if the copyright owner makes a request.

6. Present Scenario

Generally most of the publishers do not allow free access to peer review and research journals, though such type of journals are very useful for researchers. To overcome this problem, e-consortia are the best

solution. E-Consortia promote better, faster and more cost effective ways of providing broad access to scholarly e-resources. Due to collective bargaining by the Consortia with publishers and aggregators, it has been possible to reduce the access charge of e-resources for needy researchers. To facilitate better acquisition of e-resources, INFLIBNET has started the associate membership program through which any library can   access their required e-resources on the negotiated price.

Example – In India, UGC-INFLIBNET Infonet importantly took part in this venture and played a vital role in successfully providing e-resources to Indian Universities, Colleges, autonomous institutes, IUCs, etc. http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/

The important goal of each library is to provide correct, updated and authentic information to the users, by adopting the 'e-resource acquisition policy' successfully. Thus, by adopting e-resource acquisition policy, all the principles laid down by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan regarding Laws of Library Science are followed.

7. Our Vision in Context of Indian Learners

At present, by the efforts of UGC-Infonet, e-resources have been provided to the users up to Universities library, IUCs and some institutes restricted to some metro and developed cities only. By the efforts of 'N-LIST' project INFLIBNET is planning to provide the e-resource access to 6000 colleges' library. E-resources are still out of reach to learners and users of high schools and colleges located in remote areas, rural areas and small townships. To impart awareness among the learners and users located in remote areas, Government should take initiative to develop a network which provides information and other e-resources upto that level so that schools and UG/PG colleges also provide access through consortial effort to their students and make them aware of the latest developments in the universe. Then only our country would be able to effectively compete with other developed and developing countries.

8. Conclusion

The 20th century was the century of industrial revolution. Now, the 21st Century is the century of 'Information & Communication Technology Revolution'. The people who have new suggestions, new ideas, must be equipped with professional and technical abilities for the creation and implementation of his/her ideas, suggestions, thoughts in any field. It would be better if we say that "The 21st century is a century of information world". Now-a-days the information and communication technology is grow-ing in such way that it is not possible for traditional library system to provide information at a speed comparable to e-resources. Thus, today's libraries have not just remained libraries, but have developed into an Information Centre.

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