RESOURCE SHARING, NETWORKING AND LIBRARY CONSORTIA: PROBLEM AND PROSPECTS IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

The emerging Information Technologies have brought many changes in libraries. These technologies have facilitated LIS professionals to work together to acquire and share library collection and provide digital library services to the user community. Increase of the literature in all subjects and shrinking of the library budget made the libraries depend upon each other. This leads to library cooperation, resource sharing and networking. Now the more accepted system of resource sharing is library consortia. Consortia approach is one of the many ways of maintaining cooperation and coordination among the libraries and in fact it has emerged as the 'state of the art' in library cooperation in recent years. The online databases; electronic journals are facilitate the formation of consortia among the libraries. This paper highlights the past and existing resource sharing and networking status of Bangladesh. In this paper the authors also depict the benefits of library consortia and try to provide some recommendations for the formation of library consortia in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Library cooperation; Library networking; Resource sharing; Library consortia

1.   Introduction

In the present era of Information technology, the information needs of the users have been increased so enormously that no single library on its own can meet their information needs. This has necessitated the need for effective linkages and cooperation between libraries and information centers for sharing of available resources and information through networking. The consortia for library can be considered as a major step towards library cooperation in sharing electronic resources. The consortium should take lead role in the development of a national strategy for information provision for research in higher education.

2.   Library resource sharing and networking

The term resource applies to a thing, person or action to which one resorts to in times of need and sharing indicates allotting, apportioning or contributing something that is owned, to benefit others. Resource sharing, therefore, refers to reciprocity, implying a partnership where each member has something useful to contribute to others and which each is willing and able to make available when needed.

Resource sharing is an empty concept, but for the approach permitting resource sharing to work is that which

■ Entails having resources to share

■ Having a willingness to share them, and

■ Having a plan for accomplishing resource sharing

Resource Sharing is an integral part of modern library services. In the developed countries, no library services can be thought without sharing of resources. In the past, RS was limited to the inter-library loan system. In the modern age, with the development of science and technology and innovations of techniques and devices, resource sharing has become easier and fruitful due to the availability of databases, information network, and online sharing facilities. Thus, the resource-sharing system helps one library to access to resources of other libraries.

When resource sharing is agreed upon by participating institutions, then the following aspects must be planned:

■ Identify and locate major collections, sources and materials

■ Assemble, publish and distribute collective information for all participating bodies

■ Workout the basis for sharing, reference service, lending service, copying service, access to materials, delivery service, and lists of holdings

■ Establish means of sharing ideas, development and problems in the form of a newsletter

■ Plan for new developments in the knowledge of what others are doing

■ Developing a National Information Policy

The following are the most important benefits of resource sharing to participating institutions:

■ Easy access to materials

■ Enables co-operating institutions to extend limited resources

■ Allow greater staff specialization

■ Improve services to users

■ Avoids unnecessary duplication

■ Reduces the number of places which will need to go for services

■ Improves working relationships between cooperating libraries, and

Resource sharing refers to a joint use of resources available on a system or a network by user or peripherals. In the language of information management, when we talk about resource sharing we simply mean collective use of information of all types by various end users from a control coordinating unit or from within a network component at a reduced cost with easy accessibility.

Library cooperation and resource-sharing activity can take place in several forms and can happen at many levels, which include:

■ Interlibrary loans/reciprocal borrowing privileges

■ Exchange or sharing of expertise, resources, and facilities

- Exchange of publications and photocopies and other reprographic services
- Sharing of bibliographic information
- Cooperative acquisition, cooperative cataloguing, and cooperative collection development preparation of union list of holdings
- Cooperative relationship and network development

The implementation of resource sharing is largely depends on library networking. It gives an easy and wider access to information as members have an expanded information-base and service. A network is a form of arrangement or an administrative structure that links a group of individuals or organizations who have agreed to work together and/or share resources. Information networking entails the sharing of resources so that the information needs of both actual and potential users of information—from the local to national level—of all network participants are met.

The network enables the participating bodies to facilitate and expand their users' access to literature and information without corresponding investment in purchase, and processing of information is exchanged through the network on a formal basis.

The network may be responsible for coordinating, organizing and providing information and literature support at the national and international level. The main activities and functions of the network are as follows:

Acquisition of materials
- Joint purchasing of materials
- Assignment of specialization in material acquisition
- Coordinated subscription
- Exchange of duplicate holdings

Technical services
- Co-operative cataloguing
- Abstracting and indexing services
- Interlibrary loan
- Reciprocal borrowing privileges
- Reference and/or referral services

Publication program/repackaging information
- Union catalogue/list of periodicals
- Mutual notification of purchase through lists of new arrivals or acquisition list
- Bibliography development
- Newsletters
- Joint directories of personnel, projects, consultants, resource persons, etc.
- Manuals

Coordination services
- Clearing house functions

- Retrieval and storage function
- Referral center

Delivery/mailing service

Research, training and other special services

- User interest surveys
- Joint research projects
- In-service personnel training
- Workshops and meetings
- Translation services

3. Resource sharing and networks initiatives in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh several Resource-sharing and networks initiatives was taken by different organizations in different sectors to launch Resource sharing and networking systems. Some of these are as follows:

- **National Agricultural Information System (NAIS):** The Agricultural Information Centre (AIC) was taken an initiative to develop a network of agricultural institution.
- **Social Science Research Council (SSRC):** Social Science Research Council, Dhaka was taken an initiative to develop a social science information network in Bangladesh.
- **Health Literature, Library, and Information Service (HeLLIS) Network:** The HeLLIS network was developed by SEARO (WHO), New Delhi, India and National Health Library and Documentation Centre (NHLDOC), Dhaka. All the health libraries of Bangladesh were brought under this network.
- **Development Information Network on South Asia (DEVINSA):** The DEVINSA network was organized by CSCD (Committee on Studies for Cooperation for Development in South Asia) through the Marga Institute, Colombo, Sri Lanka. All SAARC countries, except Bhutan, were the participants of this network.
- **Information Network on Rural Development (INRD):** Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dhaka was taken an initiative to develop a regional network on rural development.
- **Women Information Network (WIN):** Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dhaka was taken another initiative to develop a network on women information.
- **Bangladesh Development Support Information and Communication (BDSIC) Network:** Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla was taken an initiative to launch a network of rural development institutions in Bangladesh
- **National Science and Technology Information Policy (NASTIP):** Under this policy, a four-tier science and technology information networking system has been recommended.
- **The Association of Management Development Institutes in South Asia (AMDISA) Library Network:** The Association of Management Development Institutes in South Asia was launched a library network on management development. The Headquarter of this network was located at the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad. One institute in each SAARC country was selected as a focal point. The Institute of Business Administration Library, Dhaka University was selected as the National focal point for this network.

- **University Libraries:** Dhaka University Library took an initiative several years' back to develop a network of the university libraries, initially by preparing a union catalogue of the holdings of the university libraries.

- **The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC),** in collaboration with the Asia Foundation, took an initiative to compile a union catalogue of the collections of different universities of Bangladesh and to establish an information network within the universities.

- **Bangladesh National Scientific and Library Information Network (BANSLINK):** Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre (BANSDOC) was taken an initiative to build up a Network, known as BANSLINK, to develop a resource-sharing network having dial up connectivity with 15 libraries and information centres of the country.

- **Sustainable Development Network Program (SDNP):** SDNP is a UNDP funded program, which started a union catalog services in 2002 in their virtual library program. The SDNP virtual library prepared this union catalog of 13 libraries, all of which are using CDS/ISIS software for bibliographic record keeping. The SDNP virtual library union catalog is a web-based Online Public Access Catalog.

Most of the above initiatives could not run longer and not able to fulfill their target due to serious budgetary constraint and lack of appropriate support from their parent organizations.

4. Existing resource sharing and networking initiatives in Bangladesh

Bangladesh being a developing country cannot effort to waste its resources. To avoid this, an effective resource sharing and networking system is necessary. At present the following resource sharing and networking systems are working in the country:

- **Population Information Network (POPIN):** The National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT) has taken an initiative to establish an information networking system in the field of health, population, family planning and maternal and child health in collaboration and cooperation with the government and non-government organizations, autonomous bodies, voluntary organizations, and international organizations.

- **National Health Library and Documentation Centre** (NHLDOC), (Ministry of Health, Government of Bangladesh) and International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) signed in 1976 an agreement to facilitate library cooperation through an interlibrary loan system and agreed to cooperate with each other to avoid duplication of journal subscriptions. Subsequently, some other library named, BIDS (1977), BIRDEM (1978), USAID, Dhaka (1992), Aga Khan Community Health Program, Dhaka (1992), and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (1995) joined this programme by signing interlibrary loan agreements. The system has been working well.

- **United Nations Library Network in Bangladesh (UN L-Net BD)**: In March 2002 United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Library has taken an initiative to establish the UN Library Network in Bangladesh (UN L-Net BD). Initially the Network consisted of twenty major libraries of different government, NGOs, including the UN agencies in Bangladesh. At present there are 26 members in this network. It was agreed that UNIC library would act as a focal point and secretariat of the network.

The major objectives of the network is to disseminate and share UN information resources among different libraries, government and NGOs, training institute, and exchange the publications among the member libraries. To create awareness among the network members they are organizing workshops and conducting meetings of the networks members on a regular basis.

5.   Library Consortia

It is not possible for one libraries or information centers to hold the full stock of information resources or to procure all information, which may be in demand by its clientele. Even not a single library or information centers can meet the thrust of knowledge of all the readers from its holdings. To solve this problem, library cooperation started long ago, such as Inter-library loan, document delivery, library networks etc. At present the more accepted system of resource sharing is library consortia. Consortia approach is one of the many ways of maintaining cooperation and coordination among the libraries and in fact it has emerged as the 'state of the art' in library cooperation in recent years.

The word 'consortia' was originated from the Latin in early 19th century in the sense of partnership. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary describes Consortia as 'a group of people, countries, companies, etc. who are working together on a particular project'. A library Consortia is an association of a group of libraries that agree to share their resources to satisfy the needs of users. Consortia may be formed on a local, regional, national, or international basis; on a functional or format basis; or on a subject basis.

6.   Benefits of Consortia

The benefits of Consortia are many:

- A comprehensive collection is possible
- Building communication among different libraries
- Avoid duplication of core collection specially for core journals
- Scope of electronic archives
- Easy access to resource sharing on Internet by developing common resources databases
- Effective document delivery systems
- Better scope for developing a union catalogue
- Reduce cost of information
- Time saving
- Improved resource sharing
- More professional services to users
- Help to develop a competitive professionalism among LIS professionals

7.   International efforts for library consortia

The development of library consortia is the outcome of the desire for resource sharing and consortia seem to be getting bigger. The global development of OCLC is prime example. Due to escalating cost

of documents, decreasing budgets, inadequate storage area and competent staff, LIS professionals of the world are coming together to form consortia. There are several International efforts for library consortia are:

- Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL) [http://www.curl.ac.uk]
- Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester (CALIM) [http://www.rylibweb.man.ac.uk/calim]
- Colorado Library Information Network, [http://www.aclin.org/]
- Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC), [http://www.wrlc.org]
- BIBSYS (Shared University, Research and National Library of Norway) [http://www.bibsys.no/english.html]
- Queensland University Libraries Office of Cooperation (QUOLOC) [http://www.quloc.org.au]
- China Academic Library & Information System (CALIS), China, [http://www.calis.edu.cn/calisnew/]
- Takatsu University Library Consortium (YULC), Japan
- [http://www.lib.reitaku-u.ac.jp/limedio/kangai/tulc.html]
- Tokyo Western Regional Academic Library Consortium, Japan, [http://www.tnishi.gr.jp]
- Yamatesen Ensen Private University Libraries Consortium, Japan [http://www.agulin.aoyama.e/info_3.html]
- Korea Resource Sharing Alliance (KORSA), Korea, [http://www.korsa.or.kr/]
- CONsortium on Core Eletronic Resources in Taiwan (CONCERT), [http://www.stie.gov.tw/English/e_CONCERT.htm]
- Ministry of University Affairs (MUA). ThaiLIS, [http://www.uni.net.th/]

8. Indian Initiatives for Library Consortia

In India at present there are many consortia being run successfully by different organizations. Some of them are as:

- CSIR e-Journal Consortia, [http://www.niscair.res.in/ActivitiesandServices/MajorProjects/majproj.htm#ejournalconsortia]
- INDEST (Indian National Digital Library in Science and Technology) Consortia [http://paniit.iitd.ac.in/indest/]
- FORSA (Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy) [http://www.iiap.res.in/library/forsa.html]
- UGC-INFONET [http://www.inflibnet.ac.in]
- IIM Library Consortia, [http://www.iimb.ernet.in/]
- ICICI Knowledge Park, [http://www.iciciknowlwdgepark.com]
- DAE Library Consortium, [http://www.tifr.res.in/~libws/]
- ICMR Library Consortia, [http://www.jccc-icmr.informindia.co.in/about/about.asp]
- HELINET (Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Karnataka) [http://www.rguhs.ac.in/hn/newhell.htm]

9. Bangladesh initiatives

The information revolution has brought radical changes to the functions and services in all types of libraries. Many libraries in Bangladesh till today are not in a position to afford to procure all documents and subscribe to core journals in major discipline due to financial constraints. As a result, with the aim of ensuring rapid resource sharing among the major libraries and documentation centers in Bangladesh, many library networking and resources sharing efforts were started to help each other. The objectives of these consortia are for better resource sharing, to reduce information costs, for speedy delivery of documents, to keep abreast of new developments etc. Much emphasis should be given at the national level in Bangladesh for the development of documentary information resources, because it is considered as vital resources to promote the development of economy, science, technology and culture etc.

University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) and Dr. Javed I. Khan of Kent State University have taken an initiative to develop a digital library system for Bangladesh. A 4-member committee was formed by the UGC to draft a concept paper on forming Consortia in Bangladesh, and the committee has already submitted the report to the UGC for their approval.

10. Consideration needed to form Consortia

The following issues need to consider before building the consortia:

- Technology infrastructure
- Resources identification
- Budget and funding
- Pricing issues
- Subscription payment issues
- Access related issues
- Licensing and copyright issues
- Archival issues
- Usages and usability issues
- Coordination among partners
- Availability of efficient staff
- Overcoming political objections
- The egos of individuals and institutions
- Adequate professional training on ICT for the LIS professionals
- Sustainability issues

11. Recommendation

In this era of global communication, networks and consortia are highly important. A library consortium in the country is needed to achieve cost effectiveness and bridging of the digital divide. To develop library consortia in Bangladesh we have to overcome many hurdles such as inappropriate ICT

infrastructure, inadequate funding, limited trained personnel, technological capability, lack of understanding of the concept of consortia. But anything new comes up with new challenges and opportunity, it is up to the individuals to take up the challenge and accept the opportunity. So, we can recommend the following suggestions for establishment of library consortia in Bangladesh.

- The Government and LIS Professionals bodies should take initiative to conduct some workshops on Consortia.
- The Government and LIS Professionals bodies should start a forum to bring the librarians/ Information professionals and the publishers/vendors together for better communication and interactions.
- The Government should also make attempts to provide the necessary ICT infrastructure such as high-speed links and a stable network to access the e-journals.
- Policy makers, both in national and international levels together with Internet Service Provider (ISP) should have a shared obligation to seek ways to achieve the wide spread use of the internet.
- Bangladesh should have a separate ministry to coordinate the overall development of the library and information system in the country.
- LIS professionals must market their services to the private sector for sponsorship and support.
- The government should encourage and must recognize the role of librarians and information professionals in building an information society for the development of the nation.
- Involvement of management of the parents organization for sustainability

12. Conclusion

Consortia in Bangladesh are still in table talk and there is a need to study the consortia models and guidelines and methodologies. It is recommended that the concept of Consortia can work well among similar organizations having similar situations such as sufficient additional funds available for the libraries of the consortia members and above all the committed mindsets of the library administrators. On the other side the subscription of e-journals are increasing day by day and the library budgets are shrinking, so it is needed for the library professionals to work together and formulate consortia for subscription to e-journals. Bangladeshi LIS professionals should seriously think and take initiative for consortium movement like western countries for maximum utilization of resources at the reduced cost, time and space.

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