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## Consortia Developments in Library and Information Centres : Some Issues

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### Abstract

*Due to increase in the cost of journals, dwindling library budgets and proliferation of electronic information resources, libraries have been involved in cooperation, coordination and collaboration in resource sharing. The emergence of information technology made library professionals to change their role as navigator of information and come closer willingly to share available information with other libraries. Libraries and Information Services (LIS) are being transformed by technology; consequently, LIS have to adopt to meet their user's changing needs and growing expectations. Included among the resource sharing initiatives conceived by libraries in India is the creation of a computerized network or consortium of all LIS to achieve optimum use. This paper presents the consortia developments in the library and information centers in India.*

**Keywords :** Consortia, Electronic Resources

### 0. Introduction

Consortia means alliance of institutions having common interests. The application Information Technology and Information Retrieval systems for on-line catalogues, bibliographic databases and full text electronic documents have facilitated a quick information exchange among the institutions.

Cooperation amongst the institutions for sharing their library resources is being practiced for decades. Traditionally, primary purpose of establishing a library consortium is to share physical resources including books and periodicals, amongst its members. However the mode of cooperation has gone under a transformation with infusion of new information technology from print – based environment to digital environment.

The academic libraries, being the nerve centers of higher education, teaching and learning; play an important role in support of all the activities of the concerned university. The increasing growth in the enrolment of students and researcher, lack of proper and adequate infrastructure further aggravates the overall problems, challenges for the academic libraries. This situation arised the need of consortia of digital libraries. University Grants Commission(UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and other government bodies of education are helping academic libraries to make automation and build their own consortia of libraries in their area.

### 1. E-Books

An e-book or electronic book is essentially a book that has been written in electronic format so that it can be read direct from the computer screen. An e-book is a text presented in a format which allows it to be read on a computer or handheld device. Many titles which are available in printed versions can be read as e-books, including best selling fiction, classics and reference texts. E-books are also used to make out – of – print work available, or to bypass print altogether, as with new works by aspiring authors. E-books can consist simply of the electronic text or may also contain such as audio, video or hyperlinks.

## **2. E-Journals**

Electronic Journal may be defined as any journal, periodical, e-zine, web-zine, newsletter or type of electronic serial publication, which is available over the Internet and can be accessed using different technologies such as World Wide Web, gopher, telnet, etc. E-journals are periodical, regular or irregular moderated unit made available in an e-format either on a static medium or via computer networks.

## **3. Library Consortia**

Library purchasing methods are currently undergoing considerable changes with the growth of library consortia around the world. The consortia are increasingly negotiating with publishers for access by their members to electronic journals and databases. Under the terms of the licences involved, members may often have access to all titles taken by each of the libraries or to all titles from participating publishers. The libraries within such consortia are often turning to their subscription agents for help in the administration and management of the licence arrangements with publishers, including the maintenance of up-to-date databases of publisher options and prices; the availability of individual publishers' licence agreements and forms; liaising with publishers regarding changes to the agreements, for example in relation to new title requirements or additional libraries joining the consortium; handling renewals of licences; acting as a distribution point for passwords and IP numbers and assisting with access, etc.

### **3.1 Aim of the Consortia**

The primary objective of the Library Consortium is to encourage and facilitate interlibrary communication, education and resource sharing within its diverse multi-type library membership.

Today Consortium purpose is shifted from mere sharing of resources to sharing of expertise between libraries and also explores the need for libraries to make the most effective use of their funds collectively.

### **3.2 Need for Consortia**

Academic (University & College) Libraries & Research Center Libraries with the impact of Information Technology are compelled to provide relevant information essential to its end users within a short time either from its in-house holdings or through Consortia. Inflation & Budgetary reductions are the primary force that brings the idea of consortia development.

### **3.3 Salient features of Library Consortia**

1. To eliminate the different problems faced by the libraries to provide various services to the users.
2. To meet the thrust of information of the vast people due to rapid growth of population all over the world.
3. To cope up with the newly generated knowledge published in different forms, such as, printed and non – printed documents, electronic media on various disciplines, multi-disciplinary & new generated subject areas.
4. To collect all the documents published at the national and international level, because of the library financial crunch; &
5. To overcome the language barriers i.e.:- primary documents are being published by the developed countries like USA, UK, France, Japan etc, and among them the non-English speaking countries produce majority of scientific literatures in their mother languages.

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6. Single payment by one of the participants or through an agent and license has to be signed by all;
  7. The members are expected to maintain same level of subscription;
  8. Initial minimum subscription was for 5 titles with 10% e-access charge but was reduced to two titles thereby increasing e-access charge to 12%;
  9. Publishers found it convenient to negotiate with members through an agent and agent raising individual invoices to all members and single payment to publishers;
  10. Institution-wise usage statistics to be provided to ascertain as to how often user's access to all titles subscribed.

#### 3.4 Principles to Govern the Consortia

1. Flexibility to choose your own library management solutions vendor and select the member libraries with which you will share resources.
2. Flexibility to own, manage, and control your library's records and enforces its policies.
3. Flexibility to extend access to even more information with an information portal that shows your library's face.
4. Flexibility to share physical and digital resources.
5. Flexibility to enable your library users to search and place holds on the resources of your own and other member libraries and to enable users of other member libraries to search and place holds on your library's resources.

#### 3.5 Functions of the Consortia

1. Collection Sharing.
2. Electronic Content Licensing.
3. Electronic Content Loading/Presentation.
4. Inter – Library Loan / Document Delivery.
5. Preservation.
6. Training.
7. Union Lists / Shared Online Catalogues.
8. Other; New forms of scholarly and scientific communication.

#### 3.6 Benefits of Consortia:

1. Consortia-based subscription to electronic resources provides access to wider number of electronic resources at substantially lower cost;
2. The Consortium, with its collective strength of participating institutions, has attracted highly discounted rates of subscription with most favorable terms of agreement.
3. The Consortium is proposed to be an open – ended proposition wherein other institutions can join and get the benefit of not only highly discounted subscription rates by also the favorable terms of licenses.
4. The Consortium have been offered better terms of license for use, archival access and preservation of subscribed electronic resources, which would not have been possible for any single institution;

5. Since the subscribed resources would be accessible online in electronic form, the beneficiary institutions would have less pressure on space requirement for storing & managing print – based library resources.
6. The Consortium is expected to trigger remarkable increase in sharing of both the print and electronic resources amongst participating library.

### 3.7 International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)

The International Coalition of Library Consortia first met informally as the Consortium of Consortium in 1997. The coalition continues to be an informal, self-organized group comprising nearly 150 library consortia from all over the world. The coalition serves primarily higher education institutions by facilitating discussion among consortia on issues of common interest. And dedicated to keeping participating consortia informed about new electronic information resources, pricing practices of electronic provider community, providing a forum for them to discuss their offerings and to engage in dialog with consortia leaders about the issues of mutual concern.

## 4. Development of consortia

Library & Information Center's networking in India have come to the existence almost two decade ago. In India we used the term "Inter-library Loan" in the parlance of library management. This scenario has extended from its limited basis to become fully grown Consortia of various kinds. Since India is the developing country, we constantly work towards improving our infrastructure and technology to meet the demands of our scientists and researchers by taking the lead from the developed countries.

Now a day, in India there are few important Consortia's are established. Those are :

### 4.1 INFLIBNET- UGC

The INFLIBNET was established in 1991 by UGC, which aims to link 294 traditional universities, 300 research institutes and 14,000 colleges in the country.

It avoids duplication of journals and enhances active resource sharing through consortia with various publishers. As many as 50 universities are already connected and another 70 would be shortly cleared for e-journals subscriptions.

Negotiations are being under active consideration for consortia subscriptions of e – journals with various publishers/vendors/intermediaries.

### 4.2 Health Inter - Network (HIN) India: The Health Inter - network is a United Nations initiative created to respond to the challenges posed by the digital divide:

The Health Inter - network aims to support & strengthen public health services & to provide access to high quality, relevant & timely health information. It further aims to improve communication & networking among public health care workers, researchers & policy makers.

### 4.3 HELINET Consortia

The Rajive Gandhi University of Health Sciences has been working on collaboration & virtual resource sharing & in the past one year made a significant investment in hardware and content procurement for making International Journals and Databases available to its member libraries all over the Karnataka.

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## 5. Indian Scenario in Consortia Activities

We have looked into necessity for consortia formation, cost factors of e – journals, pricing and licensing models. In Indian context, consortia formation started much later compared to many developed countries. To begin with, a small group of libraries started coming together and made headways for negotiating consortia terms and conditions so as to have access to large amount of information. As of now, we have a few consortia formed and each one is a model of its own as far as funding is concerned, viz:

- ✍ Same funding Agency, CSIR;
- ✍ Institute's Headquarters funding main/branch libraries- TIFR;
- ✍ Central Agency funding directly- MHRD:INDEST;
- ✍ Homogeneous group under central funding – IIM Libraries
- ✍ Different departments/homogeneous group initiated consortium – FORSA.

### 5.1 Model 1: Same Funding Agency – CSIR

CSIR and its 40 laboratories have successfully negotiated with a major publisher for consortium licensing covering their entire database, making payment from headquarters for access to e-journals. This is a large consortium formed during 2000 after prolonged discussions keeping in view various parameters from the point of view of pricing, viz. number of subscriptions, number of subscribing laboratories, number laboratories not subscribing, print based price, add-on to e-access, access fee for non-subscribers and host of other parameters, which will not qualify for model keeping in view large number of parameters vis-à-vis spread of laboratories across the country, absence of facilities in some laboratories, heterogeneous groups, etc. With cooperation and willing support of some dedicated library professionals, the consortium went through successfully (Goudar, I.R.N., 2003). It is to be seen now, while renewing license, how potentially all 40 laboratories are making use of the database subscribed with cross e-access to large number of journals. For renewal, internal review has to be carried out to assess usage pattern from all laboratories and justify the amount spent.

### 5.2 Model 2: Headquarters funding main/branch libraries-TIFR

TIFR and its five branch libraries located at different locations in the country have gone into formation of consortium with major publishers. Headquarters arranged payments after negotiations and after successful completion of one year and its smooth running renewed for the second year. All the members and users are happy with arrangement for accessing important journals among themselves. The publishers should also be happy for the reason that with little administrative efforts, negotiations/payments were settled.

It was a win-win situation for both the parties, since the negotiation was based on print subscription by member libraries and one of the branch libraries has the advantage of accessing entire offer of journals and not subscribing a single title from the concerned publisher. This could be an ideal multi-site model, where administrative /payment aspects are handled by parent organization.

### 5.3 Model 3: Central Agency funding directly - MHRD-INDEST

An Indian National Digital Library in Engineering, Science and Technology (INDEST) was set under MHRD, Government of India, initially covering 38 major technological institute including IISc, all IITs, NITs, RECs and IIITs. It is an open ended system with provision for adding new members by shared subscription through a consortium of libraries. It hopes to increase access to e – journals and important databases on negotiation with major publishers.

Keeping in view, what science and technology libraries used to spend annually, INDEST investment is much less and could provide comparable or even better facilities of information sharing with six full text electronic resources and five on-line databases. The institutions availing INDEST have been divided into three broad categories, viz. Category I: IISc and all IITs, Category II: RECs, NITs and all rest in category III (Sen, N. 2003; Arora, J., 2003).

There are other 'nets' getting ready or already swung into action in forming consortia, viz. UGC, ICAR, etc and small scale level- FORSA and DAE libraries. In due course, INDEST should be able rope all parallel consortia into its fold and make a truly national level consortium to negotiate national site license for all multidisciplinary areas.

#### 5.4 Model 4: IIM Digital Library Consortium

All IIM libraries have been striving for resource sharing in areas such as cooperative acquisitions, processing and decentralized utilization. IIM libraries consortium has been in existence since last three years and negotiated for acquisition of databases and electronic journals.

INDEST Steering Committee meeting held on 18 April 2003 considered favorably to constitute Special Interest Group for IIM Library Consortium and thereby taking care of consortium based resource requirements of all management schools of INDEST members. The Group has recommended that the SIG: Management Schools to be known as "Electronic Resources for Indian Management Schools – ERIMS" and looking forward to subscribe to electronic resources(Jambekar,2003).

#### 5.5 Model 5: Different departments/Homogeneous Groups-FORSA

This is yet another model, wherein Institutes are affiliated to different departments of central government. The model envisaged from this group is briefed in nutshell reflecting how library professionals come together willingly and support for consortia formation.

Unlike others, this group has an informally established forum, which needs a briefing to reflect how homogeneous, like minded professionals come together for cooperation, coordination and collaboration in resources sharing and initiating need based consortia formation in the changed environment.

### 6. Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics (FORSA)

In early 1980s, due to proliferation of information, library professionals working in institutes where astronomy and astrophysics was one of the main thrust areas of research, felt the need to come together and to establish a forum, which can act as a spring board for sharing and exchange of information. As result FORSA was informally launched on July 29, 1981 with a mission to: compile union catalogue of scientific serials, annual and other irregular publications, reference tools, recent research in astronomy, books on order and thesis holding, holding duplicate issues of journals, directory of libraries and facilities available in each library.

At present there are eleven members in FORSA, viz. ARIES, Bose Inst., CASA-OU, HCRI, IIAP, IUCAA, NCRA (TIFR), PRL, RRI, SINP, and TIFR. For details of FORSA, one could look into- <http://www.iiap.res.in/library.forsa.html>.

FORSA has gone into formation of two consortia, viz. Indian Astrophysics Consortium – IAC (Kluwer Journals 2002+) and FORSA Consortium for Nature On-Line (Nature Publishing, 2002+) keeping in view the following points:

- ✍ It is a voluntary consortium with shared goals- being one of several types of consortia;
- ✍ Governed by discussion/consensus among participant library professionals;
- ✍ We started with nothing but good will and shared goals, without staff support, no office; and one of the participant has become the Coordinator for dealing with all FORSA matters;
- ✍ We have 'sunset' clause, i.e. review every three years for IAC and on-line single title every year for renewal keeping in view everybody's concern and experiences of the past years.(Patil,Y.M 2004)

### 6.1 Problems encountered

- ✍ It was a maiden venture for the group. We did not have guidelines or models to follow;
- ✍ We have to believe the middleman, who is expected to act on our behalf;
- ✍ The agent added one more member to our group, whose titles were outside the group thus diluting the objectives of the consortium. As a result, the consortium was burdened with other titles with marginal interest to one or two members;
- ✍ This kind of incidence could have been avoided if members were aware of consortium guidelines and a formal committee to decide the membership of the consortium or FORSA;
- ✍ The problems faced should signal FORSA members to formalize the formation and functioning of the consortium negotiations in the future;
- ✍ Usage statistics was provided on institutional basis rather than title-wise and now with the introduction of COUNTER, one can

## 7. Conclusion

Purpose of Library Consortia is to control and reduce information costs, improve resource sharing develop a networking information environment & share licensing issues with each other. But now a days number of consortium's are coming up with multidisciplinary subjects in India.

Libraries have an ongoing responsibility for collection development, preservation, retrieval of information from paper – based resources and now it has become more complex with the introduction of digital resources & with the help of Information Technology. Though it is late, there is a time to reinstate consortium movement especially by the automated and semi-developed libraries attached to big libraries to acquire maximum resource & service involving minimum time, money, space etc and serve the users community at an optimum level. It is very much difficult for a single library to satisfy the needs of its users in digital environment. Keeping in view the old traditions and applying them to the new environment will make institutions grow & provide useful service to the user community. In the near future, all the libraries should be a partner of the one or the other Consortium.

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