

RESOURCE SHARING : THE THIRD DIMENSION OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION

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Abstract

The article deals with various aspects of library resource sharing in changing context. The resource sharing has advocated as the third dimension of a modern library, which gives the final touch to the modern automated and networked library system. It discusses problems. Prospects and prerequisites to establish a library resource sharing network and coined out some essential characteristics of the resource sharing system from user's point of view. The article ends with the word of caution that- libraries must adopt IT just to survive and they should actively participate in the resource sharing movements, because the concept of libraries in physical boundaries is going to be part of history.

1 INTRODUCTION

The sharing is a need-based activity framed around the age-old concept of give and take. In general it is as old as the civilization. In "the field of libraries we might trace the history of resource sharing since their inception in various forms viz., shared cataloguing, library cooperation, interlibrary loan and union catalogue etc., The term library resources include any and all of the materials, functions and services, which constitute a modern library system. It is amalgamation of people, processes, ideas, materials and money which forms the substance of a library and can be described as its resources. [1]

Resource sharing is a sort of implied agreement amongst participating libraries wherein each participant is willing to share its resource to other members and in turn are privileged to share the resources of its partners as and when the need arises.

At present time when the Computer and Communication Technology has gained the central role in all walks of life and drastically changed the way people think, communicate and do business, it became indispensable to computerise and network the libraries just to survive. The entrance of these new technologies in library premises rescheduled the functioning of libraries and provided a new dynamic shape to the age-old concept of resource sharing. Lack of effective and efficient technology has been a major hurdle for resource sharing in India, besides the lack of co-operation among the participating libraries. Now by the use of Information Technology, it became possible to create co-operative functional resource sharing library-network which is the--most important requirement at this juncture where the economic consideration, information explosion and specialized users needs are forcing the libraries to co-operate.

2 RESOURCE SHARING: NEED OF THE TIME

The increased growth, use and value of information generated the concept of information society or information oriented society. If we analyse the situation from invention of printing press to Internet, we find that the complete civilization is moving from generalisation to specialisation, whether it is growth and nature of subject, commodities or services. In this era of specialization, the efficiency and efficacy of libraries will be measured by the services provided by them not by the physical collection they have. In this situation the sharing of the resources only may provide the variety of new information services, because in this era it is not possible for any library to accommodate the universe of knowledge physically within the library boundaries. So the resource sharing became the need of the time to fulfill the ever- specialized user's information needs in cost effective manner as the main objectives of resource sharing are:

- * Reduction in all round cost.
- * Avoidance of unnecessary duplication of information materials and efforts.
- * Possibility of developing specialised activities specifically concentrating on some particular area. .Maximum accessibility to information without losing the individual identity of libraries.

At present, specifically in case of Indian academic libraries, which are planning and going to adopt the Information Technology, the resource sharing is needed for:

Retrospective conversion of their bibliographical data to electronic form.

@ To help less equipped libraries.

@ To reduce the cataloguing cost.

@ To share the valuable resources

@ Documents and information.

@ Technical expertise.

@ To decentralise information.

@ To boost the distance learning and more.

3 PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS AND PREREQUISITES

If we look at the usefulness and strength of resource sharing among libraries, we find a very enthusiastic picture, but on the other hand when we analyse the ground realities of the present situation of our academic institutions and libraries, it seems worthless to talk about these services and activities. We have to accept the realities to reform them as soon as possible, because the growth of IT will not leave space to do anything after some years. The major problems to be eliminated before may be identified as:

- * The required technology and needed organisational structures are not presently available to provide the required level of service, comparable to that available today without the concept of resource sharing.
- * Resource sharing will effect the economics of publishing by increasing unit pricing as library orders decline. A substantial part of the prospective saving from resource sharing will thus evaporate.
- * A large library may become more and more of a lender (rather than borrower) of materials, causing resource sharing to be a drain rather than a source of additional material.
- * If all libraries turn to resource sharing, none will acquire sufficiently and have books to lend;

In spite of these lacunae we have started to move in the direction. At this stage it is essential to develop some sort arrangements to stream line the movement. Followings might be recognized the prerequisites of a functional resource sharing system. ,

3.1 Infrastructure

It includes the installation of required hardware and software to create bibliographical, contents pages, abstracts and full text electronic databases and their networking. It is also needed to create various union catalogues and to develop efficient software to handle on-line users query. In addition to these a sound document delivery system could also be needed to send the required information to its end user. In nut shelta library wants to be part of resource sharing network should have to have computers, printers, modem, scanners, database creation and networking software of specified standards, telephone connectivity, network access, photocopying machines, fax and a reliable postal system. The cost effectiveness of resource sharing is diminished at the present, because it has to run in parallel with other running system.

3.2 Common code of conduct

Apart from similar software and networking protocols the participating libraries have to evolve a common code of conduct regarding the collection development (Acquisition Policy) and resource sharing. There are several basic agreements among libraries that must be developed to operate a co-operative resource-sharing network. It includes. (A) agreement to share currently owned materials will protocols, limitations and priorities. (B) financial agreement, to safeguard t11e individual recognition of the libraries. (C) agreement on acquisition policies to ensure consistent development of holdings and to avoid redundancy. (D) agreement of record keeping to streamline and to ensure the smooth operations from acquisition to borrowing and lending.

3.3 Legal copyright and photo copying laws

It is noticeable that the resource sharing activities should violate the copyright and photocopying laws.

3.4 Trained manpower

The establishment and organisation of resource sharing activities are not possible with out the competent, trained and dedicated manpower. At present it is needed to organise massive education and training programs via different modes to fulfil the required need.

3.5 Aware users

The user is the most important component of any system. Keeping in view this fact, participating libraries and nodal agency simultaneously have to develop and organise user education / orientation programs in changing context, to ensure the maximum utilizations of the resource sharing activities.

In addition to above said prerequisites it is essential to adopt some professional ethics to run the system smoothly. There is no procedure to impose this idea on participating libraries, but it is worth noticeable that in future only those libraries will survive whose professionals will be guided by this idea.

4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A NETWORKED LIBRARY RESOURCE SHARING SYSTEM

Where there is a system there must be its users. The satisfaction of users should be the criteria to measure the effectiveness of the system. A sound library resource sharing system, whether it is automatic or manual should have following characteristics. These characteristics should be kept in mind to establish or remodel the networked system. These checkpoints are also useful to measure the effectiveness of the existing resource sharing system.

- * **Speed:** The resource sharing system should be speedy. It should be based on the latest means of data communication systems and programs. It should be able to judge the timeliness and urgency of user's information need, because the use of information depends on whether it is provided at right time or not.
- * **Accuracy:** The resource sharing system should be able to locate and provide the accurate information. It should be reliable and error free.
- * **Cost / fee:** The information provided should be cost effective. It must be less than the original cost of document.
- * **Staff courtesy / knowledge / assistance:** The professionals engaged in the resource sharing activities should be knowledgeable and prompt to handle the queries. The speed and accuracy of manual resource sharing system depends on these professionals.
- * **Consistency of service and reliability:** It must be consistent and reliable. The resource sharing activity should be adopted as an important component of present library system.
- * **Communication (provision for status reports):** The union catalogues should be able to provide the status report regarding availability of the document.
- * **Delivery and request options:** The resource center should be able to deliver the needed document! information through required mode of delivery i.e. via e-mail, fax, courier or by post.
- * **Self-service options:** It will be easy to use, so that user can handle it without any problem.

These characteristics should be considered as guiding principals to establish a new resource sharing system and to measure the efficiency and efficacy of existing one.

5 CONCLUSION

In case of libraries the automation and networking should be considered as the first and second dimensions and the resource sharing as third dimension, which opens the doors of services where imagination is the only limit. We have started to move in this direction due to this various library networks have emerged. Now it depends on librarians and libraries whether they want to survive or not, if yes they must adopt IT and actively participate in the resource sharing movements, because the concept of libraries in physical boundaries is going to be part of history.

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