ISSUES IN UGC-INFONET E-JOURNAL CONSORTIUM

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Abstract

Library consortia for purchasing electronic journals became recognized as a vital part of academic information infrastructure at the research community. The biggest challenge that newcomers to the consortium world face is grasping the fact that standard setting is about giving away rights in technology. Leading institutions in North America and Western Europe take a variety of positive measures to promote consortium activities and formed unique consortia of many kinds. On the other hand, a consortium in India is still in a developing stage and struggle to solve problems they face.

The factors that have led to the development of consortia are diverse among countries. This paper describes definitions, aim, organizations, internal structures, policies and other characteristics of the UGC-Infonet E-Journal Consortium which is one of the well known consortia for Higher Education in India under the UGC. It will also highlight the characteristics and issues faced by the consortia and the measures taken up to promote consortium activities.

1.   INTRODUCTION:

The UGC-Infonet: E-Journal consortium is consortium for Indian Universities which comes under the preview of UGC for access of scholarly electronic journal. These enable the consortia members to leverage the best practices of using the resources and to globalize their thinking, behavior and strategies world-wide. This consortium offer the opportunity of providing access to a broader and deeper range of titles than most libraries currently can provide their communities. This is particularly true concerning consortium-purchased bundles. The institutions gain electronic access to all titles in their subscriptions, in the consortia partners. For librarians and their institutions' faculty and administrators, such an expanded collection is of obvious benefit. The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre has set out to be a major player in promoting scholarly communication among academicians and researchers in India by:-

● Forming a consortium among the Universities;

● Promoting library network;

● Subscribing e-journal;

● E-resource development;

● Archival maintenance;

● Website, training, etc.

Indian Universities constitute one of the largest higher education systems in the world. With 310 Universities/institutions, 16,000 affiliated colleges, around 10 million students and 5 lakh teachers. It is a great challenge to ensure effective coordination and communication. Fast changing curricula and frequently introducing of new subjects impose a great demand on the system in general. Indian Universities need to be given the required thrust to enter the third millennium with a leading edge. Fast changing

curricula, frequent introduction of new subjects, globalization of education and competitive research, has increased the demand for scholarly journals over the years. But due to insufficient funds, devaluation of rupee against major currencies and escalation in the cost of foreign publications, there is a continuous reduction in the subscription to scholarly journals and databases, which affects the research and academic activity.

1.   UCG-INFONET: E- JOURNAL CONSORTIUM

UGC- Infonet is an ambitious programme of UGC to interlink all the Universities in the country with state-of-art technology. The UGC-INFONET have overlay on ERNET infrastructure to provide assured quality of service and optimal utilization of bandwidth resources. UGC-INFONET has become a boon to the higher education system in several ways. And in the long run, each University will become a hub for the colleges affiliated to them.

1.1   E- Journal consortium

The E-journal consortium is our pride in the field of education and research which has been formally launched by UGC to fulfilled the demand of the researchers and the Academicians of the country. The programme is wholly funded by UGC administered and monitored by the INFLIBNET Centre an autonomous body under UGC.

1.2   UGC-Infonet E- Journal Consortium of INFLIBNET Centre

The UGC-Infonet: E- Journal Consortium is a consortium of Indian Universities. The consortium shares the electronic resources among the Universities to become high performance institutions in knowledge lead by Information and Library Network Centre (INFLIBNET) Ahmedabad. This consortium reduces the costs of the journals to more than 90% of the total cost of the journal when the individual member subscribed alone. Simultaneous access is also possible in regard of its place.

2.   THE AIMS OF UGC-INFONET E-JOURNAL CONSORTIUM ARE:

● Scaleable Architecture to grow from Universities to affiliated Colleges;

● Nation-wide Terrestrial Backbone using Fiber Optic links;

● Integrated Satellite WAN supporting broadband and SCPC -VSAT technology;

● Comprehensive Network Management Systems for overall monitoring of the network, down to each and every device;

● Linkage with other Academic and Research Networks all over the world;

● Data security and virus protection using firewalls and Intrusion Detection Systems;

● Dedicated Data Center for Web hosting, e-Journals and Mail Boxes;

● Mirror sites spread all over the country for content hosting and

● Broadband Multimedia and Video Channels for Distance Learning

3.   ORGANIZATION

The consortium need to have an operating structure, an individual responsible for keeping the consortium on track, money to cover management and program expenses, and a system for keeping members informed about the consortium's activities. Members need to be intimately involved in organization creation

to ensure that the resulting system will meet their needs. The consortium operates through its headquarters at the INFLIBNET Centre Ahmedabad under the leadership of Dr. T A V Murthy Director INFLIBNET with an overall responsibility for making policies, monitoring the progress, coordinating with UGC for promoting the activities of UGC-Infonet E-journal Consortium. The Centre have independent electronic access to all the publications to help with the process and has also provided one free print copy of each journal from many publishers, which is being maintained as a National repository in its centre Archival Library. A web site has been created to provide all needed information to consortium members about the status of the programme at http://web.inflibnet.ac.in/econ/index.htm. INFLIBNET conduct various training programmes, workshops, user awareness programme time to time at different places to spread awareness and to develop expertise in the university community in the use of E-Resources. Special training programmes, seminars are conducted on different University campuses by publishers of complex databases viz. Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts etc. The National Negotiation Committee members consisting of members from among the beneficiary institutes under the chairmanship of Prof. Ajit Kembhavi, IUCCA, Pune review the progress of the consortium from time to time.

4.   POLICIES

The consortium has operating policies and procedures, understood and accepted by participating institutions that give it sufficient authority to protect the integrity of activities it supports and coordinates and to be accountable for its activities. The consortium maintains official records documenting decisions related to participating institutions.

- Sets clear standards against which its courses and services can be held accountable to participating institutions and to the public at large

- Assures that appropriate performance data are collected and its programs and services are evaluated and improved

- Issues performance reports to its participating institutions and to the public at large.

- Exercises responsibility for the quality of the education provided through its services.

- Identify courses or services failing to meet the standard and require their remediation.

- Engages in planning processes necessary to ensure its long-term success.

- Appropriate technical requirement is fulfilled through good management, following a technology plan, and drawing on a human infrastructure capable of supporting the technology.

- Supports professional development and scholarly activity.

- Coordinates or provides comprehensive in- service training programs for its participating institutions, using virtual environments when appropriate.

- Enables its participating institutions to become familiar with emerging technology tools.

- Budget allows for its leadership group to participate in local, regional, and national conferences

5.   RESPONSIBILITIES TO PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

The consortium has clearly stated policies and procedures, well-defined decision-making structures and processes through which it identifies and fulfills its responsibilities to participating institutions.

- Facilitates its programs and services are evaluated and improved rates access to programming provided by its member institutions rather than competing with them.

- Assures that each participating institution has access to programming from other participating institutions for its campus and its learners.

- Consortium policies, financial arrangements and marketing encourage participating institutions to offer the highest quality programming.

- Follows processes that honor each institution's policies and procedures in approving courses and degree programs for which the institution grants credit and/or awards degrees or certificates.

- Assumes responsibility for developing policies required for effective functioning of the consortium.

- Assures that the financial arrangements among the consortium and its participating institutions are clearly stated.

- The consortium has policies that establish the ownership of intellectual property shared with or created by the consortium.

- Recommends appropriate changes if participation in the consortium requires changes to existing institutional policy.

- Cooperates with its member institutions to develop the processes and systems necessary to accomplish its stated mission and goals.

- Collaborates with its participating institutions to assure that they fulfill the expectations of government agencies and third-party quality assurance agencies.

- Establishes procedures through which it and the participating institutions share responsibility for the quality of the education facilitated by the consortium including but not limited to instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of all learning activities.

- Assures that either it or its participating institutions provide appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.

6.   SUBJECT COVERAGE:

The UGC-Infonet E-journal consortium covers almost all areas of learning. It further aims at covering all fields' relevance to various Universities including, Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Physical and Chemical Sciences, Life Sciences, Computer Science, Mathematics, Statistics etc. The major subjects covered so far in the consortium are given in table as well as in graph below.

6.1   Journals subscribed under UGC-Infonet E-journal Consortium.

The UGC-Infonet E-Journal consortium has been providing so far about 4000+ journals to 100+ universities which are under the preview of UGC.

The number of journals subscribed along with the Publishers and the coverage are listed below:

Name of the Publisher	No. of Journals/Database	Coverage/ Back files
1. American Chemical Society(1876)	31 Journals	Vol. 1 Issue 1
2. American Institute of Physics American Physical Society	27 Journals	1997-Archival files vary from journal to journal.
3. Annual Reviews	29 Journals	Archival access for the last ten years

4. Biological Abstract	One Database	1969-
5. Blackwell	489 Journals	1997-
6. Cambridge University Press	188 Journals	1997-
7. Chemical Abstracts Services (Sci-finder Scholar)& STN	One Database	1907-
8. Elsevier Science	34 Journals	Archival access from 1995
9. Emerald	28 Journals	2001- varies from Journal to Journal
10. Encyclopedia Britannica	National site Licensing	All Universities and Colleges
11. Euclid	18 Journals	2002- varies from Journal to Journal
12. Gateway Portals Ingenta and J-Gate	Cover more than 10,000 Journals up to abstract level	28 Universities (Ingenta) 50 Universities (J-Gate)
13. Institute of Physics	36 Journals	Vol. 1 Issue 1
14. J-Store	457 Journals	Vol. 1 Issue 1
15. MathSciNet	One database	1940 to current
16. Nature	1 Journals	1997-
17. Portland Press	4 Journals	1996 to current
18. Project Muse	222 Journals	1999-
19. Oxford University Press	100 Journals	1998-
20. Royal Society of Chemistry	23 Journals + 6 database	1997-
21. Science Online	1 Journals	1996 -
22. Springer & Kluwer	1217 Journals	1997-
23. Taylor & Francis	1105 Journals	1998-

The present world of Information explosion and proliferation of published literature throughout the world have dramatically changed in higher education. The challenges posed by information explosion get multiplied due to resource crunch on one hand and increasing cost of publication on the other. But the Consortia have helped out to face these challenges. The advent of information technology and networking technologies have changed the concept and have opened new vista of library consortia not only faster and cheaper but also opened a flood gate of resources available in different parts of the world. The literature made available includes journals covering research articles, reviews and abstracting databases. Access is provided to current as well as archival literature. Portals are also provided which will enable the users to navigate easily through all the literature.

7.   ESTABLISHING A MISSION AND GOALS

The consortium has essential statements of mission and goals that reflect its purposes as outlined in its foundational documents, state its commitment to support and facilitate high quality learning and training, and define briefly its intention to maintain strong collaborative relationships among the consortium, participating institutions, and other stakeholders. The consortium needs to jointly develop a mission and goals, specifying their purpose and what they hope to accomplish together. These will serve as the overarching framework for their activities. Goals will be most useful if they include both measures of success and milestones for success. The consortium should encourage member organizations to

develop their own measurable goals for participation in the consortium, beyond those goals jointly agreed to by the consortium members.

- The mission of the consortium is widely understood and accepted

- The statements of mission and goals have been adopted or endorsed by the participants

- The statements of mission and goals are public and widely distributed among participants in the consortium in the consortium

- The mission of the consortium enables public accountability

- The statements of mission and goals establish a foundation on which systems of accountability for the consortium can be structured

- The statements of mission and goals establish the consortium's support of using technology for effective pedagogy and enhanced student learning, and for providing access for students

- The statements of mission and goals establish the responsibility of the consortium to its participating institutions and the students using the consortium's services

7.1   Assessing Needs

Before the consortium can provide an appropriate program of services, it must determine what services its member institutions need, both to succeed user community and to be effective participants in the consortium. Assessing needs involves determining the user's needs, and conducting awareness programme about the new resources recently added.

7.2   Developing a Program

The consortium need program of services addressing institutions as members of the consortium. Developing a program involves researching the possibilities and cataloging available resources, and then defining the program and acquiring curricula.

7.3   Evaluating the Consortium

Evaluation is one of the most important assets for a successful consortium so it is important to continually gain feedback and rethink, redesign, and improve the consortium's programs, it is also necessary to periodically conduct more comprehensive evaluations measuring the consortium's progress against its stated goals. These evaluations should measure progress against the consortium's goals for itself, for its individual program components, and for each of its member's institute. The usage statistic of the member institute helps to improve the consortium.

7.4   Benefits of Consortium

The UGC-Infonet E-Journals Consortium is the most ambitious initiative taken so far in the country to serve faculty and students working in the universities and colleges. The benefit of consortia-based subscription to electronic resources is made available during 2004 to 50 universities and many other universities were given trial access for six months and are added to the consortium during 2005. The consortium attracted the best possible price and terms of agreement from the publishers and it has been observed from the last one year that every major publisher wants to become a part of this initiative and is ready to provide the best possible economic model. The consortium provides access presently to more than 4,000 electronic journals from more than 25 publishers and aggregators. The UGC-Infonet web site provides more details on the journals list and other features.

The benefits of consortium are many.

- The process of working together as a group and learning cooperatively is extremely powerful. Members can share problems, solutions, and ideas with each other, thereby reducing the number of mistakes they make and shortening their learning curves. In many cases, consortium members, collectively, have all the answers they need to succeed — all they have to do is learn to share.

- Consortium members can reduce their costs by sharing training development and delivery expenses. They can expand their access to training resources by sharing curricula, facilities, and trainers. By combining their resources, members might also be able to research and design new programs that they could not have developed on their own.

- Finally, with the leverage member's gain by being part of a group, they can persuade education and training providers to tailor course content to meet their needs. While these benefits hold for both small and large institute, they are of particular importance for smaller universities.

7.5   Overcoming Barriers:

Organizing and forming a consortium is not easy. There are many barriers to success, including lack of information and resources. But the barriers can be overcome, and the benefits of a consortium, particularly for small and mid-sized institutions are great. To succeed, consortia should:

- Gain commitment from the highest levels within member organizations and involve all levels of the organization in consortium activities.
- Gaining the full support of members is crucial to success.
- Consortium goals must be aligned with members' goals.
- Full support is achieved when the consortium's activities meet members' needs.
- Recognize and address institution concerns about sharing information with competitors.
- Institution will participate if they feel their competitive position will not be jeopardized.
- Build the success of earlier efforts.
- Create consortia out of earlier group or collaborative efforts.
- Once in operation, seize on each small success and use it to spur members on to even greater achievements.
- Create a sense of permanence and stability.
- A clear purpose, structure, and process will provide security.
- Preparing members to take ownership of the consortium giving them control of activities will help secure their continuing involvement and support.
- The benefits to be gained from consortia are real. Institution members attest to lower training costs, better quality training, improved work processes, and increased productivity.
- While the barriers to forming learning consortia exist, they can be overcome, and they are worth overcoming.

8. CONCLUSION

The initiative taken up by University Grants Commission to provide electronic access to scholarly journals and databases has started making a very good impact on the research and academic community. However there is great need to further improve the access in terms of network infrastructure within the universities and the bandwidth support will further enhance over the usage over the years. The result strongly indicate that in the consortia arena the levels of information use will rise through desktop electronic access, but it is not possible to predict now how high the rise will be. At this early stage the users have probably not yet fully absorbed what the E-Journals consortium can do for them, but INFLIBNET is on its mission to reach out to them and provide necessary guidance time to time in improving the access base.

9. REFERENCES

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