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## RISK MANAGEMENT: IT'S IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRES

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### Abstract

*The development and dissemination of information in various forms and media on a local, national and international level has envisaged the librarians to be advocative in all means of information service provided from their libraries. Higher education is experiencing a dramatic influx with a new generation of faculty with different sources of information. This article deals with the definition of risk management and identification of the various areas of risks in library environment. The applications of risk management in libraries start from the collection development, through publishers / vendors for different types of documents. The different types of risk include:*

- *Assessing the organization*
- *Collection management*
- *Access rights by the users*
- *Scholarly communication*
- *Risks associated with the migration*
- *Consortia*
- *Staff training and recruitment*
- *Preservation*
- *Use of technology by the students, faculty and library staff.*

*The strategies for managing the risks are explained for the following:*

- *By having discussions, group meetings, etc, the information requirements of users, faculty and students can be found;*
- *Communicating with other agencies like library schools, professional associations for finding out the latest syllabus, in order to develop the content accordingly.*
- *Detailed discussion with publishers / vendors for collection management covering all aspects of the future needs /demands / changes;*
- *For collecting the resources from external sources, resource sharing and access to the databases along with Internet;*
- *Consortium approach for collection development, content management, information services and preservation;*
- *Hiring staff with competitive skills and also develop skills for the existing staff, by providing in-house training; and*
- *Preservation aspect could be resolved by consortia approach by discussing the formats, storage medium, software availability, upgradation of hardware, etc.*

*The author concluded that the library professionals should take all precautions of risk management and provides risk free managerial services to the users on time.*

**Keywords :** Risk Management, Academic Libraries, Consortium, Collection management, Scholarly communication

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries in general are experiencing unprecedented demands for change both in the way they work and the information and materials they provide. Librarians have tended to greet the need for change with feelings of insecurity and visions of ongoing chaos. The vitality and relevance of academic libraries are increasingly at risk. Faculty and students on / off campuses expect more from the library due to the growth of information available through electronic resources. As the changes in higher education are moving, librarians are responding to these systematic changes in the academic environment. Changing roles for librarians, as collaborators, integrators, instructional designers and information consultants and models of information delivery necessitated not only increased relation between faculty-librarian contacts, but also dramatic changes in the nature of faculty-librarian relationships(5). The need for understanding of different techniques in procuring content, management of content, rights of access, collection development policies, etc with risk associated with managing different activities in association with other librarians, publishers, system specialists, students and faculty and others are discussed in this article.

## 2. DEFINITION

Risk management is the process of measuring or assessing risk and then developing strategies to manage the risk.

## 3. AREAS OF RISK MANAGEMENT

The different areas, where risk management can occur in library environment are:

- Assessing the institution / organizations requirement
- Acquisition / Collection development
- Content development
- Access rights by the users
- Risks associated with migration
- Scholarly communication
- Consortium arrangements
- Staff training and recruitment
- Preservation decisions
- Use of technology by the students, faculty and library staff.
- Security aspects for library materials and staff
- The risk of exposing the items in the collection to theft, mutilation or accidental loss.

## 4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is the sum of all activities directed toward acceptably accommodating the possibility of failure in a program. Risk management is based on assessment; every risk management assessment includes a number of tasks: (1) identification of concerns, (2) identification of risks, (3) evaluation of the risks as to likelihood and consequences, (4) assessment of options for accommodating the risks, (5) prioritization of risk management efforts, and (6) development of risk management plans.

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## 5. RISKS AND STRATEGIES FOR RISKS

### Assessing the institution / organizations requirement

Academic libraries address their mission to support research and teaching by building collections and developing services intended to meet the information needs of their users. If there is a sudden change in administrative / managerial personnel, and the change in organizations goal and policy issues, may also pose risks for the libraries in procurement policy and other activities.

### Acquisition / Collection management

Librarians try to assure for information supply as per the user demand by having collection development policy by allocating budgets in institutional priorities. If the library collections does not meet user needs and expectations, can lead to a spiral of loss of funding; resulting in a decrease in usefulness, followed by further erosion of fiscal support and the decline in the quality of the collection in the short run. Due to this, there is a risk for decline in budget allotment or the budget allotted may be diverted to other departments (2).

### Content Management

For many reasons libraries do not have the same degree of control over the content in digital resources. Providers of digital information resources are able to add content or more often, delete content from their products without their customers' consent. Libraries are frequently notified after the fact or given very little advance notice of these actions. On occasion, no notification is issued; libraries and their users simply discover the content change. Unplanned content changes affect the collection's reliability and integrity and content removal may pose risks to the library profession's commitment. (1)

### Access Rights by Users

Legal risks can arise in relation to the access to, use and dissemination of data and information. These risks increase with on-line material. Proprietary rights apply to software, databases, written works and other original materials. Information used, updated and circulated should be accurate, both in order to avoid the risks of liability for defamation or for illegal content and for any data protection compliance. Also the risk related to CD-ROM network, like maximum access, full text download, network licence, etc. are to be considered.

### Migration

The following three major categories of risk must be measured when considering migration as a digital strategy:

- Risks associated with the general collection. These risks include the presence or absence of institutional support, funding, system hardware and software, and the staff to manage the archive. These are essential components of a digital archive. The collection, and the users who use the collection, will be affected to some degree by a migration of data. Legal and policy issues associated with digital information will introduce additional risks.
- Risks associated with the data file format. These include the internal structural elements of the file that are subject to modification.
- Risks associated *with* a file format conversion process. The conversion software may or may not produce the intended result; conversion errors may be gross or subtle.

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## **6. SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION**

### **a) Publishing**

Scholarly Communication actually encompasses the totality of what occurs between the creation and consumption of a scholarly work. The risks to it and the information marketplace begin at the point at which it is documented and are related to who sells scholarly content, who buys it, and how these transactions are accomplished. Richard Fyffe (4) notes that librarians must inform the members of their academic communities about this risk, if they are to participate in the reform of the scholarly communication process and maintain their credibility and integrity. Risk and technological changes are inexorably linked, and librarians as experts, must communicate these risks to lay persons and develop appropriate risk management strategies like:

- 1 Encourage and enforce sound scholarly citation and documentation practices
- 2 Promote competition among publishers and alternative access to locally produced content.
- 3 Cancel individual titles available through aggregated databases judiciously.
- 4 Become more assertive as negotiators and as customers. Be willing to say “no” when a contract or license is not satisfactory.

### **b) E-Journals**

The content removal by e-journal publishers is copyright-related, which is one of the risks to the libraries by not providing the content without any interruption. Publishers do not have the rights to republish electronically the content they originally published in paper. Less frequently, publishers remove content in response to research errors, plagiarism, and fraud. This practice is contrary to traditional scholarly communication practice and it violates the library's commitment to preserve the historical record with all its flaws. Disaggregation, or the removal of content from an aggregated database by its creator or owner, occurs for a variety of reasons—often economic but sometimes philosophical in nature. This can transform an aggregated database from a key, to a marginal, resource and, since libraries are rarely compensated for content removal, it can also pose financial challenges. If the lost content is an important resource for its users the library may have to resubscribe to it from another, generally from more expensive source (2).

### **c) Royalty to authors, publishers and others**

The payment to authors, publishers and others who participate in scholarly publishing is trivial, due to the policy changes in distribution of honorarium and other mode of payments.

## **7. CONSORTIA**

### **a) Big Deals**

Libraries pursue “Big Deals” i.e., license agreements in which access is gained to all of a publisher's output for a price based on current subscriptions—they acquire more content for less money in the short run, but they risk weakening “the power of librarians and consumers to influence scholarly communication systems in the future” It is worth noting that the pursuit of more information or more publications for less money takes place in most consortia purchases, many of which would not necessarily be considered “Big Deals.” Yet these, too, pose risks to scholarly communication (6).

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**b) License Agreements**

Publishers and content providers often require libraries to sign agreements that restrict the libraries' ability to use their products for interlibrary loan, as well as the libraries' rights to preserve and archive parts of them. Further, by using digital rights management systems, they enforce use restrictions, such as on copying and downloading, which are more stringent than those that copyright law would impose. Also they create digital fences that enclose not only their works but also large portions of the public domain.

**c) Co-ordination**

Risk involved for co-coordinating with local, national and international organizations for forming the consortia are for the material to be procured / accessed. Each country has a different policy for acquiring / accessing to the different types of content and agreements would be a risk, if there is a change in future policy decision by the Government and also in continuing the membership (3).

**8. PUBLISHER AND VENDOR MERGERS**

The librarian is serious and concern about the ownership of content. Publishers suddenly raise prices due to inflation and thereby threaten one of the profession's core values, equal access to information. They can also affect the usability of digital content due to changes in the interface through which acquired content is accessed and/or the way acquired and existing content are merged or juxtaposed(2).

**9. PRESERVATION**

Preservation of information in all formats is increasingly an emphasis of libraries and allow for ongoing use. It should evolve as a distributed system by interacting with large national coordinating organizations; preservation guidelines should follow the data processing and filtering at all levels. The lack of any long-term technical solution to the problem of digital preservation limits to the efficacy of critical problems with substantial new investments, with allocating new responsibilities and assessing costs for a nonexistent process is one of the risks to the librarians (7).

**Staff Training and Recruitment**

The staffs who are already working are to be retrained to update their knowledge and may have to recruit new entrants with better / higher qualifications. The risk involved here is the willingness to attend the training and risk of taking new staff, by thinking that they will be better than the existing ones.

**Use of Technology**

For accessing the organization, the proper use of website, by having sufficient connectivity and systems is one of the risks. People may have different type of system, and if there is a change in software and formats for access, download there is a risk. The type of users also suddenly changes, in case the organization introduces new courses, the need for updating or modifying the content on the website is one of the risks.

**10. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING RISK**

The strategies for managing the risks are explained for the following:

- By having discussions, group meetings, etc, the information requirements of users, faculty and students can be found;
- Communicating with other agencies like library schools, professional associations for finding out the latest syllabus, in order to develop the content accordingly.
- Detailed discussion with publishers / vendors for collection management covering all aspects of the future needs /demands / changes;
- For collecting the resources from external sources, resource sharing and access to the databases along with Internet;
- Consortial approach for collection development, content management, information services and preservation;
- Developing own collections by e-print archives and arrange for access to open access materials / freely available resources;
- Hiring staff with competitive skills and also develop skills for the existing staff, by providing in-house training; and
- Preservation aspect could be resolved by local, national or consortial approach by discussing the formats, storage medium, software availability, upgradation of hardware, etc.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Risk, while connoting serious consequences, collection managers must work knowledgeably to manage the risk mentioned. They must continue to communicate with their constituents about their needs, but these conversations should be expanded in scope, on changing expectations as well as convey information about changes in scholarly communication, the information marketplace and risks to professional and societal values. They should be more proactive consumers, conveying to their publishers and content providers concerns about privacy, collection stability and reliability, and access. Further, collection managers must be prepared to discontinue purchasing or subscribing to the information resources offered by publishers and content providers who, over the long term, do not address these concerns. Finally, collections managers need to play an active role in local and national efforts to encourage competition and create alternative access to information.

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