
ROLE OF E-JOURNALS CONSORTIUM IN 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Libraries play a very important role in this fast changing e-environment of publishing. Their role includes identification of selection of information, its organization of management, storage retrieval and dissemination to right users at the right time at right place at right price and in right format. The goal of any academic libraries is to meet the teaching, research and other information needs of the user. The proliferation of the literature on all the subjects, price of journals hike in currency conversion rate and the budget crunch made the libraries depend upon each other. This leads to library co-operation, resource sharing and networks etc. At present the online databases, E-journals facilitate formation of the consortia at resource sharing among the libraries. Consortia prove to be one of the major solutions to the existing problems of budget crunches among the libraries and information centers.

The advent of E-publishing has brought a revolution in journal publication, subscription and access delivery mechanism. The paper discusses the necessity increasing the information resources in electronic form to meet the current demand of academic libraries and institutions at affordable cost and also discusses need and importance of E-journal consortium and resource sharing among libraries and information centers.

Keywords : Electronic resources, library consortia, E-Journal consortium, Resource sharing Academic Libraries.

1. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of information revolution is considered to be one of the marvels of 21st century. The new technology has not only created and developed some modern libraries but also transformed many existing libraries on modern lines. We are living in an information society. Digital library is a global virtual library. It is also called network of electronic libraries. The 21st century is witnessing revolutionary impact on the publishing and information delivery systems due to the emergence of internet, particularly the www was a new medium of information storage and delivery. A significant change in the global information process has been noticed in the publication of journals and other important information resources in electronic form.

Most of the electronic journals launched during the mid 1990's have started creating and impact on the appearance of citations. Currently the entire journals especially foreign journals available in web form. Slowly demise of print journals. At the same time general population be came increasingly aware of the usefulness and capabilities of computer technology for education, research and recreation. Users have been demanding broader variety of information services, tailored to their requirements. They are also demanding better quality of such services.

The proliferation of E-resources in the networked society has resulted in development of 'shared subscription' or 'Consortium based subscription' to journals every where in the world. Shared subscription to E-resources through the consortium of libraries is feasible strategy to meet, pressures such as diminishing budget, increased users demand, rising costs of journals, the article out lines efforts made by Indian libraries and institutions towards formation of consortia of libraries for buying access to E-resources.

2. JOURNALS AS E-RESOURCES

Journals are a vital source of information for the scientific research and development in academic libraries and information centers. The number of periodicals at present is estimated to be 250,000 of these 25,000 is scientific, technical and medical journals, 15,000 are referred scholarly periodical, which are available on the net. Online access to E-journals is available either free against print subscription or for a nominal fee along with print subscription or such access is provided either by the publisher or through their aggregators. Getting access to E-journals involves various modalities viz. identification of journals, corresponding with the publishers/aggregators, signing the agreements etc.

Journal titles are increasing three fold every 15 years, and costs of journals are growing at the 2.5 times every 10 years; so it is obvious that no single library can procure all journals in a discipline. With the emergence of information technology applications and particularly Internet, there has been a shift from traditional print journals to E-Journals, Electronic journals offering tremendous possibilities and advantages over print journals; ease of use, "anywhere-any time", accessibility, share ability, hyperlink to related text or multimedia content. E-Journals also offering solution to other major logistic problems faced by libraries such as follow up of missing issues, binding, shelving etc.

E-Journals have many advantages:

- One can access it round the clock across geographical barriers. The e-journals get published or reach the subscribed much before their print counterpart. It also reaches all its subscribers simultaneously.
- Another important advantage of E-journals is that more than one person can access it at a time. Article can be downloaded and printed simultaneously by more than one reader, depending on access rights and permission. Multiple and remote access makes it available at one's desk. This is a boon for a huge campus where there are hundreds of readers with many departments.
- Electronic journals offset the missing issue problem. If a particular volume of the print version of the journal is not complete, library staff can download and print all the articles available online or can share it in digital form till the time hard copy is supplied by publishers. Permission in some cases may be necessary. Many of the publishers provide free access to E-journals against print subscriptions. The information about the free access against the print subscription is usually available either on the journal's cover page or on their website and some times even in the publishers catalogue. Some publishers provide free online access to underdeveloped countries and online access with nominal fee for developing countries. One such example is Oxford University Press. Which offers free online access at a greatly reduced fee to a good number of journals in the field of science, medicine technology, humanities and social sciences. The offer is made under the initiative of international network for the availability of scientific publications (INASP) and WHO.
- Access to electronic journals is very useful to both libraries and users as problems of missing issues or delay in receipt of issues can be overcome.

3. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF E-JOURNAL CONSORTIUM

Information is a national resource and it is necessary for national development. As information becomes a necessary resource and commodity in the digital Era, providing information services more important to all types of organizations. In academic libraries, libraries are faced with the challenges of providing better services with decreased budget. Consortia can become an excellent way in the process of

collection, digitizing, organizing and making accessible the electronic resources. The idea of library co-operation resource sharing, networking are in fact are some such efforts in the past. But, the trend today in forming library consortia for sharing of electronic resources.

The journal has played a major role in the creation and transmission of knowledge. The E-publishing has brought a revolution in journals publication, subscription, access and delivery mechanism. The ability to access journals online has led to a new and still evolving, form of co-operation among libraries and information centers; every individual library now subscribes to a smaller number of journals, usually those most relevant to their organization, and the libraries then come together to share their journals 'electronically' through a consortium. This is a very attractive option to counter the escalating costs and depleting budgets.

The word consortia was originated from the Latin in early 19th century in the sense of partnership. According to chambers 21st dictionary 'consortia is an association or combination of several banks, business etc. usually for a specific purpose. Consortia means to association for a specific purpose.

Consortium is a collectivity of any group of libraries towards a common goal. The consortium facilities the libraries to get the benefit of wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost. The main objectives of library consortia are for better resource sharing to reduce information costs, for speedy delivery of documents to keep abreast of new developments and also co-ordinate in development of library facilities and services.

The following few factors that necessitate the need for building library. E-Journal consortia are as follows:

- The exponential growth of knowledge population, document as made it more and more impossible for the individual library to purchase all the relevant information. The effect has been that libraries have become more and more dependent on inter lending in order to fulfill the requirements of their users.
- The developments in scientific publishing and price policies of publishers posed new challenges and opportunities for academic libraries in purchasing and managing the serials within their restricted budget. So to solve the ongoing serial crisis, it is essential for a common infrastructure a firm to share the resources among libraries.
- The overwhelming application of new technologies, new methods of information retrieval/ dissemination has contributed to rapid escalating user expectations in the sense that the users expect library information to be delivered as fast as any other information they need.
- The rapid technological developments have resulted in a constant pressure for new hardware, software and education and training of library staff.
- Better sharing of existing resources and jointly acquiring new resources at great savings.
- Providing enhanced library services with an emphasis on access to new electronic resources including databases and services offered through the Internet and the www.
- To leverage resources by sharing existing collections or resources through virtual union catalogues and material delivery services that provides reciprocal access from member library holdings.
- To reduce the cost of member library operations by obtaining coup purchase price for information products; and
- To bring pressures to bear on information providers to reduce the rate of risen the cost of purchasing information.

Consortia is inevitable among libraries to cope with crunching budgets, rising prices for subscribing periodicals and ever growing user information needs. There are a number of advantages of E-consortia for libraries such as access to non-subscribed journals, scope for electronic archives joint subscriptions, reduced storage costs, effective document delivery systems arising out of larger scale of operation.

4. EMERGENCE OF CONSORTIA BASED SUBSCRIPTION

The consortia for libraries can be considered as on major step towards library co-operation in sharing electronic resources. Pricing models of consortia, new developments in E-Journal licensing has brought revolutionary changes in the field of library and information science.

The development of consortia is the out come of the desire file resource sharing and consortia seem to be getting bigger. The global example of OCLC in prime example. OCLC is the leading global library co-operation, helping libraries serve people by providing economical access to knowledge through innovation and collaboration are newer consortia on the scene having one common goal like pooling their collective financial resources to increase greater economic control over their market places.

Consortia organizing body:

The library managers are required to cope up with the increasing demands of faculty, students, and research scholars against all odds like dwindling budgets and decreasing staff. Libraries are forced to work together due to economic realities of technological possibilities paving the way for forming subscribing clubs for E-Journals. Many of the electronic journals are being acquired through purchase or lease by consortia on behalf of a group of libraries.

An organizing body is necessary to be formed with the librarian from each library and among them one will act as a chairperson on rotation bases to lead the total consortium. The organizing body will streamline the activity of each participating library and send recommendation to the top hierachal level of each participating libraries for implementation to provide advanced user service, better collection development, emerged economic concept in relation to library affairs efficient dealing with the publisher and development of human resources.

One of the vital activities of the organizing body is to take decision on the following financial aspect like whether a consortia funds be created to subscribe the core journals in multiple copies at a discount price. Whether the participating libraries to whom the responsibility to negotiate with some publishers are vested by the organizing body, will send remittance to the publisher for multiple copies from its own fund and transferred subsequently among the member libraries.

Benefits of consortia based subscriptions:

- Consortia based subscription to E-resources provide access to wider number of E-resources at substantially lower cost.
- The research productivity of all institutions is expected to improve with increased access to international databases and full text resources.
- The consortia is proposed to be an opened proposition wherein other institutions can join and get the benefit of not only highly discounted subscription rates but also the favorable terms of licenses.
- The consortia have been offered better terms of licenses for use, archival access and preservation of subscribed E-resources, which would not have been possible for any single institution; and

- Since the subscribed resources would be accessible online in electronic format, the beneficiary institutions would have less pressure on space requirements for storing and managing print-based library resources. moreover all problems associated with print media such as their wear and tear location, shelving, binding, organizing etc., would not be an issue for E-resources.

5. CONSORTIA INITIATIVES IN INDIA

Consortia like INDEST, CSIR, FORSA, UGC- INFONET, and HELINET have already come up in Indian and some others are in the offing. Many organizations are now under library consortium to reduce cost and enhance the efficiency of their resource sharing. As on today they are 225 Universities including institutions, 39 deemed Universities, 34 Agricultural Universities 9 Open Universities on national importance. This is a happy development if it requires libraries to shift from the "owning" model to in "access" model in the long run consortia approach will expand the country's information base. It could one day even lead to national consortia with a national site license.

5.1 INFLIBNET, UGC INFO NET Consortium

With globalization of education and competitive research, demand of journals over the years. These Journals will be available over UGC – INFONET to all the universities ERNET India, a scientific society under the ministry of communication and information technology, In partnership with the UGC is settle up UGC – INFONET. It is the largest academic library consortium. In India located at its head quarter at Ahmedabad. It offers high quality collection of cull text electronic resources to academic community, comprisal of faculty, staff researchers and students. In first phase, facility will be extended to 50 Universities and later it will be extended to the remaining University and colleges titles are growing three folds every 15 years and their cost, 2.5 times every 10 yrs obviously, no single library can afford to purchase all Journals even in a single discipline. Due to insufficient funds, most of the libraries have been forced to cut subscription of Journals UGC has turned towards the internet to cover the gap between demand and supply by way of e-Journals that can be sub-scribed online. UGC is also exploring the possibilities of alliances with publishers for adopting a consortia based approach for e-subscription of journals INFLIBNET consortium is modernizing the University campuses with state – of – the art campus wide net works and setting up of its own national wised communication networks named UGC-INFONET.

Research and academic community are dealing with information. They always seek quick, authentic and latest information to purpose their studies and research works. UGC-Infonet E-Journals Consortium is determinant to provide scholarly and latest information to the research and academic community in India. The users are already getting access to around 4000 scholarly e-journals from all areas of learning through this program.

INFLIBNET Centre has been conducting number of training and awareness programs to guide the research and academic community for accessing and browsing the e-journals which are being provided by UGC-Infonet E-journals program.

5.2 FORSA

Forum for Resource sharing in Astronomy (FORSA) was established in 1981. It is a typical example of a homogenous group of member joined together in order to negotiate consortia licensing for astronomy journals.

5.3 CSIR Consortium

CSIR has 40 laboratories involved in research and developments in science and technology. NISCAIR and other CSIR laboratories have worked to form CSIR consortium.

The main objectives of the CSIR consortium network project are;

- To provide CSIR science and Technology personal electronic access to world S & T literature through strengthening the facilities for pooling, sharing and electronically accessing the CSIR information resources.
- To Nucleate the culture of electronic access with a view to catalysing the evolution of digital libraries.

5.4 INDEST Consortium

The ministry of Human Resource Development has set up the Indian national Digital Library in Engineering – Science and Technology consortium. It has commenced its operation since Dec-2002 through its head quarters at IIT, New Delhi.

The consortium subscribes to full text electronic resources and bibliographic databases to members. The consortium, being an open ended proposition, welcomes other institutions to join it on their own for sharing maximum benefits it offers.

5.5 HELINET

Health Sciences library information Networks consortium is the first medical library consortium launched in the country on March 15, 2003. The objective is to set up a network of libraries of the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Karnataka, to promote resource sharing and digitization of library resources. Under the HELINET scheme, the member can access abroad 600 scholarly, International biomedical journals from 24 leading publishers.

Their future plans are to expand the access for more nature of e-Journals, e-books and other e-resources and develop the digital library infrastructure as a platform for e-learning.

6. CONCLUSION

To day information has become a major commodity and citizens need to be educated for productive information use from pre-school through post secondary education. Libraries and librarians play an important role in the education of people for effective and efficient information use by teaching them information skills at all levels of education to enable them to be informed citizens of the country.

With the explosion of knowledge and constraints on the financial resources, libraries consortia has emerged as a necessity moreover, the problems of space standardization, professional development of the staff, challenges posed by new technologies and drastic cut in the library budgets have aggravated the problems of the present day librarianship. To overcome these problems, libraries have to resort to use of computer and communication networks and need to either form into consortia or join the existing consortium for resource sharing and use of national and international databases through communication networks, otherwise the scattered information available at one library will not be accessed.

The consortia approach helps in the successful deployment and desktop access to the end users at highly discounted rates.

Consortium is gaining momentum in the developing countries and in future more and more consortia would emerge to serve their members. The consortium should take lead role in the development of a national strategy for information provision for research in higher education.

Joining a consortium, integrating intellectual access providing for both physical and electronic development process are all the distinct steps moving towards the 21st century libraries developments in modern resource sharing whether they be document delivery services or computing services do not alter the ethics of librarianship. Keeping in view the old traditions and applying them new environments will make institutions grow and provide useful services for the betterment of resource sharing.

Government should make attempts to provide the necessary infrastructure such as high speed networks connections to access the E-resources. Also it should make arrangements to conduct some training programs for the librarians on latest trends in library and information science.

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