Strategic Plan for Mahatma Education Society Consortium (MESCon), New Panvel : A Proposal

P A Choukimath   Uma B Agadi

Muttayya M Koganuramath

Abstract

This paper analyses the conceptual framework of a proposed academic library consortium. It discusses the various factors involved in the process of formation of consortium. It also attempts to identify an outline to develop various information products and services offered by the consortia. It explores the possibilities of establishing the consortium of a group of institutions. The strategic plan of the Consortium for the institutions run by the Mahatma Education Society has been discussed. The aims, objectives and various programs covered under the consortium have also been highlighted.

Keywords : Library Consortium, Academic Libraries, Consortia-Proposal

0.   Introduction

Academic libraries have long formed consortia for the purpose of sharing existing physical resources - principally books and journals held by member libraries. This is done in recognition of the fact that a group of libraries has a combined set of resources that is greater than the resources of any single member. Indeed, studies have indicated that, contrary to what might be assumed, there is great diversity among collections, and even the smallest library contributes something unique. Alliances to share resources, then, make considerable sense because all the participating libraries benefit from access to titles they do not hold in their own collections.

1.   Library Consortia

Appreciated or not, library consortia have become familiar features in the current information landscape. The economic and technological conditions of existence forced libraries to turn deliberately to consortia for various services and to advance specific initiatives. Many of these services and initiatives centered around electronic resources and digital library initiatives, just as in the 1970s resource sharing of print-based resources and union online catalogues often served as the catalysts for the formation of consortia.

1.1   Aims and Objectives of the Consortia

The goals of most consortia are closely allied with, but slightly different than, the goals of their member libraries. Bernie Sloan stated that the bedrock purpose of any consortium is to assist its member libraries to carry out their mission of improving users' access to information resources.

1.2   Basic Functions of the Consortia

There are three basic functions provided by the consortia.

1. The sharing of physical resources: To this end, union catalogues have to be assembled, local systems to be linked together, rules for interlibrary loan to be established, and so on.

2. To provide connections to the Internet and the World Wide Web: This includes the provision of workstations wherever necessary.

3. To provide access to electronic resources: This may be either by mounting the member libraries on a local server or providing access to resources on other platforms. This function is becoming increasingly important in most of the consortia.

1.3   Benefits of the Consortia

The library consortia have many benefits to its member libraries. They can be deliberated as follows:

1. A comprehensive collection of reading materials is possible

2. Avoidance of duplicate core collection especially core journals is possible

3. Easy access to the member library collection through resource sharing

4. Savings in terms of cost and time are highly appreciable

5. Equal access to information for all the users of whole consortium

6. Academic/research productivity of the member institutions is expected to improve

1.4   New Possibilities

Sharing resources through consortia is nothing new in the library world; what is new is using the Internet to provide access to shared materials, automation systems, and electronic resources. The widespread adoption of Internet protocols has made it easier for libraries to link together in consortia and pool their resources effectively. The World Wide Web Consortium, with its commitment to common protocols and interoperability, is important to the continued evolution of the Web as a platform for resource sharing.

2.   Mahatma Education Society Consortium (MESCon)

2.1   Mahatma Education Society

The Mahatma Education Society embarked upon its mission of "Education for All" with the Chembur English High School in the year 1970. The vision and dedication of the Chairman Mr. M.P. Pillai combined with the global outlook, tenacious struggle and updaunted spirit of Secretary Dr. K.M. Vasudevan Pillai and the forward looking, untiring energy of Joint Secretary Dr. Daphne Pillai have enabled in expanding the Mahatma Education Society to a vast education complex sprawling to over 5 campuses at Chembur, New Panvel (E), New Panvel (W), Powai and Gorai. The society now runs a total of 31 educational institutions from Kindergarten to Post-Graduate professional courses in several faculties.

2.2   Members of the Consortium

The below mentioned major institutions offering udergraduate and post-graduate institutions and some others will be the members of the core group:

1. Pillais' College of Architecture (PiCA)

2. Pillais' College of Education (PCE)

3. Pillais' Institute of Career Planning (PICP)

4. Pillais' College of Arts & Commerce (PCAC)

5. Pillais' Institute of Management Studies & Research (PIMSR)

6. Pillais' Institute of Information Technology, Engineering, Media Studies & Research (PIIT)

7. Pillais' Polytechnic (PP)

8. Mahatma Night Degree College of Commerce (MNDCC)

9. Institute of Advanced Computer Science & Management (IACSM) and

10. Junior Colleges of Commerce, Education, others.

2.3 Courses offered by the MES Insitutions

Mahatma Education Society through its prestigious institutions offer several courses such as - B.Com, B.Sc.(IT), B.Sc.(CS), B.M.S, B.Ed., B.Arch., B.E. (in four branches viz. Computers, IT, Electronics, Mechanical Engineering, and two more branches - E&T, and Instrumentation expected to start by next academic year), MMS, PGDST, D.Ed., and many more foundation courses like C.A., I.C.W.A., and C.S.

2.4 Libraries under the Consortium

Libraries of all the insititutions under Mahatma Education Society have been catering to the academic needs of their students and faculty with the well stock of books and periodicals in all the core subject areas of interest. They also have good collections of non-book materials such as educational CDs, floppies, Audio Cassettes, maps & atlases etc. Many libraries are already on the way of complete automation of their operations.

2.5 User Expectations

Our library users are bocoming computer literate and also aware of what is available on the internet for them. Libraries have to meet the varied informational needs and requirements of the user community to accomplish their academic goals successfully.

2.6 Strategic Needs

"MESCon" will be based on the discipline or subject-specific interests. This has to be active in developing and providing the information products and services to its members.

The strategic needs of the consortia will be,

- To support the teaching-learnig process in the institutions,
- To update and maintain the inventory of resources avilable in sister libraries,
- To formulate the policy and guidelines for resource sharing,
- To provide hands-on training to the staff as well as users,
- To have a flexible plan to cope up with technological changes,
- To establish a sound policy for aquiring electronic resources,
- To cooperate with sister libraries to gather all necessary information sources on one platform,
- To develop a proposal for minimum IT infrastructure, etc.

2.7   Broad Objectives of "MESCon":

The following are the broad objectives of the planned consortium,

1. To ensure equitable access to information to all the academic community of MES institutions

2. To establish an academic network by involving sister institutions and friends of the "MESCon", and media group to promote the activities and to achieve the goals

3. To introduce programs like duplicate exchange, book-bank (for own institutions at first stage and later for schools in the locality)

4. To assist the users in finding and aquiring appropriate information, whether or not the user is at the library

5. To provide forum for resource sharing among the member libraries

6. To maintain reasonable level of self-sufficiency in developing informational infrastructure to meet the users' requirements and electronic communication system by establishing a web-domain called http://www.mescon.mes.ac.in (already there is web-site for the society called http://www.mes.ac.in)

7. To implement a facility to deliver networked access to non-book materials such as CD-ROMs, etc.

8. To develop bibliographic and directory type materials for identifying, acquiring and providing access to collections of member libraries and extending access to resources availabe in various other libraries of the similar interest

9. to look for opportunities to reduce cost and increase access by evaluating products

10. thus, to optimize the use of the library resources and services

2.8   Vision of the "MESCon"

Timely and right information is an opt solution for any type of problem. Library has been considered as the beating heart of the academic community. In this direction it has been concieved that establishment of a proper academic network of sister institutions run by the Mahatma Education Society will definitely help to achieve the academic excellence. This is in fact to empower the library users to get access to the variety of information sources to meet their academic requirements and to become the responsible citizenry of the nation. Thus, it is to promote developments that will improve the delivery of information materials to users at costs that are sustanable for the institutions and affordable for the users.

2.9   Collaboration with Other Organisations/Institutions

Including the publishers, vendors, companies, and others there are many organisations and institutions and their libraries which offer several inforamation services and products such and INFLIBNET, DELNET, NIC, AICTE, DTE, CA, universities, and many professional organisations in the areas of academic interests etc. "MESCon" has to collaborate with all such organisations and institutions in providing access to the information.

2.10   Scope of the "MESCon":

The scope of the cosortium in concern is limited to the libraries of the institutions run by the Mahatma Education Society only. It is open to the students and faculty of the sister institutions of the Mahatma Education Society.

2.11   Developing a Portal

In order to provide the right information to right user in shortest possible time a portal for the consortia will be of great help.

The portal will be developed on the following two cornerstone principles;

- access to electronic resources and services can be improved through integration, both within a single institution and among the member institutions; and
- to provide a common platform to gather a variety of useful information resources into a single, "one-stop" Web page which allows users to customize their information sources by selecting and viewing information they find personally useful.

2.12   Enhancement of Existing Practices

Delivery of non-electronic material will continue for the foreseable future. However a strategy will include the following three distinct components

1. delivery of conventional sources (materials),
2. development of infrastructure for the acquisition, processing, storage and preservation,
3. delivery of electronic documents.

Union catalogues and OPACs will be used in various ways:

1. to support acquisitons,
2. to suport Inter-Library Loan,
3. to support cataloguing,
4. to support collection development,
5. to provide access to bibliographic information,
6. to provide circulation status of a particular document,
7. to provide other information services such as reference, referral multimedia services, etc.

2.13   Programs of the MESCon

Mahatma Education Society Consortia is willing to have all the necessary programs which cater to the informational needs of the user community of the sister libraries.

At present, the following programs have been chalked out,

- User Education Program
- Collaborative Aquisition Program
- Book Bank Program
- Access to Electronic/Online Resources
- Duplicate Exchange Program
- Professional Staff Development Program

- Extension of Services (to the students and faculty of other Colleges/Institutions residing in the locality)
- Development of own Digital Library i.e. "PIGILIB" (Pillais' Digital Library)
- Cooaparative Storage and Archive (for carefully selected documents from weed-out stock of Major Libraries like RBI, IITs, NITs, IISc, C-DAC, or any other institutions)
- Provide specific services such as Web-based Information Services, Document Delivery Service and others under the UGC-Infonet

2.14   IT Infrastructure for MESCon

The libraries of member institutions under the MESCon have already provided with computers and other pheripherals required to perform their routine library functions. Even the minimum IT infrastructure required for the proposed consortium has been suggested by the experts is as follows,

- Hardware: Multi Media systems with CD-Writer
- Software: Windows 2000 Professional; Acrobat Reader; Arial – software for Document Delivery
- Networking: ISDN
- CD Server: CD Mirroring Software form Tulsient or Novell Netware

Pillais'College of ArchitecturePillais' College of EducationPillai's College of Arts & CommercePillais' Instt. of Career PlanningPillais' Instt. of Management Studies & ResearchPillais' Instt. of Ifo. Tech.Pillais' PolytechnicMahatma night Degree College of CommerceInstt. of Advanced Comp. Sc. & Mngmt.Junior Colleges

2.15   The Proposed Model for MESCon

The proposed model consists of three components as shown in the fig. 1 below. Here PIIT, New Panavel will serve as the head-quarters as well as the mirror site from where all the users from member libraries can access to the different databases etc.

e-journalsbibliographic databasesfull-text databasese-booksindexes of Jl. articlesunion cataloguesspecialised bibliographiese-dissertations

PIITMESCon **Head Quarters with Mirror Site**

e-journals bibliographic databases full-text databases e-books indexes of Jl. articles union catalogues specialised bibliographies e-dissertations	⇒	**PIIT MESCon Head Quarters with Mirror Site**	⇒	Pillais'College of Architecture Pillais' College of Education Pillai's College of Arts & Commerce Pillais' Instt. of Career Planning Pillais' Instt. of Management Studies & Res. Pillais' Instt. of Ifo. Tech. Pillais' Polytechnic Mahatma night Degree College of Comerce Instt. of Advanced Comp. Sc. & Mngmt. Junior Colleges

Resources   **Head Quarters & Mirror Site**   **Member Institutions**
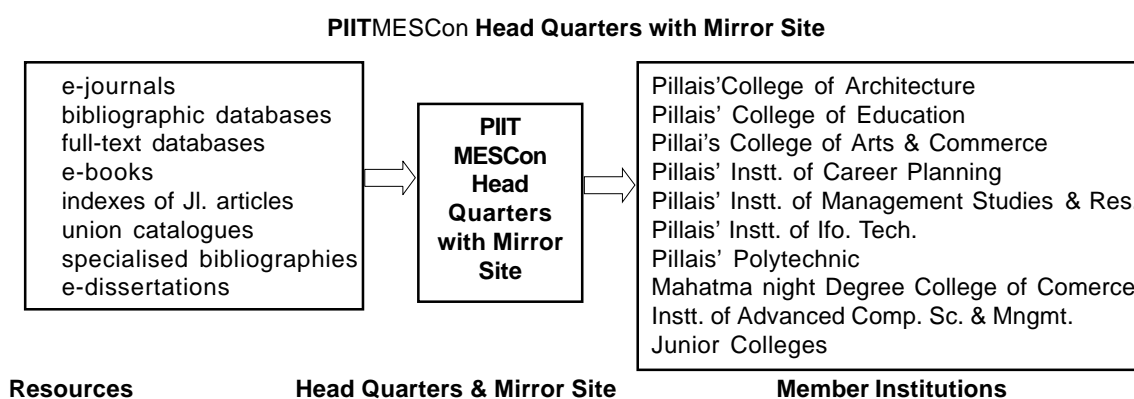
Fig.1

3. Work in Progress

The process of formation of the consortium has already been begun. The eminent Librarians available in the city of Mumbai have been invited to discuss about the matter and requested to give their valuable suggestions and insights. One-day workshop has been organised at Mahatma Education Society's Dr.K.M. Vasudevan Pillai's Campus, New Pnavel.

The issues such as formation of a consortium and its activities, formation of co-operative storage & deposit central library, for all the sister libraries have been discussed. And, also they have suggested to extend the consortium to the other libraries of Navi Mumbai at later stages. They wish the consortium (MESCon) should bridge the divide of information rich and information poor of the Navi Mumbai especially the rural areas of the Riagad district academic community. And, also a proposal has been sent to the CIDCO for considerations in getting the land to the Mahatma Education Society to build a Library Complex to serve as the headquarters of the Consortium and set up a co-operative storage library for the member institutions under the consortium.

4. Conclusion

The future look of the academic library will be very different from what it is now. Clearly, consortia will become even more important forces in the electronic information world. As long as they can prove that they are providing a cost-efficient product that is used, they will continue to receive the support of funding agencies.

In the light of above discussion, for the Mahatma Education Society establishment of its own Consortium and integrating intellectual access will be the better steps moving towards the perpetual growth and development and to continue with its distinct glory and prosority.

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About Authors

Mr. P.A. Choukimath is the Librarian of Pillai's Institute of Information Technology, Engineering, Media Studies & Research (PIIT), New Panvel- 410 206, India. He holds B.Sc., B.Ed., M.L.I.Sc. and qualified UGC-NET. He was Library trainee at INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumabi. He is the Life Member of ILA and BOSLA.
E-mail: puttuc@yahoo.com

Mrs. Uma B. Agadi is the Librarian at Pillai's Polytechnic, New Panvel - 410 206, India. She holds B.A. and M.L.I.Sc and worked with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Life Member of BOSLA.
E-mail: uagadi@yahoo.com

Dr. Muttayya M. Koganuramath is University Librarian at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai -88, India. He holds M.A., M.L.I.Sc., MSc.I.M.(Sheffield, UK) and Ph.D. He is the receipient of "TCTP Fellowship" from British Council, UK and "Library Fellowship" under South Asia Renovating Collection, Australia (1998). Has published 5 books and 30 research papers and also compiled 8 major bibliographies. He has organized many conferences, seminars and workshops and presently Chairman of BOSLA.
E-Mail: muttayya@bom3.vsnl.net.in