

LIBRARY CONSORTIA IN INDIA: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS**Sadanand Y. Bansode*****ABSTRACT**

Due to the crunching financial assistance to the university libraries and increase in the cost of the information sources, it has been very difficult for the libraries to procure all the information sources needed by their users. The solution to the above problem is library consortia especially in relation to electronic resources. Many initiatives have been initiated in India for the formation of library consortia. Many library consortia in India are doing well and many libraries are benefited but at the same time library consortia are not free from problems. Various issues related to consortia like uninterrupted online access, perpetual access to back issues, pricing, licensing, copyright and archival solutions etc are pinpointed and need to be strategically tackled and well addressed to get the best out of the consortia.

KEYWORDS

Consortia- Issues; Library Consortia; India- Library Consortia

INTRODUCTION

The exact date of the introduction of the term "*Library Consortia*" is not clear, but the concept of consortia as being an association or

* Dr. Sadanand. Y. Bansode. Reader, Department of Library & Information Science, University of Pune, Pune-411 007 email: sadanand@unipune.ernet.in

partnership has long being a principle of librarianship. The published literature indicates that the concept is not new and it refers to co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. However, libraries had not used it widely until 1980s. (**Nfila & Darko-Ampem, 2002**)

A consortium is said to be a co-operative arrangement among groups or institutions or an association or society. Consortia are commonly formed to increase the purchasing capacity of the collaborating institutions, to expand the resource availability and to offer automated services. In other words, it is described as a group of organizations whose purpose is to collectively facilitate and support the work of a service program in ways that add material and human resources beyond those available to each organization/individual (**Rajgoli, Birdie & Karisiddappa, 2005**)

Consortia may be formed at a local, regional, national or international level, on a functional or format basis, or on subject basis. Majority of the libraries particularly in developing countries are thinking today about the co-operative purchasing for any group of libraries. Thus, Consortia are constituted for often being useful for establishing a formal structure regarding resource sharing with formal agreement by each participant library.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several Studies have been carried out on Library Consortia in India and much more abroad.. **Pathak and Deshpande (2004)** discuss the importance of consortia and their impact on society, especially in developing countries like India. The present scenario of consortia among university libraries, special libraries and different technical institute libraries in India is elaborated **Francis (2005)** depicts the

benefits of library consortia, analyses the present trend in the formation of consortia in India and suggests a new model of library consortia in which all academic institutions and government research organizations could participate. The formation of such a unique consortium under the direction and full support by the Government of India is stressed. The role that can be played by the INFLIBNET Centre of the University Grants Commission in the formation and management of such a consortium is also portrayed. The areas of re-defining and re-engineering the operations of the university libraries necessitated by the consortia based electronic information and document delivery services are also intricately detailed.

NEED

Several factors call for the adoption of consortium among libraries. Some of the major factors are:

➤ **Literature Explosion**

The voluminous growth of literature has made it impossible for a library to attain self-sufficiency. Library materials, which have grown exponentially in many forms and formats like books, periodicals, research papers and non-book materials have made it beyond the control of a library to acquire all the materials which are being produced. It is estimated that new information grows about 30% per annum. The world's total yearly production of print, film, optical, and magnetic content would thus require roughly 1.5 billion gigabytes of storage. This is the equivalent of 250 gigabytes for each man, woman, and child on earth. (Lyman & Varian, 2003)

➤ **Limited Finance**

Crunching funds is another factor that has led libraries to go for consortia development activities. Libraries are finding it hard to maintain the subscription to even for core journals due to ever increasing cost of the journal subscription especially international ones

by Indian Universities which is even less than 300 titles, where as the average number of journals subscribed by the western countries is much higher. (Cholin, Satyabati & Muthry, 2006). For example there is an increase in the budget of periodicals in University of Pune library by 5%, but yet this library has to reduce the number of titles subscribed every year because of rising subscription price of journals.

➤ Users Demand

Access to Information differs from user to user. Students may require books for educational purpose but a scientist or a specialist needs some advanced literature in his area of research. To meet all these requirements successfully by a single library is quite impossible. No library, however big, is in a position to claim self-sufficiency in these multitude and mass sources of knowledge. The demand of the user is changing and ever increasing with newer revolutions and developments.

➤ Professionalization

The professionalization of library service has the most important influence on consortia. The changing role of librarian from 'gatekeeper of information' to manage 'gateways to information' has enhanced the value of library consortia.

INITIATIVES IN INDIA

Many consortia are being run successfully by different organizations in India. Some of them are FORSA, CSIR Consortium, INDEST, IIM's, ICICI Knowledge Park, ICMR, ISRO and a very ambitious consortia programme launched by UGC through as UGC-INFONET. A summary of renowned ones is given in the following paras.

➤ CSIR

(<http://www.niscair.res.in/ActivitiesandServices/MajorProjects/majproj.htm#ejournalcons>)

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research has 40 national laboratories carrying out R & D work in the areas of Engineering, Biological, Chemical, Physical, Environmental and Information Sciences. The CSIR e-Journals consortium has envisaged to provide accessibility to > 4500 electronic journals published by leading publishers and learned societies. (**Bisen, 2005**).

➤ **INDEST** (<http://paniit.iitd.ac.in/indest>)

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has set up the, Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Science and Technology Consortium. The Ministry provides funds required for providing differential access to electronic resources subscribed for the consortium to the core members through the consortia headquarters set-up at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi. The total number of members in the consortia has now grown to 115. The INDEST Consortia subscribes to over 4000 electronic journals from a number of publishers and aggregators. (**Chakravarty and Singh, 2005**).

➤ **FORSA** (<http://www.iiap.res.in/library/forsa.html>)

The Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics, the consortia of Raman Research Institute, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, National Centre for Radio Astrophysics, Physical Research Laboratory, Nizamiah Observatory and State Observatory provides access to 25 e-journals from Kluwer to their users with the payment of 12.5% over and above the Print subscription. This consortium has successfully negotiated with publishers of NATURE to provide access to its e-version at a price of almost 1/3 of the list price.

➤ **IIM Consortia**

Six Indian Institutes of Management have formed a consortium and jointly approached the publishers of e-journals and databases in the area of Management, Social Behavioral Science source. They have been giving IP enabled access to e-journals. Well renowned publishers like Elsevier (247 titles), Blackwell (268 titles), Kluwer (33 titles), Wiley (3 titles) provide their resources online to the members of the IIM Consortium. Apart from 25 titles free against print subscription, 2,300 titles as a part of EBSCO databases and 800 titles as part of ABI Inform database have been made available to users of IIM libraries electronically. (Gaudar & Narayana, 2004)

➤ **ICICI Knowledge Park**

(<http://www.iciciknowledgepark.com/>)

The Knowledge Park at Hyderabad has signed an agreement with Informatics India Ltd provide access to J-Gate Custom Contents for Consortia service to four Hyderabad based and one Pune based R & D Institutions. Initially this service is free for the members with the objective of making it self-sustaining in the later stage.

➤ **ICMR**

(<http://www.jcccmr.informindia.co.in/about/about.asp>)

As part of modernization the Indian Council Of Medical research has under taken many new initiatives like subscribing to JCC@ICMR and Full Text Electronic Databases i.e. ProQuest. To keep pace with the rapidly changing information technology scenario, the Council entered into the e-journal arena through developing an e-journal consortium. The ICMR has identified five core bio-medical journals and subscribes for e-version in consortia mode to all ICMR institutes. These include Lancet, Science, BMJ, NEJM, and Nature. This e-journal consortia will be beneficial for cross sharing of information among the ICMR Institutes.

➤ **ISRO**

The resource sharing initiative taken by Indian Space Research organization (ISRO) libraries by avoiding duplicate subscription to bibliographic databases is expected to result in savings of Rs. 41 Lacs per year. Further, the proposed cancellation of duplicate journal titles by its centers is likely to save the surplus amount that could be used to provide access to e-journals for the benefit of all the centers. A move is there to form formal consortium for providing access to e-journals and also J-Gate to custom contents for the consortia. (Sridhar, 2002)

➤ **HELINET**

(<http://jgateelinet.informindia.co.in/about/about.asp>)

Health Science Library and Information Network is a successfully implemented consortium which is first of its kind in the country. The consortium was started with a vision to improve the quality of education and research in the Health Science institutions of the country through enhanced access to high quality medical information. HELINET's goal is to deliver information to users desk-top with round-the-clock access. The major benefit of this consortium is expanded access to core international e-journals. Before the launch of the consortium, access to foreign medical journals by each college was limited to around 100. HELINET has made it possible for each college to access and share the contents in more than 600 journals, increasing the access provision by 6-times.

➤ **UGC-INFONET**

(<http://web.inflibnet.ac.in/info/ugcinfonet/ugcinfonet.jsp>)

Due to scarcity of funds, libraries have been forced to discontinue the scholarly journals, which have a great impact on the users. In order to provide the current literature to academia, University Grants Commission (UGC) has initiated the UGC-INFONET: e-journal consortium. Timely initiative of UGC is a great boon to academia in the country, which enables them to access large number of scholarly

journals from reputed publishers, aggregators and society publications. Under the consortium, about 4,000 full text scholarly electronic journals from 25 publishers across the globe can be accessed. The consortium provides current as well as archival access to core and peer-reviewed journals in different disciplines. The whole programme has been implemented in different phases. So far 100 Universities out of 171 Indian Universities, which come under the purview of UGC, have been provided with access to these journals and it will gradually be extended to affiliated colleges as well. It covers almost all areas of learning like Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Physical and Chemical Sciences, Life Sciences, Computer Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics etc. and other subject areas are to be added in near future. The programme is wholly funded by the UGC and monitored by Information Library Network (INFLIBNET).

ISSUES

The library consortium activity is a complex process, which involves the wholehearted support and concerted efforts of the librarians, their management and the publishers. They form an important trio in the new scholarly information environment. A large number of issues related to consortia include zeroing in and identifying the resources, uninterrupted online access, perpetual access to back issues, pricing, licensing, subscription payment, copyright and archival solutions etc.

➤ Resources Identification

Identifying the most suitable product which is agreed upon by all the members of the consortium is more or less a difficult proposition. This is mostly because each and every member will have their own wish list of information products and services, though the overlap between the products will be on the higher side in the case of an ideal homogeneous group.

➤ **Technology Infrastructure**

Long range planning and sourcing of the appropriate IT and Communication infrastructure conducive for proper delivery of information resources is pre-requisite for every participating library.

➤ **Pricing**

As discussed earlier, there are no standard practices or processes being followed by majority of the publishers of scholarly literature and hence this is a gray area all together. In most cases cost of the journals are out of reach of many of our libraries and only a consortia approach could provide some meaningful practical solution. Publishers are invited for negotiations and asked to offer their best prices to the consortia. Several methods of pricing are followed, but what is important is that finally the price offered by the publisher should be economically viable for the participating libraries. And it should also ensure uninterrupted and perpetual access to the resources.

➤ **Access**

Various access methods are offered by publishers towards accessing their resources and it varies from case to case. Access authentication could be User ID / Password based or IP based which are more popular. Uninterrupted and hassle free access to the scholarly content is the ultimate objective of the consortium but varying practices may make access sometimes cumbersome to use consortia approach .

➤ **Licensing and Copyright**

As against the print paradigm, the e-Journal subscriptions and access models allow only licensing of the content / product for a stipulated period of time which has several restrictions and bindings on the licensee. A number of issues are being debated by librarians, users and publishers which need international attention, deliberations and solution.

➤ Archiving

This needs paramount attention and unfortunately is yet to be attended least in India. Long term preservation of the invaluable wealth of information being accumulated by the consortium is to be archived and preserved for posterity. As the technology is fast progressing and also getting obsolete almost at high pace, it is right time that information resources are carefully archived and preserved on a long term basis through consortia approach and efforts.

➤ Sustainability

Designing and launching a library consortium is perhaps the easier part when compared to its long term sustenance and longevity. The management and the members of the consortium have to strive hard in formulating and establishing robust models towards achieving the above goals.

➤ Usage and Usability

The Return on Investment (ROI) of the consortium is measured in terms of the increased usage, usability of the costly information products which is ultimately reflected in the scientific productivity of the host institutes. It is the earnest efforts of the consortium, the management, the researchers and faculty and the librarians which determine the success or otherwise of any consortium. (ShreeKumar & Sunitha, 2007)

➤ Training

Training to the users is the another issues that one has to give proper consideration. Usually the users are habituated to handle the traditional resources of information. They are reluctant to sudden change in the handling of information. So, it is the library that has to train the users to face the new media, highlight the benefits through orientation and training programmes.

PROSPECTS

Looking into the prospects of consortia, the following benefits can be achieved by participating in Library Consortia:

- Library consortia enrich the educational, intellectual, informational and social aspirations of users through the cooperative provision of superior quality library resources and services made available to the users. Many electronic products, normally out of reach for a single institution, are made available to them.
- Formation of library consortia allows gaining competitive advantage by pooling resources, mutual interests and complementary skills which develop as a result of consortia, bring with them better solutions and help in bridging the gap between information and resource deficient libraries.
- A major priority of libraries is cooperative collection development, which aims to increase the scope of information resources available locally to faculty and students of the institutions participating in the consortia.
- Consortia link libraries into an effective network of cooperative entities that benefit the users. Every library is liable to send their respective holdings to other libraries under a resource sharing program. The main purpose is to improve the ability of libraries to serve their users through interlibrary cooperation. Consortia are ambitious network of both electronic and non-electronic resources and services. **(Ghosh, 2007)**
- Enable libraries to procure more resources with less finance and ultimately help them to create library beyond four walls

LIMITATIONS

Following are some of the probable drawback of the consortia:

➤ Membership fee

Organizing body may charge excessive contribution fee as per their will, and hamper the very objective of the consortium. Besides, there are chances of manipulation of funds.

➤ Potential Conflict

Libraries may join more than one consortium to meet various needs, as each organization has its own bureaucracy culture, level of technology, staff size, budgetary constraints etc. This may give rise to a conflict of vested interests and results in changes and shifts in format and operations of consortia.

➤ User Authentication

Unlike in the print world, electronic information requires validation of the rights of the user. User authentication is regarded as an essential element of electronic resource sharing and may give rise problems of illegal and unethical use.

➤ Preservation and archiving

Electronic information archiving and preservation has barely surfaced as very complex issue. A tension between the two aims exists because as technology changes, software becomes extinct and hardware is replaced. Consequently, resources must be migrated, or transformed, into data readable by new technology. Each time a resource is altered; the newer version strays farther from the original, thereby confounding preservation efforts. The converse is true for preservation's effects on access. As time passes, technology, hardware, and software change, and access to original work is compromised (**Wilson, 2004; Lin, Ramaiah & Wal, 2003**)

CONCLUSION

Library consortia are really helping the researchers, faculties and the students to retrieve the information and save their time. It benefits the libraries to procure more electronic resources in the library with limited library budget and this is what the libraries require in the present scenario. India should also take initiatives to establish national archival centers like United States. The mission of the national archival centre could be to build archival collection of important scholarly journal literature and to fill the gap in the library collections of journal back volumes and also help to reduce long term capital costs associated with storage.

REFERENCES

- Bisen, Rajesh Singh (2005). E-Journals Aggregators: A consortia approach for effective access to full-text journals database. *IASLIC Bulletin*, 50 (2), 96-99.
- Chakravarty, Rupak & Singh, Sukhwinder (2005). E-Resources for Indian Universities: New initiatives. *SRELS Journal of Information Management*, 42 (1),57-73.
- Cholin, V.S., Thiyam, Satyabati., & Muthry, T.A.V. (2006). UGC-INFONET E-Journals consortium: Access to scholarly journals and databases for Indian academic community- A study. In T.A.V. Murthy et.al.(Ed.s) *Dynamic Interoperable Web Based Information System*. Ahmedabad: INFLIBNET.
- Francis, A. T. (2005). Library consortia model for country wide access of electronic journals and databases. In T.A.V. Murthy et.al.(Ed.s) *Proceedings of International Conference on Multilingual Computing and Information Management in Networked Digital Environment*, Cochin.

Ghosh, Maitrayee. (2007). Procuring electronic information through consortia: Current trends in India. Retrieved December 03, 2007 from

http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00007404/01/COMLA_article.pdf

Goudar, I.R.N., & Narayana, Poornima.(2004). Emerging Pricing Models for E-Journals Consortia and Indian Initiatives. In TERI (Ed.) *ICDL* (pp.333-341).New Delhi: TERI

Lin, Lim. Siew., Ramaiah, Chennupati., & Wal, Pitt. Kuan. (2003). Problems in preservation of electronic records. *Library Review*, 52 (3),117-125.

Lyman, Peter., & Hal, R. Varian. (2003): How Much Information?. Retrieved June 05, 2007 from

<http://www.sims.berkeley.edu/how-much-info-2003>

Nfila, Reason. Baathuli., & Darko-Ampem, Kwasi.(2002). Developments in academiclibrary consortia from the 1960s through to 2000: A review of the literature. *Library Management*, 23 (4/5),203-212.

Pathak, Sandeep., & Neela, Deshpande. (2004). Importance of consortia in developing countries—an Indian scenario. *The International Information & Library Review*, 36 (3), 227-231.

Rajoli, Iqbalahmad. U.,Birdie, Christina., & Karisaddappa, C.R. (2005). Use of resources through consortia made in Indian Library & Information centers: A case study of FORSA Consortium. *IASLIC Bulletin*, 50 (2), 74-82.

ShreeKumar, M.G., & Sunitha, T. (2007). Library capacity building through e – journal consortia: The Indian scenario.Retrieved

November 30, 2007 from
<http://dspace.iimk.ac.in/bitstream/2259/249/1/09-mgs-sunitha-paper+new.pdf>

Sridhar, M.S. (2002). Resource sharing among ISRO libraries: A case study of consortia approach. *SRELS journal of information management*, 39 (1), 41-58.

Wilson, Amanda J. (2004). Digital preservation and academic library consortia: A case study of the triangle research libraries network consortial licenses. Retrieved June 05, 2008 from

<http://etd.ils.unc.edu/dspace/bitstream/1901/62/1/amandawilson.pdf>