

LIBRARY CONSORTIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

When all-out efforts are being made to put India on the track of digital India, digitalization of libraries is of paramount importance to keep abreast of the fast developing information technology. Consortia is a kind of co-operation among libraries which come together to share e-resources. Due to limited budget and rising the cost of e –resources library consortia are the alternative source to tide over the financial constraints. This paper aims to explore the concept, advantages, disadvantages, and overview of different types of consortia like UGC-INFONET, FORSA, NLIST, CSIR, INDEST, HELINET, ERMED, DeLCON etc .and discusses them briefly.

Keywords: Library consortia, E-resources, NLIST, FORSA, UGC-INFONET, CSIR, HELINET, DeLCON

INTRODUCTION

It would be no exaggeration to describe the current age as an age of information explosion. No library is able to satisfy all the needs of its users due to various constraints. In the present technological age, libraries and information centers have started acquiring and maintaining new forms of information resources such as e-journals, e-books, online database, e-documents etc. The spurt in prices of electronic journals and publications has necessitated the formation of library consortium by the library community. The concept of library consortium gravitates different member libraries to meet the goal of working as a team. Library consortia have become powerful negotiating parties incorporating their own clauses in the contracts with the publishers.CALIS (May,1998) in China, UGC INFONET, CSIR E-journal consortium in India, WRLC in Washington, Ohio Link in Ohio, CONCERT in Taiwan are some of the well-known library consortia.

LIBRARY CONSORTIA

“Consortia “is a plural form of “consortium “but is often used in a singular form. Consortium is derived from the Latin word “consort” which means partnership. A library consortium is a group of libraries which come together to realize a combined objective that usefully requires co-operation and the sharing of resources. The library consortium mainly deals with resource sharing in digital or electronic format. The aim of the consortia is to achieve what the members of the group cannot achieve individually.

According to oxford English dictionary consortia means “Temporary cooperation of a No. of powers, companies etc. for a common purpose .It is an association of similar type of organizations / institutes which are engaged for providing and servicing the common things for a specific purpose of its users”.

E-RESOURCES

An electronic resource is defined as a resource which requires computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data. Currently, libraries are shifting towards new media, namely electronic resources for their collection development so that the demands of users are better fulfilled. E-journals, e-database, e-books, e-magazines, digital library project, electronic exhibition, e-subject guide, e-newsletters, e-white paper, e-conference proceeding etc. are some of types of e-resources. Many of e-resources are available free to anyone over internet access.

NEED OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA

Pricing models of publishers, electronic publishing of scholarly journals for consortia give new opportunities to libraries to provide immediate access to information. Several reasons could be cited to justify the need for consortia:-

- a) **INFORMATION EXPLOSION:** - Due to intensive researches taking place in almost all fields of knowledge, there is a tremendous increase in the generation of information. Information is provided many forms and formats. It is impossible for libraries to attain self- sufficiency .A consortium is in a better position to address and resolve the problems of managing, archiving e-resources.
- b) **SHRINKING BUDGET :** The cost of books and other information sources is increased day by day .Consortia is built up with a view to increasing the purchasing power of the participating institutes in this critical situation of major financial problem faced by libraries and information centers. A consortium enables its member libraries to get the electronic resources at an affordable cost.
- c) **DIVERSITY OF USER NEEDS:** Library users want to have access to the material as soon as possible and many of them want information in online format. The web based electronic resources are proper a means to meet the expectations of users.
- d) **PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES:** The role of library professionals has changed from mere conservator to navigator of knowledge. It has great challenge for libraries to remain at the front line of the profession. The changed role of librarian has enhanced the value of library consortia.
- e) **QUICK ACCESS:** Today researchers hope that they should have access to their journal articles in the electronic form because e-resources are cheaper than print source.

ADVANTAGES OF CONSORTIA

Some of the important advantages of the library consortium are as follows:

- Available 24&7 days.
- Search bibliography / full text of article.

- Journal is available much earlier than print.
- Avoids duplication of resources.
- Provides access to wider range of electronic resources at lower cost.
- Helps develop common resources database.
- Optimum utilization of funds.
- Facilities to build up digital libraries.

DISADVANTAGES OF CONSORTIA

- Copyright problems and misuse of research material.
- Absence of printed copies of journals.
- Internet access is necessary.
- Combination of essential and non-essential journals.
- Requires high initial investment in license and information and communication technology.

CONSORTIA INITIATIVES IN INDIA

Some of consortia available in India are:

UGC-INFONET: The UGC INFONET digital library consortium was formally launched in December, 2003. By honorable A.P.J Abdul Kalam, the President of India. The consortium provides current as well as archival access to more than 10500+ core and peer-reviewed journals. The consortium has also launched “Associate Membership programme” wherein private universities and other research organizations are welcomed to join the consortium. As of 2017, 230 universities, 3000+ colleges and 94 technology institutions are accessing resources from the programme. More than 15000 e-journals and 3135000+ e-books, 40 resources and 16 databases are available now.

N-LIST (National library and information services infrastructure for scholarly content): N-LIST is jointly executed by the UGC-INFONET digital library consortium INFLIBNET centre and the INDEST-AICTE consortium, IIT Delhi. N-LIST project provides access to e-resources for students, researchers and faculty from colleges. In Sep, 2017 3016 govt/ govt aided colleges and 1668 science colleges are accessing resources through N-LIST. More than 6000+ e-journals and 97,000 + e-books are available now.

INDEST-AICTE CONSORTIUM: Indian national digital library in engineering science & technology is an initiative by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) It was set up in 2003 by an expert group appointed by the ministry under the chairmanship of Prof. N. Balakrishnan. The INDEST-AICTE consortium has three types of members Core members supported by MHRD (65), AICTE supported members (94) and self-supported members (102). The total number of members in this consortium is now 1235. It provides access to selected electronic journals and database to technical institutions including IIT and IISc(8), NITs, ISM, SLIET and NERIST (23), IISERs and new IITs (13), IIMs (13) and IIT, IIITM and NITIE(8).

CSIR E-JOURNAL CONSORTIUM: The council of Scientific and Industrial Research was established in 1942 and is India's largest research and development (R&D) organization. CSIR has a dynamic network of 38 national laboratories and three innovation complexes. SIR works in the areas of engineering, biological, chemical, physics, environmental and information science. The consortium started working in the year 2002 with the Elsevier science. Today NKRC facilitates access to 5000+ e journals of all major publishers, patents, standards, citation and bibliographic database. The consortium envisions emerging as a leader to serve the R&D sector with much needed information to strengthen the research and development system in the country.

FORSA CONSORTIUM: Forsa stands for Resource sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics which was established in July 29, 1981 at Raman Research Institute, Bangalore. At present ARIES bose institute, CASA-OU, HRI, IIA, IUCAA, NCRA (TIFR), PRL and SINP are the institute members of FORSA. FORSA has become a member of ICOLC which has over 160 participants from across the world. In 2004, this group extended its membership to physics and mathematics libraries in the country.

CeRA CONSORTIUM: CeRA consortium for e resources in agriculture was established in November 2007 to facilitate accessibility of scientific journals to all researchers / teachers in the national agricultural research system by providing access to info.specially access to online journals which is crucial to attain excellence in research &teaching.

ERMED CONSORTIUM: An electronic resource in medicine consortium is an initiative taken by DGHS & MOHFW. Started in 2008, it has 70 state and centrally funded government institutions (including AIMS) selected from 24 states as it members at present. It also subscribes to 1500 current periodicals. It accesses 242 high quality on line e-journals from five leading publishers.

HELNET CONSORTIUM: Health Science Library and Information Network was started by Rajiv Gandhi University of health science in the state of Karnataka in 2002. RGHUS has access to more than 7000+ online bibliographic database of PG dissertations, 6500 digitized UG and PG courses.

DELCON CONSORTIUM: DBT e-library consortium (Delcon) has been operational since January 2009. Delcon currently includes 16 DBT institutions including ICGEB, NER institutions, BIRAC etc. 1171 journals and a database named SCOPUS are covered under Delcon.

ISSUE RELATED TO CONSORTIA: Perhaps the formation of consortium is an easy task but some of the consortia initiatives could not materialize properly. Some barriers which disrupt proper implementation of consortia initiatives are as follows:

- Lack of awareness about consortia and its benefits.
- Lack of technological compatibility.
- Licensing issues- access for a defined period.
- Multiple consortia membership.
- Problem in budget allocation and funding.

- Absence of strong professional associations to motivate to participate in consortium.
- Problem in transfer of funds.

CONCLUSION: In this age of information explosion, a consortium is of paramount significance and is nothing short of a boon. A library consortium is a virtual ocean of knowledge and resources. Libraries have to realize that working together can accomplish far more than what they can do individually. Libraries in India should work cooperatively in order to establish library consortia with a view to offering and sharing electronic resources. By working with consortia libraries can find highly effective solution to help them answer the information questions of the users. Major problems the libraries face these days are prices of journals, budget cut, user's demands, globalization of education, integration of various disciplines , but apex bodies like UGC, AICTE, CSIR etc. are working as negotiating bodies to provide discounted subscription to consortium of universities, institutions/ colleges.

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