

CONSORTIA INITIATES IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: - *The first part of paper is about the library consortia with respect to concept of library consortia, its definition, historical background of consortia, various phases of its development, need of library consortia, importance of library consortia and lastly benefits of library consortia. The second part of the paper is about some consortia initiatives under taken in India. It speaks about the various library consortia available in India, its foundation, features, subjects covered, institutes using the consortium, funding agencies for financial support, e-resources provided in the consortium, various publishers providing e-resources, aims and objectives providing e-resources by the concerned agency, etc.*

Keywords: Library Consortia, Information Explosion, Information and Communication Technology, Library Network.

1. Introduction:

Library Consortia is the sharing of resources among the participant libraries. Library consortia to expand both in formal agreement between two or more libraries based on a number and functions over their respected areas.

The information and communication technology has touched every aspect of life and in last few years, has grown highly user friendly. Publishing industry is also one of the areas where the technology has spread its wings. Today's information technology and new ways of publishing has promoted users as well as librarians to go for electronic publications for the new acquisition. Library Consortia have been

established in several parts of the world. An increasing demand for information & the inability of libraries to have all resources on site have necessitated resource sharing.

Over the decade this concept has emerged as a growing area among the librarians, scholars, and publishers. The 'consortia' is the plural form of 'consortium' but is often used in place of singular form. It is derived from the Latin word for 'fellowship' – the meaning emphasizes coming together of separate groups for a purpose. Synonymously the term is used as alliance, coalition, collaboration, cooperation, partnership, etc. Consortium is a complicated organization.

It is ‘an association’ in the sense that is not commonly understood, i.e. a consortium is not a library association, although some associations of libraries engage in consortium activities. Again, a consortium is not a regional or state system of public libraries, although such systems may negotiate access to electronic resources on behalf of their constituent institutions.

Simply, the consortia run to gamut from relatively informal cooperatives founded just to realize economies of scale in purchasing, to highly-organized, centrally-staffed, centrally funded organization; intended to share the resources, and to engage in all manner of collaboration within the member libraries.

2. Definitions:

2.1 **Oxford English Dictionary** defines Consortium as “temporary cooperation of a number of powers, companies, etc. for a common purpose. It is an association of similar type of organization/ institution who are engaged for producing and servicing the common things for providing services for a specific purpose of its users”.

2.2 **American Heritage Dictionary** defines Consortium as ‘A cooperative arrangement among groups or institutions, or an association or society’

2.3 **Random House Dictionary** defines **consortium** as ‘The combination of financial institutions for a common end requiring large resources of capital.’

A consortium is an association of two or more individuals, companies, organizations or governments (or any combination of these entities) with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal.

A Consortium could be described as a group of organizations who come together to fulfill a combined objective that usefully requires co-operation and the sharing of resources.

And need to have a clear mutual goal in order to ensure their success. The aim should be to deliver “more than the sum of the individual parts”. A library Consortium formation can be local, regional, state, national and inter institutional level.

3. What is a Library Consortium?

A Library Consortium consists of a number of libraries, preferably with some homogeneous characteristics by subject, institutional affiliation, or affiliation to funding authorities that come together with an objective to do certain job collectively. These jobs may include:

- 3.1 Subscribe e-resources
- 3.2 Include resource sharing
- 3.3 Shared cataloguing of resources
- 3.4 Shared Technology Solution
- 3.5 Shared core / peripheral collection
- 3.6 Shared cataloguing (or copy cataloguing) in network environment is still operational and relevant;

A Library consortium is the group of libraries coming together with common interest. It has been emerging as a new concept that facilitates the libraries to get the benefit of wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost and at the best terms of licenses.

Consortium literally means ‘temporary cooperation of several powers or large interests to effect some common purpose’

Library consortium is ‘a group of libraries that agree to pool their resources by allowing the user of each institution some type of access to resources of all other institutions’

It is a community of value creating entities, generating value through an aggregation of library units within and across organizations

Group of Libraries come together with common interest to form consortium. One of the libraries or agencies work as coordinator for identification of libraries for each publisher, negotiation, legal etc. The aim of the consortia is to achieve what the member of the group cannot achieve individually.

4. Historical Background:

Though the exact date for the first use of the term “library consortium” is not clear but the concept of “consortium” as ‘association or partnership’ has long been a tenet of librarianship, generally encompassed in terms of cooperation, co-ordination and collaboration between, and amongst libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. However, libraries have not used it widely until about the 1980s. In modern

usage, the word was first adopted in the seventeenth century in relation to the association and fellowship between husband and wife. In law the term still applies to the husband and wife relationship. The published literature indicates that Melvil Dewey wrote about “library co-operation”, in an issue of the Library Journal that appeared in 1886, and a year back E. Mac presented views on “co-operation versus competition” in the same publication (Kopp – 1998, p.7). Furthermore, R. B. Down expressed his futuristic view of library co-operation in a paper “One for all – a historic sketch of library co-operation, 1930-1970” included in the 1939 symposium on “The Library of Tomorrow” organized by the ALA. Nfila & Darko-Ampem traces the history of library consortium from 1960 through 2000 and report that an International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) was formed in 1997/15. Recently, the formation of consortia is an attractive solution to many libraries. Even the ‘consortium’ becomes a good word for libraries as it combines the past with the present and the future. Today, electronic consortia have been budding forth in every part of the world in bewildering forms and shapes, and many libraries are already a part of one or more consortia. It is worth noting that the ‘consortia’ is still at its nascent stage in many countries, like India.

5. PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

5.1 First phase:

Several libraries come together for the mutual benefit of the respective users

- **Library Cooperative:** In the first phase the documents were only in printed format and the stress was on use through inter-library lending.

5.2 Second phase:

Libraries are linked together with the help of ICT

- **Library Network:** In the second phase too documents were mainly in printed format. Bibliographical databases of the holdings of all the libraries could be accessed from any library and required documents could be procured through document delivery service.

5.3 Third phase:

Libraries come together to acquire and share e-resources

- **Library Consortium:** In the third phase the documents are mainly in digital format which can be accessed directly by the users of any library remotely.

6. Need for Library Consortia:

Universities are finding it hard to maintain the subscriptions to even for core Journals due to ever increasing cost of the journals subscription and also shrinking budget. The pressure on libraries to provide more information with less budget, is growing, academic library professionals

need to find ways to satisfy the research need of increasing number of faculty and students; while managing new technology, increasing workloads and decreasing staff numbers. The library consortia network has existed for a long time, particularly in USA, but their main aim was sharing the print copies of the material which has now changed to electronic access to resources via the Internet.

The average number of subscription to international journals by Indian University is even Less than 500 titles; whereas the average number of American universities is more than 4000 titles. Improving the quality and standard of research in Indian universities and bringing it to a Level of global recognition by improving the access-base of literature to them is essential.

Whole world is moving towards electronic publishing and the cost of the electronic publishing is much cheaper than that of the print version

Access to resources is now considered more important than the collection building. The consortium facilitates the libraries to get the benefit of wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost and at the best terms of licenses. A consortium, with the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it, is in a better position to resolve the problems of managing, organizing and archiving the electronic resources.

Academic and research users can now hope to have access to their learned journal articles in electronic form.

The average number of subscriptions to international journals by Indian universities is very less than the western countries.

There should be an increase in the availability of information in electronic form with more and more literature published in e-form.

Reduction in the staff strength and cost savings for library budget would be useful. Greater buying and increased access to sources would be beneficial.

Academic and Research users can now hope to have access to their learned journal articles in electronic form as the electronic access is comparatively cheaper.

7. Importance of library consortia:

7.1 Increased international co-operation:

International co-operation is essential among the librarians/libraries and information centers authorities for effective sharing of their resources. In this electronic era there is a significant increase in the international co-operation towards the library consortia in order to fulfill the multidimensional approaches of users in multidisciplinary subjects.

7.2 Increased e-information resources

Solving electronic technologies, including powerful and inexpensive personal computers, scanners, the Internet, the World Wide Web, telnet, e-mail and other advances are rapidly changing the library's approach to consortia.

Advances in hardware and software for the digitization of information have made electronic

publishing a valuable format for scholarly communication. The rapid success of electronic information resources has raised the importance of library consortia.

7.3 Increased new technology

The development of the new technologies, new processing tools and new methods of information transfer makes it possible to process any data and transfer it instantaneously to any point on the globe. Today technology makes it possible to automate files, transfer their contents via telemetric means, and create text bases that can be consulted at a distance.

7.4 Increased new products and new services:

With respect to new products and services, there has been an unstable overall improvement with a spectacular shortening of access time. Document supply services whether managed by library consortia, information centers or brokers all promise delivery within 24 hours even 30 or less than 30 minutes if the users are ready to pay the service charge.

7.5 Increased new users

Certain professional users like doctors, engineers, etc. show interest in fast direct information accessible from their work place.

7.6 Simplification in network

The connection management is also pursuing new ways. Where as in the past, it was

expensive in some cases to reconfigure the company network.

8. Benefits of Consortium:

- ✓ Increase the cost benefit per subscription.
- ✓ Promote the rational use of funds.
- ✓ Ensure the continuous subscription to the periodicals subscribed.
- ✓ Guarantee local storage of the information acquired for continuous use by present and Future users.
- ✓ Develop technical capabilities of the staff in operating and using electronic publication databases.
- ✓ Strategic alliance with institutions that have common interest resulting
- ✓ Reduced information cost
- ✓ Improved Resource Sharing
- ✓ Develop technical skill of library staff in using electronic resources

9. Library Consortia in India

9.1 INDEST (Indian Digital Library of Engineering, Sciences and Technology)

This consortium was set up by MHRD in 2003 on the recommendations of expert groups appointed by the Ministry. It was renamed as INDEST-AICTE consortia in the year 2005 as, AICTE was playing the major role in the enrollment of engineering college in to the consortium. The MHRD Ministry provides funds required for subscription to electronic resources for 62 centrally-funded Government institutions including IITs, IISc Bangalore, NITs, ISM, IIITs,

IIMs, NITTTR's and few other institutions that are considered as core members of the Consortium. 60 Govt./Govt.-aided engineering colleges are provided access to selected electronic resources with financial support from the AICTE and 102 universities/institutions have joined the Consortium under its self-supported category in 2012. The total number of members in the Consortium has now grown to 1235. Its provides access to 12000 electronic journals from various publishers such as ABI inform, ACM Digital Library, ABI INFORM, ACM Digital Library, AIP Journals, APS Journals, ASCE Journals, ASME Journals, ASTM Standards, Capitaline, CRIS INFAC Ind. Information, EBSCO Business Source Complete, Elsevier's Science Direct, Emerald Management Xtra, Euromonitor – Passport, IEC Standards, IEEE/IEE Electronic Library Online (IEL), INSIGHT, Optical Society Of America(Optics Infobase), ProQuest Science (formerly ASTP), SpringerLink, MathSciNet, SciFinder, Scopus Database and Web of Science.

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9.2 UGC INFONET

The UGC- INFONET Digital Library Consortium was formally launched in December, 2003 by Honorable Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam in 2003. The Consortium provides current and archival access to more than 7500+ core and peer-reviewed journals (From publishers such as American Chemical Society, American Institute of Physics, American Institute of Physics Archive, American Physical Society, Annual Reviews,

Cambridge University Press, Economic & Political Weekly, Emerald, Hein Online, Institute of Physics, JSTOR, Manupatra, Nature, Nature Archive, OUP Archive, Oxford University Press, Portland Press, Project Euclid, Project Muse, Royal Society of Chemistry, RSC Archive, ScienceDirect-10 Subject Collection, Science Direct Archive- Basic Science Collection, SIAM, SIAM Locus (Archive), Springer Link, Taylor and Francis, Westlaw India, Wiley Blackwell Publishing and 10 bibliographic databases from 26 publishers i.e ISID, JCCC, MathSciNet, Royal Society of Chemistry(6 Databases), SciFinder Scholar and Web of Science and aggregators in different disciplines. The programme has been implemented in phased manner. In the first phase that began in 2004, access to e-resources was provided to 50 universities who had Internet connectivity under the UGC-Infonet Connectivity programme of the UGC. In the second phase, 50 more universities were added to the programme in the year 2005. So far 209 Universities including 14 National Law schools and central universities that come under the purview of UGC, have been provided differential access to subscribed e-resources. These e-resources covers almost all subject disciplines including arts, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, chemical Sciences, life sciences, computer sciences, mathematics and statistics, etc. The programme is wholly funded by the UGC and executed by the INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network) Centre, Gndhinagar.²

9.3 HELINET (Health Sciences Library and Information Network)

It was launched by Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences in 2003. HELINET Consortium is first of its kind in the country when it was started in the field of health sciences information network in the year 2002. About 600+ core international e-journals, 2000+ e-books, 1500+ videos and databases are being subscribed/ procured and provided to students and faculties and research scholars pursuing their studies in various faculties of health sciences of all the respective affiliated colleges under RGUHS. About a million of scientific articles are being downloaded annually by our academic community, which is a healthy recovery of investments and enhancement of academic standards empowering knowledge and skills.

The HELINET Consortium created a memorable picture in the mindset of users of health science community which is reflected in the usage of a download of 21000 full text articles in the year 2003 when it was launched and today, the usage goen-up over 8 lakhs articles download per year.³

9.4 FORSA (Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics)

In the early 1980s, due to proliferation of information, library professionals working in the Institutes where astronomy was one of the main thrust areas of research felt the need to come together and to form a forum, which can act as a

springboard for sharing and exchange of information.

The sheer necessity brought all likeminded astronomy librarians in the country together and a first meeting was held on July 29, 1981 at Raman Research Institute, Bangalore and informally launched Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics (FORSA) with a vision and mission to share resources held in each library.

Since 1989, FORSA members meet every year, in conjunction with Annual Meeting of the Astronomical Society of India. A noteworthy feature of such meetings is that FORSA members interact with the astronomers in the Joint Session, in which developments in library and information handling activities in the field of astronomy/astrophysics are presented and comments from users are solicited to improve and expand library services.

At present, there are eleven institute members, viz. ARIES, Bose Institute, CASA-OU, HRI, IIA, IUCAA, NCRA (TIFR), PRL, RRI, SINP and TIFR. ⁴

9.5 E-Shodh Sindhu

Based on the recommendation of an Expert Committee, the MHRD has formed e-ShodhSindhu merging three consortia initiatives, namely UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, NLIST and INDEST-AICTE Consortium. The e-ShodhSindhu will continue to provide current as well as archival access to more than 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a

number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines from a large number of publishers and aggregators to its member institutions including centrally-funded technical institutions, universities and colleges that are covered under 12(B) and 2(f) Sections of the UGC Act. Aims and Objectives

- ✓ The main objective of the e-ShodhSindhu: Consortia for Higher Education E-Resources is to provide access to qualitative electronic resources including full-text, bibliographic and factual databases to academic institutions at a lower rates of subscription. The major aims and objectives of the e-Shodh Sindhu are as follows:
- ✓ Setting-up e-ShodhSindhu: Consortia for Higher Education E-Resources by augmenting and strengthening activities and services offered by three MHRD-funded Consortia;
- ✓ Develop a formidable collection of e-journals, e-journal archives and e-books on perpetual access basis;
- ✓ Monitor and promote usage of e-resources in member universities, colleges and technical institutions in India through awareness and training programmes;
- ✓ Provide access to subscription-based scholarly information (e-books and e-journals) to all educational institutions;

- ✓ Provide access to scholarly content available in open access through subject portals and subject gateways;
- ✓ Bridge digital divide and move towards an information-rich society;
- ✓ Provide access to selected e-resources to additional institutions including open universities and MHRD-funded institutions that are not covered under existing consortia;
- ✓ Take-up additional activities and services that require collaborative platform and are not being performed by existing Consortia; and
- ✓ Moving towards developing a National Electronic Library with electronic journals and electronic books as its major building blocks.⁵

9.6 N-LIST (National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content)

The project has four distinct components, i.e. i) to subscribe and provide access to selected UGC-INFONET e-resources to technical institutions (IITs, IISc, IISERs and NITs) and monitor its usage; ii) to subscribe and provide access to selected INDEST e-resources to selected universities and monitor its usage; iii) to subscribe and provide access to selected e-resources to 6,000 Govt./ Govt.-aided colleges and monitor its usage; and iv) to act as a Monitoring Agency for colleges and evaluate, promote, impart training and monitor all activities involved in the process

of providing effective and efficient access to e-resources to colleges.

As on Nov 2 2017, a total number of 3119 Govt. / Govt.-aided colleges covered under the section 12B of UGC Act as well as Non-Aided colleges. Log-in ID and password for accessing e-resources has been sent to the authorized users from these 3119 colleges. All e-resources subscribed for colleges under the N-LIST Project are now accessible to these 3119 colleges through the N-LIST website (<http://nlist.inflibnet.ac.in>)

It provides access to 6,000+ ejournals from American Institute of Physics, Annual Reviews, Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), Indian Journals, Institute of Physics, JSTOR, Oxford University Press, Royal Society of Chemistry, H. W. Wilson, Cambridge University Press and 31,35,000+ ebooks from Cambridge Books Online, E-brary, EBSCOHost-Net Library, Hindustan Book Agency, Institute of South East Asian Studies(ISEAS) Books, Oxford Scholarship, Springer eBooks, Sage Publication eBooks, Taylor Francis eBooks, Mylibrary-McGraw Hill, World -ebooks Library, South Asia Archive (though NDL).⁶

10. Conclusion

Library consortia is good initiative taken in India. It promotes the e-resources usage and encourages the institutions to subscribe for the consortia available in their subject field. More specifically this initiative should be undertaken at college levels. Colleges of same

field should come together to start this kind of activity for the journals which are not included in the consortia available in India. This will help in accumulating all the resources for the user's availability.

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