

Chapter 74

Special Library Consortia: A Resource Sharing Approach in an Electronic Milieu

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ABSTRACT

Due to increase in costs, proliferation of electronic resources and dwindling library budgets, cooperative e-acquisition has become a compelling proposition in a library consortium environment. The user community also has been greatly influenced by newer technologies facilitating seamless access to information. Users demand to have a wide array of electronic information services. As such, the current library scenario has reached a critical mass both in terms of e-products as well as increased number of virtual users. Due to journal crisis, and cuts in library budgets, the special library professionals are forced to come together in forming a consortium for subscription of e-journals. This chapter provides an outlook of special library consortia in India and the rest of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries today are facing increasing demand for services while concerned with the challenges such as the remarkable rise in managing information resources, elevated cost of library materials, high expectations from users, budget cuts and much more. The solution to these crises is to establish library consortium especially in relation to the acquisition of electronic resources. Library consortia are created to help libraries obtain better prices by buying joint access for a greater number of users, expanding access to print and electronic collections and developing new services to meet the customers' needs.

Consortia approach has come into view as the hallmark of libraries in order to feat electronic resources effectively. As noted by Vasishta and Jyoti (2007), Allen Kent stressed that, "the success and survival of libraries will much depend on how much and to what extent the libraries cooperate with each other in future". A consortium is said to be a cooperative array among groups, institutions, association or society (Bansode, 2007). Huarng & Yu (2011) shared that library consortium "refers to co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between, and among, libraries for the purpose of sharing information

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resources”. Consortium among the libraries is useful in various ways. It will be beneficial for getting cooperation among its member libraries in acquiring electronic databases, communication of information and inter-library loan. It will be supportive for balanced use of library funds that even small libraries can also derive benefits out of their tight budget. Consortium provides an effective information infrastructure to its member libraries.

According to Varaprasad & Madhusudhan (2010), there are different kinds of consortium:

1. Open Consortium: In this type, libraries are free to join and leave when they please. Member libraries are usually homogeneous in nature and require cross-sharing of the resources in a specific subject area. For example, INDEST-AICTE Consortium.
2. Closed Consortium: As the name indicates, this type of consortium is formed by coalition, affiliation, and collaboration among exclusive member libraries. For example, CSIR, DAE, and IIM Consortium.
3. Centrally-funded: In this type, a parent body or the coordinating agency will have the financial responsibility for running the consortium. For example, CSIR, INDEST, UGC INFONET, and ICMR Consortia, etc.
4. Special Library Consortium: Consortium formed by corporate libraries, law libraries, medical libraries, museum libraries, news libraries, and non-profit libraries.
5. Shared Budget: In this type, management of funds and other aspects are handled individually by the member libraries. For example, IIM, and Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics (FORSA).
6. Publishers’ Initiative: Certain publishers are also encouraging consortium formation by giving a deep discount in prices to the member libraries. For example, Emeralds’ Publishing Group.
7. National Consortium: This is a model perceived at national level which includes member libraries from one country. For example UGC INFONET Consortium.
8. International Consortium: The end of this model is international level. For example ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia).

BACKGROUND

The world has been a spectator of knowledge and information outburst during the past few decades. Access to information holds the key to development (Jharotia and Shukla, 2011). Libraries which are stockpile houses of knowledge and information, and information centers which propagate knowledge and information, form two important components of present day society (Dayal, 2011). Knowledge is the only treasure that increases with sharing information. The traditional concept of ownership in collection development is gradually being replaced by access to information and knowledge without regard to location and format (Gorman & Cullen, 2000). Increase in the volume of library materials and information, the increasing costs of acquiring and processing them, the need for trained personnel, storage space, and the increasing demands by users are motivating factors for libraries to share books, journals, preprints, catalogues, list of publications, recent additions, newsletters, policy decisions, current events, news flash, etc. Given that no library can afford to purchase, house, and preserve every information source that its patrons might need, information resource sharing, in the form of inter-library loan (ILL) and document delivery (DD) has become a core library service. The terms “library cooperation”, “library networking”,

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