Chapter 10
Selection and Acquisition of Electronic Resources in Academic Libraries:
Challenges

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ABSTRACT

With information explosion, there has been a rapid increase in the number of e-resources published across the world. In addition to this, the cost of e-resources has risen steeply. This has resulted in libraries finding it difficult to acquire all the required information resources from the budget available from its parent body. The problem of libraries is compounded by the growing costs of maintaining both print and online subscription and issues related to 'perpetual' electronic access to back files. The print industry in the world is said to be on the decline. People prefer the electronic versions of the reading materials, because they are more portable, accessible and affordable. But there are many challenges/hurdles to this path, which we have to overcome with time, effort and ingenuity. There are certain challenges relating to their selection, acquisition, maintenance and preservation, etc., which need joint efforts of library professionals and associations. Electronic publishing of scholarly journals, emerging of consortia, pricing models of the publishers give new opportunities for libraries to provide instant access to information. Consortium, formed by a group of libraries, is a unique program to facilitate electronic access to scholarly databases and journals. The beneficiaries will be faculty, researchers, students and neighbor institutes engaged in pursuing higher education. Consortia will minimize the financial burden and pave the way for an enormous amount of saving of time, money, and manpower.

INTRODUCTION

On the one hand there has been a remarkable increase in the number of new journals and databases advertised and published by commercial publishers; on the other, there has been the pressure on the libraries to go electronic. A few years ago the possibilities of electronically submitting a manuscript, which is then transmitted with almost no delay to referees and the wonderful feature of reading accepted papers that are yet to appear in print, were almost unheard of. Owing to growth in commercial publishing, in some areas, journal prices have spiraled out of control, forcing libraries to cut back on their holdings. The professional societies, particularly in the United States, produce many of the flagship journals of science, which have maintained their pre-eminent position over the last century. However, the ongoing electronic revolution has forced major changes (Balaram, 2000). An academic library exists to serve their students, research scholars and faculty members by providing the required information. They need information to carry out their research work. The objective of the libraries is to provide an effective combination of print and electronic resources, and the integration of the use of these resources in support of teaching, learning and research at their academic institutions. Electronic resources, however, pose challenges not encountered with the acquisitions of traditional library materials, such as access, interface, technical support and licensing. Libraries therefore need to formulate a separate electronic resource collection development policy to address these issues. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines in choosing appropriate electronic resources and to establish consistency and priorities in managing the important part of the libraries' collection. This chapter covers, the major steps in acquiring electronic resources; relationships among libraries, publishers and vendors; ordering, receiving, and paying for materials; and handling licensing agreements and formation of consortia etc.

"Electronic resources" according to International Federation of Library Association (IFLA, 2012) are materials that require computer access, whether through microcomputer, mainframe, or other types of computers, and they may either be accessed via the internet or locally. A large number of the earlier studies of users of electronic journals have appeared in the last few years. The pursuit of electronic resources by libraries was driven by the core values of library science. It is possible to recognize in Ranganathan's five laws of library science the motivation that drove libraries to incorporate electronic resources into services and collections. Paraphrased to better suit electronic resources, the laws read: resources are for use, every person has his or her resource, every resource its user, save the time of the user, and the library is a growing organism (Ranganathan, 1963). With the advent of e-resources, job responsibilities of selectors have changed drastically. Selection of e-resources outside the guidance of a collection development policy leads to

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