

## **Library Consortia: An Overview**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A new paradigm has emerged for libraries. No library, however big it may be, is able to satisfy all the needs of its user due to various constraints. It is because of this phenomenon that the concept of library consortium has developed. The phenomenon of consortia or group of libraries buying e-information together has become very important in the last few years. Consortium of libraries is well known for sharing of resources all over the world. Information explosion, emergence of internet and particularly World Wide Web as a new medium of information storage make the concept more come into sight than earlier. This paper aims to explore or briefly discusses the concept, need, factors, advantages, disadvantages of library consortia. 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 CERA, , etc .and discusses them briefly.*

**Keywords:** Library Consortia, E-Journal; Information explosion

### **Introduction**

Information revolution is the marked way in which a society becomes an information society from whatever it was before- traditional, agricultural or industrial one. The information has become an open phenomenon over which every individual has a right to access. The libraries which were earlier known as store houses too have widened their scope by accommodating the user to get information from all corners of the world. "Information Revolution" has made Libraries around the world to adopt new philosophies and technologies for their service and also reduce the cost of providing information. It is a greater challenge to libraries to maintain the breadth and lengths of collections, irrespective of their nature. Failure to confront this challenge successfully and fundamentally threatens the Library's mission and vision. In this regard, partnership and cooperation – local, national and international – have become inevitable for all libraries. One way of achieving cooperation is through the establishment of consortiums – a syndication arrangement which enables libraries to work together more effectively and efficiently. The terms consortium, networking, resource sharing, cooperation and partnerships are used inter-changeably to refer to strategic alliances amongst libraries with the aim of meeting the demands of clients for services that are delivered faster and reliable.

Nothing can exist in isolation in the complex global situation. Library a public place to visit is not an exception. Co-operation is an essential facet of modern library management in most of the countries. Co-operation occurs at many levels; from simple inter library loan services and reciprocal access for users, to more direct resource sharing and joint storage facilities, to cooperative collection development and joint licensing agreements with vendors and publishers. These co-operative activities are becoming increasingly important for library services primarily because of the rapidly growing data, improvements in telecommunications and rising costs associated with the acquisition of library materials. Evidently there is a growing body that electronic access begets greater usage of resources.

### **Anicient Perspective for Library co-operation :**

Library cooperation developed from sharing of union catalogue information, storage facilities, collection development, and human resources at local, national, and regional levels. Another form of co-operation has been based mainly on inter-library lending services where co-operating libraries agree to enter into reciprocal borrowing and use of materials from other libraries. This form of co-operation enabled libraries to borrow books and periodical articles which were not available locally. (2) Though there was need for library cooperation in the past, it was meted out locally with locally available resources and locale network. However the so called information revolution that transformed the world into a global village extended the library services to collect and retrieve information available in various forms either in their building or outside. Library co- operation has long been practiced in the West, but at varying levels and in various ways over time. In the early 1960s and 1970s proper "resource sharing" was much touted as the way of the future, and practiced in many countries with considerable success. Then for a short time the decade from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s co-ordinated collection development was felt to be the best solution, but this was gradually overtaken by interest in co-ordinated collection management, which is where the profession is positioning itself at present.

### **Definition:**

Co-operation among the group for attaining certain common objectives has been basic requirement of civilisation. Cooperation, as defined by Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is "the action of cooperating with common effort; the association of persons for common benefit" (3). It is an autonomous group of people, with a common object for fulfillment of economic, social and cultural needs. According to the Library of Congress Subject Headings "library 87 cooperation" is to be defined and used for "interlibrary cooperation; interlibrary resource sharing; library consortia; and library resource sharing" and it is related to the subject usage of "cooperative cataloguing; intellectual cooperation; international librarianship; and library storage center". For cooperative efforts among libraries, this means that two or more libraries are working together to provide better and enhanced services for the library patrons through cooperative cataloguing, centralized processing, cooperative acquisition of library materials, exchange of bibliographic information, interlibrary loans, library information networks, and library storage centers.

## **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.

The use of licensed electronic information resources will continue to expand and in some cases become the sole or dominant means of access to content. The explosion of information and inadequate library urged the libraries to adopt new philosophies and technologies for collection development and reduce the costs information. The electronic environment, as manifested by the World Wide Web, provides an opportunity to improve the measurement of the use of these resources. In the electronic arena we can more accurately determine which information is being accessed and used. Library Consortium is an Association of a group of libraries to achieve mutually the common objective. It is felt that the concept of E-Journals consortia can work well the libraries without requiring additional fees to access the ejournal.

## **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.
- 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 Movement**

The human race is on the threshold of a new emerging civilization: the information civilization. It is an extension of and successor to the agricultural and industrial civilizations that had determined our social structure until now. Microelectronics technology applied in the form of computers is the essential ingredient in the making of an information society. Most of these technological innovations are born in research universities-their role is almost similar to that of a steel factory in an industrial society. Information is such a highly valued commodity that individuals who produce this are super elites of an information society. This superior class status is accessible through merit and education and attaining of knowledge through the sources and the retrieval agencies. Hence the information seekers emerged with the advancement of communication technology An information society is often an individualized and demassified with each individual wanting specific information. Thus the modern communication technologies are so designed to combine the qualities of interactivity, demassification and a synchronicity to free the individual from the tyranny of mass media.

The object of sharing has changed over a period of years, so also the techniques. Recently resource sharing has come to mean sharing computing resources, unlike sharing of bibliographic materials like books, journals or journals articles on Inter-library loan basis or preparing union lists of serials, etc. Many Indian university and college libraries are not in a

position to subscribe to all the required journals and databases mainly due to lack of management support and financial constraints. The libraries are forming consortia in order to facilitate knowledge sharing at a much cheaper rate. The development of consortia is the outcome of the desire for resource sharing.

### **Formation of Consortia:**

It is not clear that when the word “library consortium” was came to be introduced. The exact date for the introduction of the term “library consortium” is not clear but the concept of a consortium as being an association or partnership has long been a tenet of librarianship. The published literature indicates that the concept is not new, and it refers to cooperation, coordination and collaboration between, and amongst, libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. However a library did not use it widely until about the 1980s. The main drive for co-operation arose when there was increase in the output of publications or the information explosion, the rise in the cost of publications coupled with stringent budget allocations, and growth in student enrolment. Increasing demand for service from users together with the need to improve inter-lending services and the library collection are additional factors. Some special libraries and organizations like the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) Library, Inter-university Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) Library, National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) Library, Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) Library, Raman Research Institute (RRI) Library, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) Library, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Atomic Energy, etc., have established consortia to share electronic access to journal literature. NISCAIR is developing a consortium for CSIR labs for accessing e-journals. Consortia in India are still a new concept that requires proper guidelines and methodologies.

### **Development of various consortia in India:**

Formation of library consortia is the need of the hour for the purpose of sharing of information. In India many consortia has been formed in different areas to share information. Following are the some of the renowned consortia working in India.

### **Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture**

Oral communication has been an integral part of people to people interactions in all ancient civilizations. With the advancement of science and technology, the process of communication has been expanded over the years to cover print and other modes like computer and associated gadgets. India is predominantly an agrarian country, and the growth of agriculture is reflected in the good yields of different crops that depend on various factors – natural and man-made. Agricultural research, the backbone of agricultural growth in the country, demands timely dissemination of knowledge being generated and updated across the globe from time to time. Institutions in NARS, by and large, have been procuring print versions of journals and literature in aid of science and technology. With the rapid growth of internet facilities and advancement of web technology, almost all reputed international journals are available on-line and can be accessed by researchers over the network.

Since ICAR is having network connectivity across institutes and state agricultural universities, select journals could be made available over the network for the use of scientific community. Accordingly, the Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) was established in November 2007 for facilitating accessibility of scientific journals to all

researchers / teachers in the National Agricultural Research System by providing access to information specially access to journals online which is crucial for having excellence in research and teaching.

### **Objectives of CeRA**

1. To upscale the existing R & D information resource base of ICAR Institutions/Universities comparable to world's leading institutions organizations.
2. To subscribe e-journals and create e-access culture among scientists teachers in ICAR Institutes / Agricultural Universities.
3. To assess the impact of CeRA on the level of research publications measured through NAAS ID and Science Citation Index.

### **Accomplishments**

IP addresses from Institutions in NARS were collated for providing online accessibility of articles from more than 2900 journals related to agricultural sciences comprising Consortium Subscribed, Library Subscribed and Open Access Journals. Compiled three reports (one on IP address and contact details; library subscribed journals based on (1) Publishers and (2) Institutions in NARS.

A web-based application was developed for facilitating the online access. The URL is [www.cera.jccc.in](http://www.cera.jccc.in). All Consortium members are provided the access through respective IP address(es).

Currently 147 institutions in NARS have 24x7 online access to important journals in CeRA platform through IP authentication. Thomson Web of Science for Science Citation Index (SCI) has been made available to the Lead Institute (IARI), but the facility is available to all members of CeRA.

Two Committees, namely Steering and Monitoring, Negotiation have been constituted for smooth functioning of CeRA activities.

To assist researchers to access full text of library subscribed journals (which are not subscribed by CeRA), the Document Delivery Request System has been introduced.

More than 62 awareness / training-cum-workshops were held covering institutions in NARS and more than 3500 scientists were directly benefitted. Besides these, clarifications on specific problems on CeRA accessibility are looked in to through live chat and online interactions.

Outcome/Impact/Deliverables • Online accessibility of all important journals related to agriculture and biotechnology to researchers and students of the Consortium members Quick access to world R & D information as available world wide • Permanent archive of the subscribed e-databases. • Improvement in the quality of scientific publications, and teaching and research guidance.

About Host Institute: The Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture is committed to promote ICT driven technology and information dissemination system for quick, effectual and cost-effective delivery of messages to all the stakeholders in agriculture. Keeping pace with the current knowledge diffusion trends, Directorate is delivering and showcasing ICAR technologies, policies and other activities through print, electronic and web mode. Directorate is the nodal center for design, maintenance and updating of ICAR

website along with facilitation of network connectivity across ICAR institutes and KVKs. Besides, Directorate provides public relation and publicity support to the council and its constituents across the country.

UGC – INFLIBNET - INFONET Digital Library Consortium The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre is an autonomous centre within the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India and is involved in creating the infrastructure for sharing library and information resources and services among academic and research institutions as stated on its web site ([www.inflibnet.ac.in](http://www.inflibnet.ac.in)). This is being achieved via the UGC- INFONET network, which aims to provide high speed internet connectivity to 150 institutions in its first phase. INFLIBNET functions as a resource centre with an aim to cater for the needs of its members for resources not accessible to them either in electronic media or in print media . The electronic subscription initiative under UGC-INFONET is expected to trigger a remarkable increase in sharing of both print and electronic resources among university libraries through one of the gateway portals being identified. The gateway portals provide customized solutions not only to access the resources online but also access to resources of other libraries participating in the consortium. With subscribed resources accessible online in electronic format, the member libraries would have less pressure on space requirements for storing and managing print-based library resources. Moreover, all problems associated with print media such as their wear and tear, location, shelving, binding, organising, etc. would not be an issue for electronic resources. The possibilities of alliances with publishers for adapting a consortiased approach to e-subscriptions for journals are also growing fast. These journals will be available over UGC-INFONET to all the universities. Much of the new research publications are also available on the net as freeware, thereby, making quality information accessible to a wider academic scholar base spread across the country, at an affordable price. It provides details of the use made of e-journals between 2004-2007 by members of the INFLIBNET consortium.

### **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.

### **Issues 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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