

VIJAYAKUMAR, JK and SREEKUMAR, MG. Consortia Approach among the Higher Education and Research Libraries in India: a Dire Need of the Hour. In M Bavakutty, M C K Veeran and T K Muhammed Salih; ed. Proceedings of *National Seminar on Library Co-operation in a Networked World*, University of Calicut, Kozhikode, India. 25-26 May 2001. New Delhi, Ess Ess, 2002: 58-74.

## **Consortium for Indian Higher Education and Research Libraries: The need of the hour**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In a strongly worded statement, librarians around the world have called for an end to the "excessive pricing" of electronic publications and for a halt in "attacks" on libraries' rights to redistribute documents. More than 40 library consortia signed the statement, in which the librarians also insisted on the need for permanent access to electronically archived information.*

-A report in \*The Chronicle of Higher Education says this. Is it something really new or indigestible to us, in India?

*\*<http://chronicle.com/data/articles.dir/art-44.dir/issue-31.dir/31a03301.htm>*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In most developing countries information professionals agree that it is important to maintain the richness, diversity and values of the traditional library service as we move into an electronic future. In this IT era, the library is viewed, not as the centerpiece in information transfer, but as one player in that transfer process, along with the Internet, community information services, the IT industry, commercial information aggregators, government agencies and other resource-rich entities. By replacing competition with co-operation, we may be able to provide high quality resource acquisition, resource description and resource discovery services to users of all types [1]. Resource sharing among libraries is long-standing and takes a number of forms including inter-lending, co-operative acquisitions, shared storage facilities, staff education, sharing of human and

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computer facilities, and information networks. Resource sharing holds a strong potential for LIS in developing countries. With no library able to acquire all the publications deemed essential, a division of tasks or specialties is a worthwhile investment for increasing a country's coverage. However, resource sharing requires efficient communication structures [2].

## **LIBRARY CONSORTIUM**

Although cooperation among libraries has been an international tradition for decades, the phenomenal growth of consortia over the past decade clearly has been fueled by the rapid transformation made possible through technology. For several years, libraries of developed countries formed consortia for many different reasons such as sharing the same system, sharing common databases or to promote common policy in accessing commercial databases. Today, many libraries are already a part of one or more consortia and those that are not are rapidly taking steps to develop these strategic partnerships with other libraries, at international level. Cooperation among libraries can be categorised in to three, in a broad sense.

### **Library network**

A library network is a co-operative arrangement between several libraries, for example for inter-lending, or an electronic network within or between libraries.

### **Library consortium**

A library consortium is a formal association of libraries, not under the same institutional control, but usually restricted to a geographical area, number of libraries, types of materials, or subject interest, which is established to develop and implement resource sharing among members. The objective of library consortia is to control and reduce information costs, to improve resource sharing, to develop a network information environment (e.g. via campus systems, campus networks, and the Internet), and to share licensing issues with each other [3]. A Library Consortium is a group of libraries that agree to pool their resources by allowing the users of each institution some type of access

to the resources of all the other institutions, either through interlibrary loan or borrowing privileges.

### **Library co-operative**

A library co-operative is a group of interdependent and autonomous libraries banded together by formal agreements or contracts which stipulate the common services to be planned and co-ordinated by the policy-making body of the co-operative. These services could be acquisitions, cataloguing, collection development or storage.

### **LIBRARY CONSORTIUM IN INDIA**

Co-operation is an essential facet of modern library management in most Western countries, although as yet libraries in most Asian countries have not accepted it as normative [10]. Co-operation and networking in library and information systems provide a wider access to collections, improve public and technical services and enhance operations by sharing resources, reducing duplication and offering more cost-effective services. These systems are frequently applied in developed countries. These countries are getting maximum benefits from these systems, for example, expanding their services, providing better user satisfaction and solving their problems. These systems are less used in LIS of developing countries. The need for the establishment of such systems is very much evidenced in a country like India. The experience of countries with developed systems can be instructive in social, professional, technological and economic terms. Raising awareness for the potential use of these systems, giving broader roles to organisations, developing communication infrastructure and maximising the use of technologies are key components for the establishment of co-operation and networking in library and information systems of developing countries [13]. In India, the discussions and preliminaries already started while INFLIBNET is initiating a consortium for Indian academic libraries. "Forming a consortium of libraries has become way of life in maximising the resources bas in the developed counties. Taking this path, it would be necessary for us to form the consortium and find out the priorities, looking in to our needs. Several major publishers are willing to come forward to provide this service under

the umbrella of consortium" [5]. Realizing the importance of resource sharing through networks, the CALIBER-2000 recommended that INFLIBNET should take immediate action to form a consortium of academic libraries to avoid costly duplication of resources in the country [14]. Another initiative was from Informatics India Ltd through their J-Gate project [6].

## **POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF CONSORTIA**

Libraries, with their usually static or (in real terms) shrinking budgets, are continually looking for methods to reduce the unit cost for each journal or article required by their customers. They are increasingly resorting to purchasing as part of a consortium. There is much more evidence of consortia purchase occurring in North America than in the UK [7]. The very recent growth of library purchasing consortia is a worldwide phenomenon [8]. Benefits of library consortia are;

- Sharing of information with Improved resource sharing.
- Joint pricing negotiations, which gives ability to control expenses and reduce overall costs including information costs.
- Contracts covering multiple countries and strategic alliance with institutions that have common interests for building a larger political coalition and critical mass

The benefits of purchasing e-journals through consortia are.

- A single interface and access point;
- A wider range of electronic journals available;
- E-journals organised by subject;
- Links to and from indexing and abstracting services;
- Enhanced search facilities;
- Customisable institution interface.

The emergence of Consortia will bring increased international cooperation, central state funding for e-info resources, multi-consortial licensing, multi-consortial collaboration etc

In Japan, national university libraries also issue a "common library card" to their clients, which enables its holder to use any national university library. These kinds of agreements and services are not available among the private university libraries at a national level. There is, however, an "Agreement of Copying Services among National,

Public and Private University Libraries”. This allows all academic library clients to receive the copying service at whichever institution they belong to [11]. First, it is abundantly clear that during the past ten years not only the operating environment in which universities function has changed but also that of their libraries. The most significant change has been the development of a “culture of dependence”. The scope for institutional autonomy has been markedly reduced in recent years. The second trend is that there is a significant blurring of the functional boundaries. IT areas and libraries’ work have moved much more closely together even if it was not necessary for their organisational patterns to merge. Record managers, IT and libraries have a great deal in common, as do archivists. So the examples could go on [12].

## **ROLE OF LIBRARY NETWORKS**

National level Library Networks operating in India can play a major role in creating consortia. INFLIBNET- the library network for Indian Universities and other academic Institutions, MANLIBNET- the library network of Management Institutes in India and other operating regional networks can initiate in this regard for their working area or in a co-operational level for mutual benefit. Multi-licensed purchase of Online databases and e-journals by these networks for academic and research community

## **CONCLUSION**

Among the common problems has been the rising cost of publications they wish to purchase for their users, and among the common solutions to that problem has been the formation of consortia of libraries to purchase books and journals at favorable prices [18]. A few of the challenges faced by library consortia are universal. To succeed as a collective activity, almost every group has had to overcome political hurdles, funding challenges, and the egos of individuals and institutions. Library consortia are clearly having an important impact around the world [17].

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### **Links of some consortia.**

1. Abilene Library Consortium: <http://alcon.acu.edu/>
2. Alliance Library System: <http://www.rsa.lib.il.us/>
3. Boston Library Consortium's: <http://www.blc.org>
4. Center for Research Libraries (CRL): <http://www.crl.uchicago.edu/>
5. Chicago Library System: <http://www.chilibsys.org/>

6. Consortium of Academic Libraries of Catalonia (CUBC): <http://www.cbuc.es/angles/>
7. Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL): <http://www.curl.ac.uk/>
8. Fenway Library Consortium: <http://www.simmons.edu/flc/flc.html>
9. Greater Cincinnati Library Consortium: <http://www.gclc-lib.org/>
10. Health Sciences Libraries Consortium (HSLC): <http://www.hslc.org/>
11. HELIN Consortium: <http://library.uri.edu/>
12. International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC):  
<http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/>
13. Library Consortia Documents Online: <http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/~b-sloan/consort.htm>
14. Library Integrated Network Consortium (LINC): <http://www.linc.lib.il.us/>
15. Maryland Interlibrary Consortium: <http://144.175.2.169/>
16. Merrimack Valley Library Consortium: <http://www.mvlc.org/>
17. Michigan Library Consortium: <http://www2.mlc.lib.mi.us/mlcnews/index.php>
18. North State Cooperative Library System: <http://nscls.library.net/>
19. Oakland Library Consortium: <http://www.library.cmu.edu/OLC/>
20. Orbis Library Consortium: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/orbis/>
21. Shawnee Library System: <http://www.shawls.lib.il.us/>
22. Silicon Valley Library System (SVLS Net): <http://www.svls.lib.ca.us/>
23. Tampa Bay Library Consortium: <http://www.tbtc.org/>
24. Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA): <http://www.viva.lib.va.us/>
25. Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC): <http://www.wrlc.org/>

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