Library Consortia: Advantages and Disadvantages

Baldev Kumar

Librarian,
Haryana Institute of Engineering and Technology
Kaithal, Haryana

Abstract

This is an age of information explosion. *In the 21st century 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.

Kew Words: Library Consortia, E-Journal; Information explosion

1 Introduction

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 e-journal.

2 Definitions of Consortia

An agreement, combination, or group (as of companies) formed to undertake an enterprise beyond the resources of any one member *(Webster Dictionary).*

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 Need for Library Consortia

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

4 Factors to Consider Before Consortia Formation

Various factors to be taken for an effective functioning of a successful consortium like resource identification on the basis of usage and usability, long run planning of the technology infrastructure, access to back runs of periodicals will have to clearly spelt, copyright and licensing, archival issue, price issue should be economically favorable. Last but not least, designing and launching a library consortium should be long term sustenance and robust models towards achieving the above goals.

5 Advantages of Consortia

The glance at the published literature on the topic and study of success stories of library consortia reveals that:
1. It provides each institution with the ability to share resources without sacrificing the individuality to each member library.
2. Consortia-based subscription to electronic resources provides access to wider number of electronic resources at substantially lower cost.
3. Enhanced library services are provided with an emphasis on accesses to new electronic resources including databases and services offered through the internet and World Wide Web.
4. Better delivery of services.

5. Better understanding of copyright laws.
6. Electronic Journals demand neither library space nor shelving costs nor can they be stolen from the library

6 Disadvantages of Consortia
1. Consortia require high initial investments in licensees and information and communication technology.
2. Unreliable telecommunication links and insufficient bandwidth
3. Absence of a printed copy of Journals
4. Outdated technology
5. Lack of standards
6. Insufficient knowledge
7. Fear of loss
8. Copyright issues
9. Negative attitudes Lack of archiving and back files availability
10. No tradition of cooperation or Reluctance to participate

7 Consortia Models
The types of consortia identified are generally based on various models evolved in India in Varity of forms depending upon participations' affiliation and funding sources.

i) Open Consortia
This type of consortia is very flexible and it is the wish of members of consortia can join and leave any they please. INDEST Consortium is an example to this.

ii).Closed Group Consortia
It is within defined group. This kind of consortia emerges either by affiliation and collaboration among them like CSIR, DAE, IIM Consortium. And the formation and operation of the consortia guidelines and its administration are fairly simple and easy.

iii). Centrally Funded Model
In this model, consortium will solely depend on the parent body. A few examples are INFONET by UGC, ICMR, and CSIR.

iv). Shared-budget Model
"In this model the participating libraries take the lead and form the consortium. IIM and FORSA are examples of this model".

v). Publisher Initiatives
The Emerald Full-Text Library published by the Emerald Publishing Group (formerly MCB University Press) is recent example. Here, the consortium members will get deep discount price to the participating libraries

vi). National Consortium

The end of this model is, national level licensing of products. And in this regard is INDEST-AICTE, UGC Infonet.

8 Examples of E-Journals Consortia India

1. INDEST – AICTE Consortium *(http://paniit.iitd.ac.in/indest/)*
2. UGC INFONET *(http://web.inflibnet.ac.in/info/ugcinfonet/ugcinfonet.jsp)*
3. FORSA Consortium (Astronomy and Astrophysics Libraries)
4. *(http://www.iiap.res.in/library/forsa.html)*
5. CSIR   Library   Consortium *http://www.niscair.res.in/ActivitiesandServices/MajorProjects/majproj.htm#ejournalconsortia)*
6. ISRO Library Consortium
7. IIM Library Consortium
8. HELINET (Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Karnataka) *(http://www.rguhs.ac.in/hn/newhell.htm)*
9. ICMR Library Consortium

9 Benefits of E-Journals Consortia

1. Scope for electronic archives
2. Availability and monitoring of usage statistics
3. Getting deep discounts through joint pricing negotiations – hence lower unit cost of information
4. Can be read anywhere in the world, at any time, by any number of people as long as the readers have an internet connection
5. Also allow the inclusion of audio-visual material as well as the other formats and technological innovations that are available on the Internet, such as keyword searching
6. Articles include links to other cited journals, e-books, and other supporting material making research more convenient
7. Reduced storage costs
8. Developing common resources databases
9. Effective document delivery systems
10. A single interface and access point
11. Enhanced search facilities
12. Better scope for developing a union catalogue among participating libraries

10 Conclusions

The consortium, with its collective strength of participating institutions, has attracted highly discounted rates of subscription with most favorable terms of agreement. Consortia are tools, which will aid in exploiting the features of the e-journals as well as in effecting savings.

References

[1] Hulser Richard P., (1997) Digital Library: Content Preservation in a Digital World. DESIDOC Bulletin of Information Technology, No.6: pp7-14.

[2] Boyd, Stephanie. What's next for corporate virtual libraries? Online; 28(6) Nov2004-Dec2004, pp14-16.

[3] Jagdish Arora. The International Information & Library Review, Volume 35, Issue 1, March 2003, Pages 1-17.

[4] http://csir.res.in.

[5] http://www.ifla.org

[6] http://www.iitb.ac.in