ORIGIN AND NEED OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA IN MODERN ERA

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ABSTRACT:

The library cooperation as it was called earlier was started after the world War- II and the exact date for the introduction the term "library consortium" is not clear. The concept of consortia is-being, an association or partnering has long been the tenet of librarianship. The published literature indicates that the concept is not new (Kopp 1998)[1] to librarians for the purpose of sharing information resources. However, the libraries have not used to the output of publication or the information explosion. The rise in the cost of publication, stringed budget allocation along with growth in student enrolment has increased the demand to improve inter-lending services and the library collection for cooperation.

KEYWORDS: consortia, library consortia, resource sharing, co-operation

INTRODUCTION:

The Farmington plan (1948) for co-operative foreign acquisition and the later America Co-operative Acquisition Program (1959) are the major co-operative ventures on resource development.

Earlier in 1885 E. A. Mac published article entitled "co-operation verses competition" which emphasizes, on sharing of library resource.

Melvil Dewey, the creator of DDC, wrote on "library co-operative" in 1880' highlights the co-operation is ofprime importance in libraries.

The common form of library co-operation is sharing a union catalogue, information storage facility, collection development and human resources at local, regional and the national level. It was until the post-World War II era that multi type co-operation emerged on both national and international level, crossing jurisdictional, institutional and political boundaries.

In an article by Louis[2] (2001) has recognized consortiums as essential to human development and Alexander[4] (2001) Executive Director of the big 12 plus consortium opined "the history of library co-operation is as long as the professional librarianship in America".

Wilson[3] (2000) opines that consortia development is rooted in the history of library cooperative efforts and is driven by the needs to provide remote users with licensed access to electronic resources. In view of Allen and Hirshon4 (1998) is a shift from organizational self-sufficiency to co-operation with othersto survive.

Okerson[5] (1996) submits that: "I believe we have come to a point in time we are ready to form a small working group or task force between academic library customers and a group of publishers to explore the terms of electronic licenses and identify those that we can agree upon to standardize".

Definition and characteristics of consortia:

Consortia mean alliance of institutions having common interests. The application of information technology and information retrieval system for on-line catalogues, bibliographic database on full text electronic document have facilitated a quick information exchange any of the institutions.

Further library consortia means a group of libraries working together for a common cause, a collaborative or coalition effort for meeting the varied needs of the users.

In simple words "consortia indeed is one wherein willing buyer meet willing sellers primarily to share at a discounted."

Chartron[6] (2001) "Consortia is derived from the field of economics and refer to the grouping together of different independent companies in order to bring together financial or material resources under a single managing body or a joint performance of specific operations ."

It is the aim of library consortiums to fulfill the educational, intellectual, informational and social aspiration of users, through cooperative provision, superior quality library resources and services easily accessible to the users.

Basic Features of library consortia:

The foremost feature of the library consortia is the reduction of cost and core services in the areas of co-operative collection development. It also provides in greater number of information which ordinarily one library may not own to use. It also ensure the resource sharing or co-operative licensing of publish portfolios that provides uninterrupted access to electronic information without negotiations.

Bjoernshaange[7] (1999) stressed the point that process of re-engineering the library could not

have taken place without entering into a co-operation arrangement with other libraries and without co-operative and creative negotiation with publishers. Indeed it is considered that the publisher and societies are important and has to be positive in this process.

In short the consortia summaries as:

1. Leverage resources by sharing existing collection or resource through virtual union catalogues.

2. To reduce the cost of member library operations by obtaining a group purchase price for information products.

3. To bring pressure to bear on information providers, especially publisher to reduce the rate of rise in the cost of purchasing information.

REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF CONSORTIA

The broad reasons for formation of consortia are:

1. To increase the cost benefits per subscription.

2. To promote the rationale use for funds.

3. To ensure the continuous subscription to the periodicals subscribed.

4. To guarantee local storage of the information acquired for continuous usage by present and future users.

5. To develop technical capabilities of the staff in operating and using electronic publication database and

6. For strategic alliance with institutions that have common interest resulting in reduced information cost and improved resources sharing.

Mastroddi[8] (1984) underlines the economic resources and ever expanding universe of information are forcing academic libraries to rely more and more on low cost access.

Wade[9] (1999) claims three primary reasons to participate in co-operation ventures which are:

1. To enhance the quality of services that a library provides to its clients.

2. the altruistic nature of library professionals for sharing is good and

3. Working together seems to be professionally right thing to do and the librarian should strongly believe in resource sharing as a means to reduce libraries funding.

Library consortia models:

During the last three and half decades, libraries have developed variety of organized models to support the different kinds of resources sharing programmers that have evolved. Designing and organizational infrastructure appropriates for the participant and the resources being shared can further the success of any kind of library co-operations.

The model varies from highly decentralized organization to highly centralized organizations. The degree of centralization of a consortium is the primary factor not only how member institution interact each other but also relationship with external party viz. publisher and vendor. More decentralized the consortium the greater the degree of autonomy that the individual institution retains and the ability of the consortiums to achieve set goals as a group.

Foskett[10] (1993) indicate that in 1982 libraries in the UnitedKingdom formed a Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL) to share computerized cataloging or bibliographic information. The following are few Licensing Models:

1. "Title –By – Title Subscription Model"

This practice is followed in most libraries to subscribe print journals. The only concession library

may get by this model is the special rates if one subscribes all publications.

2. "Print Plus Model"

The pricing of the electronic journal product is expressed as an "add-on" to the price quoted is linked to a "no-print cancellation" clause in the contract.

3. "Electronic-Plus Model"

The electronic journal content supplied for a base price and the price for print copies added to that base price. Few consortiums argues for keeping the purchase of the print copies as optional and the base price for the electronic content is not more than 80% of the price for the electronic- plus - print and the combined electronic and print price is not more than current print - only prices.

4. "All-You -Can- Eat-Model"

Some publisher offers their total content for the price that a library might have paid a limited number of print journal subscriptions.

5. "Pay-by-the-Drink-Model"

Provision to purchase blocks of journals articles, or may pay only for the delivery of the articles that are actually used.

Four types of consortia's existing today are as follows:

1. Loosely knit federations

In this type of consortia, the local or regional level co-operation is expected which is govern by its members. There is neither central staff nor-central funding and very flexible. Above all it has no bargaining power. There is low common interest as the type of institution in the same city may not have common interest. No central authority for purchases and very limited to group purchasing power which yields minimum returns.

2. Multi type / Multi state network

This is state wide or multiple state consortia approach with low common interest but there is central staff but no funding. There exists little flexibility with little bargaining power.

3. Tightly knit federations

In this type of consortia there can be statewide with high common interest. There can be an action agenda and may have sponsoring agency. The publisher discounts are high; there exist central staff and central funding. This type has fairly flexible and moderate bargaining power.

4. Centralized supported consortia

This is the most popular among the consortia with in a single state with high common interest. Members jointly agree on services to purchases based on shared interest. There is significant action agenda and central staff with strong funding. It is moderately inflexible and strong bargaining power. Characteristics of successful consortia:

The six characteristics of successful consortia are:
1. Automated library system that is union catalogue
2. Adequate funding that is state funding.

3. A formal governance structure- with local autonomy.
4. Policy of clear understanding and policies.
5. Staff participation with some parity or equality with any participants.
6. Assessment criteria or plan for assessment.

Consortia relation and activities:

Consortia can bring economy, efficiency and equality in information availability and use. Participant' institutions have access not only to their own resources but sources in the other institution which will bridge the gap between information resources rich and resource deficient.

The consortia collaboration which forms the consortia relation is identified as :
1. Shared access to information sources.
2. Statewide access for all involved.
3. Smaller libraries can benefits.
4. Possible global impact.
5. Common interface to resources.
6. Possible to ability to attract foreign investment.
7. Cooperative sharing.
8. Cooperative education expertise.
9. Cost sharing using discount.
10. Cooperative holding agreement and above all
11. Coordinated collection development.

PRICE AND COST SHARING:

We may categories the pricing offers as follows:
1. Fixed used contracts that is the interactive use of the document available
2. Fixed used contracts having the tailored mode service and news bulletin.
3. Special pricing policy based on certain activities that the institute of academic, industrial, geographical barrier or depending on the currency based.
4. It is also characterize by the unit prices.
5. It also takes care of additional and optional features available under consortia.
6. Product bundling prices is also another method of pricing which help the institution to avail a set of product at a given time.
7. We also find the promotional pricing policies to attract the institutes to buy the product.
8. The very import all the above is the value pricing that is core publication will be costly.

Obstacles /Challenges:

Disadvantages of consortia can be summarize as:
1. Duplication of effort
2. Reduce buying power
3. Confusion of libraries, vendors and policies
4. Diffusion of financial resource
5. Diffusion of human resource
6. Poor technological infrastructure
7. Poor economy
8. Cultural barriers

9. Separation of effort.

Challenges of consortia Building:

In a study conducted by Peters[11] (2003) states major discontent issue such as;

1. It holds too many meeting
2. Always' it is time consuming with inefficient and ineffective measures.
3. It lacks sustainability, scalability with too ossified with many competition groups which lends collaboration in confusion.

Again Jeevan[12] (2000) has stated that it lacks the qualities among the libraries to tackle the issues with doubts in costing and fluctuating prices with lack of trust among the libraries also hampers the consortia.

Other challenges of library consortia are as follows:

1. Team work

Recognition of the value of each team member and his specialty, respecting each member's opinion and understanding of each views, which contribute team members feeling being valued and forms part of a team.

2. Trust, openness and honesty

There are attributes that need to be encouraged and worked by the partners; trust will be built over time with idea of the partners delivering their commitments. Trust will drastically cut down the cost of running a consortium where partners constantly cross check information from other partners to avoid being taken advantage of. All the parties are expected to disclose all information that is beneficial to the consortium.

CONCLUSION:

Although a library consortium 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.

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