



LIBRARY CONSORTIA: PROMISES ACCESS TO THE WORLD OF INFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

In ICT intensive environment the societal demands are changing rapidly and government is taking this issue seriously and coming up with certain steps to empower the education system in society. The paper discusses about the consortia and its related aspects and provides a brief account of various consortia initiatives in India and abroad. Further, paper also put the mark towards changes in educational and learning approaches and how these are affecting the libraries and librarianship.

KEYWORDS: Library Consortia; Learning; E-Publishing; Information Explosion; and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

1. LIBRARY CONSORTIA: INTRODUCTION

Due to the multidimensional growth of information in both print and electronic form, no library finds itself sufficient, irrespective of their size and resources. In the developing countries collection development and services provided are affected by several problems like insufficient fund and budgets cuts etc. Shared working practice has therefore emerged in the last few decades and it includes inter library loan arrangements and programmes to lend documents to other institutions for

display/exhibitions and use. Libraries thus have a long tradition of working together. Collaborative arrangements for the acquisition and management of electronic information resources can result in lower prices and saving in terms of actual cost, time and staff. A most important development for libraries thus has been a change from organizational self-sufficiency to a collaborative approach. This trend can clearly be seen from a rapid growth of library consortia. The concept of “consortium” perhaps originated or evolved from the concepts of co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration. One of the purposes of the consortia is to reduce the cost of collection development, particularly the cost of electronic indexes and journals. The other objectives are to:

- Examine and review national and international issues such as pricing policies and copyright law;
- Bring pressure on commercial publishers to reduce the “growth rate” in



the cost of information and to bring down the unit cost of information;

- Encourage access and sharing of unique and special collection which are available in member libraries; and
- Recognize few libraries, so that they can take the responsibility of developing and maintaining collection which are of archival value.

The ability of consortia to achieve these objectives entirely depend upon the co-operation and commitment from member libraries, of course, it also depends upon the co-operation and commitment from publishers, as well as on availability of funds.

2. LIBRARY CONSORTIA: MEANING AND DEFINITION

The term 'consortia' is the plural form of 'consortium', derived from the Latin word 'consors' (con-together and sors fate) for 'fellowship' which means emphasizes coming mutually or forming separate groups for a purpose. Terms such as alliance, coalition, collaboration, cooperation, partnership etc are used as synonyms term for consortium (Ramesh and Mishra 2016). Library consortia are resource sharing organizations formed by libraries, also termed as co-operatives, networks, collectives, alliances or partnerships. Services covered under consortia may vary, but often comprise of cooperative collection development, education and training, preservation, centralized services, and network alliances featuring Library automation services, systems support, inter library lending, union listing, retrospective conversion, consultation and cooperative purchasing. In short, library consortia can be defined as the group of libraries come together to derive the best possible purchase bargain from publishers (Kumar 2010).

3. CONSORTIA: WHY?

There are several reasons that have influenced the libraries and LIS professionals to adopt the concept of consortia, some of them are:

- **Budget Scarcity:** Libraries in developing countries like India are facing the financial scarcity that have led the libraries to face problems in procurement of the relevant information and made it available to its patrons. Here the consortia comes which make it possible for libraries to have maximum number of information resources in limited budget.
- **Rising Cost of E-resources:** In the era of e-publishing where majority of the information is available in electronic form. Libraries spend majority of their budge on the subscription of electronic resources but the cost of the e-resources is increasing day by day. So the library consortium has emerged as the solution to get rid of this gigantic problem.
- **Information Explosion:** Advancement of ICT and its application in education and research has resulted into the exponential growth of information and made it more and more impossible for the individual library to purchase all the relevant information. Library consortia make it possible for libraries to have the relevant information resources.
- **Incapability in Self-Sufficiency:** In today's information society, no library is capable to have sufficient information resources and fulfil all the requirements of its patrons, this force the libraries to be the part of consortia.
- **Willingness of Publishers:** Publishers have also responded for consortia approach and have shown their enthusiasm to give the best possible offers. It saves time and energy of publishers and holds very high future potentials for them.
- **Multidimensional needs of the users:** In ICT intensive environment where the patrons are techno-savvy and avoid the print information resources, the needs of them are changing. Now they expect pinpointed exhaustive information in their desired manner.
- **Speedy access to information:** Consequent upon the ICT, majority of the users expect the information in electronic form for their research work in minimum possible time which is not possible by a library without being the part of consortia.
- **Improving the quality of research:** Each and every institution believes to set high quality standards of the research and development activities, and it is only possible through the best information resources provided to

the researchers. And consortia approach makes it possible by making the library capable to subscribe maximum information resources in limited budget.

- **Professionalism or Changing role of librarian:** Initially, the role of librarian used to be as a conservator of information resources. Now it has completely changed and the librarian is supposed to be an information disseminator, and this has made the library consortia valuable.

- **Future Developments:** with the emergence of ICT and changes taking place in publishing industry, future is going to be dominated by electronic information where the information has to be stored, retrieved and delivered to the users. Keeping view on this, consortia can be helpful for member libraries means libraries will have the options to share their resources with each other.

4. LIBRARY CONSORTIA: PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

Participating in consortia have open up several doors of advantages for libraries and libraries are being benefitted in several ways for instance (i) being the member of consortia, member libraries have started fostering the sharing of their resources with each other; (ii) it enhance the services and its quality to the users; (iii) libraries within limited budget are getting maximum resources for their users; (iv) it encourage discussion, collective thinking and develop the leadership among the member libraries; (v) it gives the chance to member libraries to bargain with publishers and get maximum discount; (vi) it enables the library users to access maximum information resources; (vii) it helps in accelerating sustainable growth of libraries; (viii) it encourages maximum utilization of the information resources; and (ix) it helps in developing a common approach for the development of libraries and librarianship etc.

5. MAJOR LIBRARY CONSORTIA IN INDIA

There are many library consortia functional in India. Some of the popular consortia functional today are briefly discussed below:

a) E-ShodhSindhu

E-ShodhSindhu is an appreciable step of MHRD being executed by INFLIBNET in the field of higher education to ensure quality information to the scholars. On the basis of the recommendation of an Expert Committee, the MHRD has formed e-ShodhSindhu by merging three consortia initiatives, namely UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, NLIST and INDEST-AICTE Consortium. It operates through the headquarter set-up at INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar. The e-ShodhSindhu is going to continue to provide current as well as archival access to more than 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines from a large number of publishers and aggregators to its member institutions including centrally-funded technical institutions, state and central universities and colleges that are covered under 12(B) and 2(f) Sections of the UGC Act (<http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/ess/about.php>).

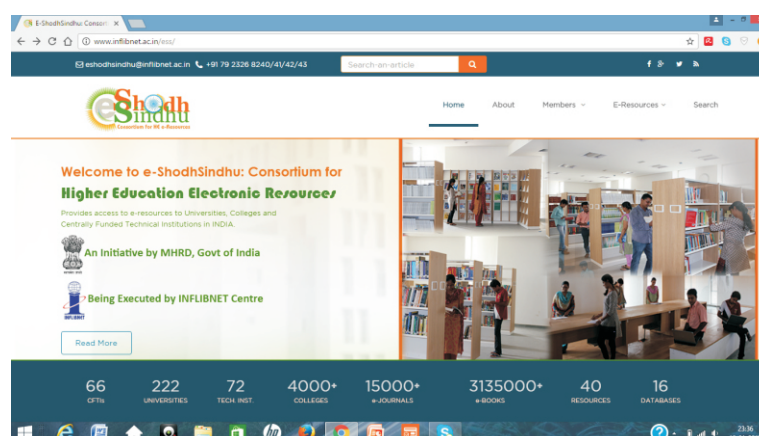


Figure 1: E-ShodhSindhu - Home Page

CeRA (Consortium of E-Resources in Agriculture) was established in November 2007 for facilitating accessibility of scientific journal to the researchers in the National Agricultural Research System by providing access to information specially journals online. The objectives of the CeRA are (i) to upscale the existing R & D information resource base of ICAR institutions and universities comparable to world's leading institutions/organizations; (ii) to subscribe e-journals and create e-access culture among scientists/teachers in ICAR Institutes/ Agricultural Universities; and (iii) to assess the impact of CeRA on the level of research publications (<http://cera.iari.res.in/index.php/en/>).



FORSA came into existence on 29th July, 1981 at Raman Research Institute, Bangalore with a vision and mission to share resources. The prime objectives of the consortia are (i) collection development in IT environment; (ii) Facilitates e-access to journals and books in available in the field; (iii) Document delivery by Fax, email, speed post, courier etc.; (iv) Merging of Database of library holdings and facilitate access to it; (v) Digitization; (vi) facilitate access to website of each member library; (vii) participate actively in consortia plans with publishers and academic societies; (viii) to come forward for Open Access and to develop institutional repositories; and (ix) to encourage the membership to the consortia (<http://www.rri.res.in/htmls/library/forsa.html>).



d) National Knowledge Resource Consortium (NKRC)

The National Knowledge Resource Consortium (NKRC), established in year 2009, is a network of 43 CSIR and 26 DST institutes. Today NKRC facilitates access to more than 5000 e-journals of all major publishers, patents, standards, citation and bibliographic databases and is emerging as a leader to serve R&D sector and system of the country (<http://nkrc.niscair.res.in/>).

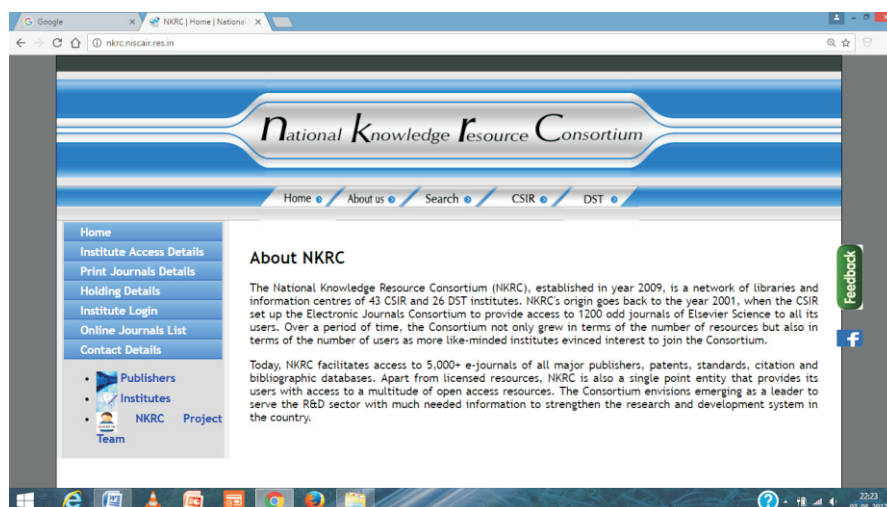


Figure 4: NKRC - Home Page

e) IIM (Indian Institute of Management) Consortium

The idea of IIM Library Consortium was initiated by the IIMs Librarians in 2000 with the objective of resource sharing and the formal approval was made in the IIMs directors meeting in August 2001. IIM consortium has four major resources in its domain i.e. Wiley, Springer, Taylor & Francis and Sage (<http://library.iima.ac.in/iimconsortium/>).

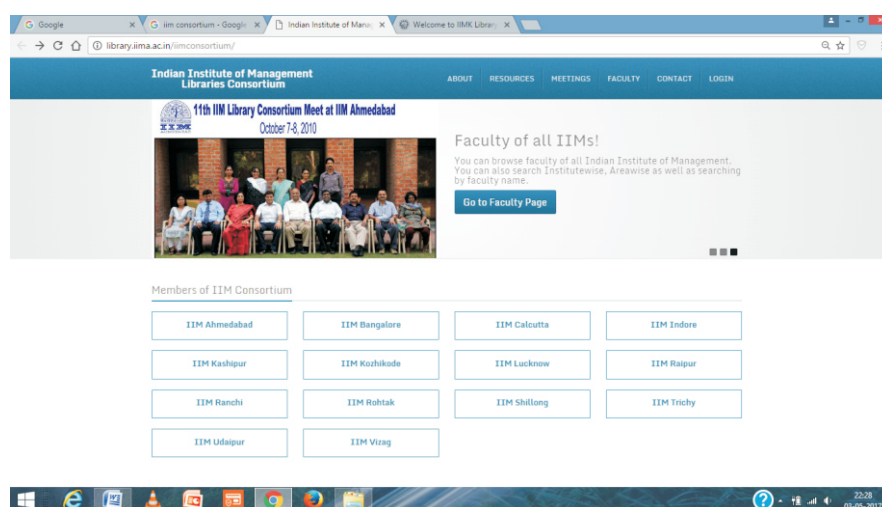


Figure 5: IIM Libraries Consortium - Home Page

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Consequent upon the development of modern technologies, the life of human beings, the way people learn, information is generated, organized and people access the information have transformed rapidly. In this cutting-edge technology, need of the hour is to initiate variety of teaching and learning programme keeping in view the demands of the society so that it can reach to and satisfy the larger population. Further, in today's

information society where information is considered precious and the role of the right information to the right reader at the right time is considered vital, many initiatives have been taken by the professionals involved and the Govt. to make the information resources available for the society. With the rapid changes in publishing, information explosion and followed by the other reasons like budget constraints etc., the concept consortium has emerged as need of the hour. In this regard, many consortia are being developed in respective fields to make it possible to provide maximum information resources to strengthen the research and development in India. Now, it is the responsibility of the LIS professionals to make the patrons, researchers, academicians, scientists and the professionals well aware about library consortia of their respective field, so that the aims and objectives of these initiatives and efforts can be fulfilled up to the optimum level.

At last, it can be concluded that the library consortia are making it possible not only for resourceful libraries but for the small and insufficient libraries also to have the maximum number of information resources for their users and promises the quality and access to the world of information.

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