

Chapter 6

Confronting/Managing the Crisis of Indian Libraries: E-Consortia Initiatives in India – A Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

Consortia-based initiatives have been launched for pooling electronic information resources on cost-beneficial platforms. The ever-increasing diversified needs of the user community in the face of diminishing budget and increasing cost of resources, consortia based subscription is key to survive for the academic libraries. Consortia are need of the hour for the Indian libraries, as the situation in India is compounded by the devaluation of rupee against the major foreign currencies, resulting in steep decline in procurement of international scholarly journals. As a result, a number of cooperative initiatives have surfaced covering different disciplines and institutions. In view of the importance and mushrooming of consortia, the chapter tries to explore the various initiatives in India for providing access to knowledge under the purview of consortia to the end users.

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The word “Consortium” is a good word for libraries.... as it combines the past with the present and the future. – Kopp (1998)

INTRODUCTION

Libraries, an important component and soul of any academic institution face a lot of hardships in meeting the needs of the clientele due to diminishing budget and escalating cost of library resources. Meeting the rising demands of the library clientele, information and communication technology has given rise to a cost beneficial platform in the form of consortia. It is based on age old adage “union is strength”, deeply rooted in the literature of librarianship in various forms due to the fact that no library is big enough or rich enough to stand alone. “Library consortia” refers to the Co-operation, Co-ordination and Collaboration (3C’s) between and among libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources (Moghaddam & Talawar, 2009).

The consortium in singular sense or consortia in plural nature is simply a symbiotic association between libraries, whereby they pool up their resources for the common good. According to the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Sect. 54.500, a library consortium “is any local, regional, or national co-operative association of libraries that provides for the systematic and effective co-ordination of the resources of school, public, academic, and special libraries and information centers, for improving services to the clientele of such libraries” (as cited in Horton, 2015, p.3). “Participation in consortia is valuable and necessary for all libraries and will become more crucial in the future” (Wright, 2005/2006).

Library is a growing organism and consortia allow libraries to spread their wings all over the world with more resources and services (Ram & Karn, 2013). It proves to be a win-win situation for all the stake holders: libraries, users and publishers. With the state-of-the-art technology they are in better position to engage in more meaningful collaboration and sustainability and allow the libraries to purchase the articles at fair price and publishers with wider publicity and sales within a short period of time and an ocean of resources for the users. The letter “e” adds ease, effectiveness, efficiency, economy and extensiveness to the concept, wherein participating libraries share resources electronically. Collaboration through library consortia is essential for continued access to productive libraries and has created an environment where consortia are focusing on experimentation and change and allow creativity to be unleashed and explored (Horton, 2015, p. 10). In India, the concept became operational after 2000 with the use of e-resources (Sahoo & Agarwal, 2012).

In India, Consortium and Library Networking (CLN) is one of the subjects of growing interest in Library and Information Science (LIS) research (Manjunatha, Sheshadri & Shivalingaiah, 2012). Bansode (2007); Singh and Rao (2008) provide an

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