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FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The applications of information and communication technology for accessing bibliographic databases and full text electronic journals have facilitated quick information exchange. The advent of e-publishing has brought a revolution in journal publication, subscription, access and delivery mechanism. On the other hand, the dwindling library budgets and growing number of journals have brought down the buying capability of libraries. The age old concept of ILL and resource sharing have lead for a new development in the form of consortia for accessing e-resources. The basic aim of consortia is to get access to more information with the less cost. This became possible due to the bargaining power of consortia on behalf of all participating members. The study carried out based both on a detailed literature review and the survey of both system and staff and consortia users. It also examined a number of issues and parameters concerned to providers, consortia and the users. The evaluation of the existing consortia was also carried out covering different aspects of consortia including funding, pricing, personnel, licensing, training, services, archiving and technology. The consorted assimilation of results and discussion lead for evolving guidelines for development of consortia in India and resulted in development of proposed consortia models.

6.2 FINDINGS

The main findings of this study as a result of the survey of consortia of system staff (librarians and consortia managers) and the consortia users
and also in depth study by way of literature analysis and personal discussion with Managers of Indian consortia hosts are as follows:

1. Large number of libraries have created database of print holdings and implemented circulation and budget control modules, which is a good development. Access to Web OPAC being base for all activities shows increasing trend and consortia movement is likely to boost this service along with few other services.

2. Training of both system staff and users is essential for boosting the usage of consortia resources. This should be the joint responsibility of consortia host, publishers/ vendors/ aggregators and participating libraries.

3. While e-journals have already emerged as preferred way of access, if one looks at overall picture taking into psycho-infrastructural factors print+online is better for another five years in the Indian context. “E-journals will be totally free” and “print journals will be phased out” are a myth.

4. Pricing based on FTE, although is a well accepted model elsewhere, this model is not even understood by many participating members of the consortia in India due to the confusion of defining FTE clearly.

5. Although in some cases the consortia initiative is by apex bodies, behind the move there is always a librarian of the host organization or a group of librarians of participating organizations.

6. The governance structure of consortia with clearly specified responsibilities for different layer committees, involvement of
representatives from apex bodies, government, consortia, participating centers and few serious users depending upon the job and level is the essence for success of consortia.

7. Most of the users are accustomed to use browsing articles through selection of journals by titles. Consortia has brought a culture of searching database facilitating them to get articles of interest across different journal titles and different publishers.

8. The e-journals archiving policy of the consortia is very tricky issue, which has to be worked out in consultation with both participating members and publishers/providers. Care is to be taken to mention the same in MOU with publishers with necessary and sufficient condition including provision of software for information retrieval.

9. Negotiation with publishers for core and time factor e-journals and with aggregator for journals, where currency is not a serious concern seems to be good for Indian libraries.

10. While e-journals are getting popular day by day, possibility of phasing out of print version completely is still a distant possibility in India. Reading habits and the library concept still rule the minds of users, especially the middle aged. Some users love to access e-journals, but prefer downloading and printing articles of interest rather than reading on the computer screen.

11. PDF is most preferred format for downloading articles for obvious reasons of figures, illustrations, tables, etc and psychology of users for its resemblance to original article in the print version.
12. Bringing an awareness and training users for using desk top tools is essential for exploiting the rich e-resources available through consortia/ individual libraries in India to facilitate them to create local databases in the areas of their research.

13. An interesting observation is that a small percentage of users do not know the consortia name although they have been using concerned consortia resources.

14. Users, especially researchers, may need to access e-journals outside the working place: at home or in the field or while traveling. This necessitates the need for careful drafting of the licensing agreement.

15. For financially fragile institutions in India, consortia are gentler way of achieving some of the benefits of combined purchasing power than being absorbed in to another institution. For financially strong institutions, consortia help in strengthen resources especially in peripheral areas.

16. The preparedness for establishment of consortia both as a main set and the technical facilities in various libraries is a fundamental problem. The consortia lead by apex bodies like CSIR, MHRD and UGC are more or less publisher/ aggregator/ vendors driven ones. There is a general lack of strategic leadership for consortia initiative. Publishers always try for bring up of their business, whereas consortia enhance collection (additional collection at less cost). The consortia lack exclusive/dedicated staff for looking after consortia activities. Consortia lack the standardization, licensing, using interface, authentication and usage statistics.
17. While the consortia users preferred electronic journals, print continues to be the first choice in case of the book. The pricing model chosen in case of some apex bodies lead consortia is by and large print + online. However, UGC-INFONET has adopted online only model due to the volatile funding situation of traditional universities.

18. A majority of the existing consortia initiatives although are apex body driven, few librarians have played a major role in consortia formation. While few consortia have taken up the user literacy program seriously, others still need to do so.

19. The consortia of IIM's and FORSA are good examples for the consortia run by the contribution of the participating libraries.

20. In the private sector the GE's Global Research Consortia at its Knowledge Centre in Bangalore is a thoughtfully conceived and effectively implemented consortia by discontinuing print subscriptions and switching over to entire e-only journals.

21. While some consortia like CSIR consortia is meant for its own member libraries. The INDEST consortia is a hybrid one facilitating the institutions under MHRD at first two levels and open ended for the benefit of engineering colleges, at third level.

22. HELINET consortia, while it supports infrastructure required by the members through external funding, the resource mobilization is through participation fee collected by the members under the affiliation of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences.
6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Considering the shared values, common good and sustainable resource support for academic and research excellence, it is recommended that consorted efforts have to be made based on the experiences of existing consortia in India and ICOLC trend reports, to develop consortia of inter ministerial, inter-autonomous and apex organizations as a national consortia.

2. The consortia should be an evolutionary nature development than immediate shift in the process and function and should not disturb the traditional approach at once.

3. Consortia should integrate the existing collections like general reference material and other existing print collection, existing access methods (for some remote libraries), network infrastructure to access collection on CD-ROM access.

4. Library consortia development needs to be promoted at grass-root level in India to include large number of medium and small educational and research institutions, who have very limited access to information resources they need.

5. Consortia should not restrict themselves as just buying clubs of e-resources, but should create community of minds (sharing expertise), integrate resources and develop single user interface for accessing distributed databases both bibliographic and full text.

6. Adequate funds must be set aside for consortium operations and management, which includes user education and training,
development and deployment of technology and infrastructure for improved access to resources.

7. Sustainability is as much important as that of setting up of a consortium. Every consortium should develop a sustainable funding model with contributions from central agencies, member institutions and direct beneficiaries like the end-users.

8. Consortium licensing activity being a legal transaction, it is highly desirable to begin the consortium with an MOU signed by all members, agreeing to a minimum set of responsibilities, commitments and obligations.

9. Every consortium should evolve its own archiving policy and model for: E-content licensed through consortia model; E-content licensed by individual member library; Legacy print content through co-operative digitization.

10. Apart from information literacy, availability of suitable IT infrastructure plays crucial role for exploiting rich e-resources made available through consortia. There is an urgent need to assess the existing infrastructure at consortia beneficiary institutions and appropriate guidelines be framed, funds made available and develop infrastructure enabling have-nots to be on par with haves.

11. Consortia member institutions should ensure availability of adequate bandwidth for Internet access and campus-wide network infrastructure. Consortia host act as the technical infrastructure backbone, minimizing the infrastructure-investment needs at member libraries. Consortium should be used as a platform for sharing of resources in electronic as well
as print media and to increase co-operation among member libraries for other collaborative activities like training, technology selection, development of local gateways, union catalogs, library automation, etc.

12. E-journals being proprietary products of publishers, purchase negotiations be made directly with the publishers or their authorized representatives. Many consortia and participating libraries face legal tangle with publishers. There is a need to frame legal guidelines for restricting the country/place of jurisdiction in India itself in case of dispute.

6.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Considering the complexities of resource selection and mobilization, expertise development a vigorous research and manpower development program initiative in India is required. Hence it is recommended to develop a “National Institute for Library and Information Professionals” based on serious and detailed brainstorming among LIS professionals, IT experts, domain specific subjects experts, and commercial stake holders.

2. There is no universally accepted pricing model for e-resources, particularly for e-journals. Pricing models are publisher driven and varies for different countries and different institutions. Aggregators and vendors, play their own role in this matter. Hence a serious research is required at policy level to frame consistent guidelines for pricing.

3. The optimization of resources could be achieved based on appropriate and streamlined feedback system. A suitable feedback system should be built into the consortia itself (software level).
6.5 CONCLUSION

It is well established fact at international level that the journals publishing is moving from print to electronic. Many libraries depending upon their nature level subject interest and affiliation to apex bodies in India are slowly moving to consortia formation at least by adding journals of major publishers in the initial stage. In India the consortia success and sustainability depends on the forms of networks, external partners, economic tightening, quality improvement, expanding information universe and growth of information technology. Further the feedback system like usage statistical analysis, need assessments, user surveys, focus groups and observation studies shape the consortia for optimum utilization for the investment. The operation effectiveness can be achieved by operational process, effectiveness of service/operation, cost benefit analysis, comparative institutional data and improving internal processes (outsourcing or project based work).

The procurement of electronic content, in India, by majority of the libraries, aims at bargaining of the cost/deal for return on investment. In fact the consortia is not just a purchase club, it should be viewed as booster for access to resources and facelift for users, feeling expertise and responsibility sharing for library staff. However in India, consortia are suffering due to lack of suitable leadership in library and information science profession or the reorganization of library and information professionals as leaders in development of consortia. Of course majority of the librarians are still to understand the role of consortia, role of publishers/aggregators and merits and demerits of switching over to consortia.

The set back for consortia are due to lack of infrastructure, lack of training, lack of user pressure, scarcity of funds and delayed leadership development. There are number of practical problem in India including lack
of IT infrastructure even at traditional universities level, non-availability of electricity 24 hours at village level and IT literacy level both at users level and the library staff level.

It is recommended that further research has to be conducted to derive the priority to establish guidelines for selecting appropriate resources and the participating members and for that effect to devise a suitable a questionnaire (the questionnaire devised in the study itself is exhaustive) for assessing and preparing the guidelines. The responses collected are collated to determine existing patterns of infrastructure (for access to the resources) and the results of this survey helped to draw the recommendations listed above.

The followings measures will be helpful for setting up of a consortium, its smooth functioning and sustainability: Start the cultural change from computer-based networks for library cooperation and formal resource-sharing networks; Establish the emergence of online resources in relation to consortia; Establish the common protocols integrating to the existing services; Ensure safety in numbers (members) as a part of a consortium (larger and more diverse the consortium, the harder it is to find common ground) changed dynamics between the libraries and their vendors impact on the scope, functionality, and effectiveness of a library consortium; and Publishers, vendors, and librarians need to forge innovative partnerships.