Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Academic libraries are centres of knowledge resources that support the teaching and learning process. A well equipped library system is fundamental to an efficient academic environment. Advances in computers and communication technologies made a remarkable impact on the information generation and dissemination process. Knowledge acquisition and management particularly in academic libraries have largely been revolutionised by these advancements. But present day academic libraries especially those attached to science and technology institutions face a lot of problems towards effective collection building to satisfy their user needs. The escalating costs of publications, exponential growth of information, varieties of forms and formats of publications and diverse user needs are the main reasons behind this. Libraries all over the time have faced this challenge and cooperation proved to be the most effective solution to this problem.

Library Cooperation/Resource sharing (RS) among libraries can be traced back to 200 B.C., when materials from the great Alexandria library were borrowed by the library of Pergamum. Libraries over the centuries practiced RS in the form of inter library loan either formally or informally. Planned library cooperation started in Germany around the year 1770 when G.H.Lessing, librarian in Wolfenbuttel formulated a plan for the exchange of duplicate materials between libraries (Dhiman and Rani, 2007). Technological advancements made a considerable impact on the concept and practice of RS.
The system of library cooperation as we see today began in the second half of the twentieth century with the establishment of Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), USA in 1967. The interest in RS rose among the libraries around the world in the next decades. Library cooperation in the 20th century was mainly concentrated on the compilation of union catalogs of holdings of participating libraries. With the infusion of information technology into libraries, the mode of cooperation took a new pace. In the 21st century, library cooperation took a diversified impetus in the form of cooperative content acquisition, catalog sharing, continuing education, cooperative digitization and storage, etc. The advances in internet technologies, the new forms and formats of digital documents and new modes of scholarly communication make a great impact on the RS activities of libraries round the globe. Resource sharing, which used to be a side business in the librarianship trade, is now becoming the flagship operation in the library projects (Jaswal, 2005).

1.1 Resource Sharing

Resource sharing is concerned with the sharing of library resources by certain participating libraries among themselves on the basis of the principle of cooperation. The term ‘resource’ represents three entities in a library viz; ‘man, material and money’. By means of RS the library resources and functions are shared in common by a group of libraries. RS facilitates the provision of access to more resources and services and the optimum utilization of budgets. Library resource sharing, library cooperation, library network and library consortium are the various terms used interchangeably to represent the same activity.
1.1.1 **Forms of RS**

The different conventional forms of RS being practiced worldwide are:

- Inter-Library Loan
- Cooperative Acquisition
- Cooperative Processing
- Cooperative Storage
- Union Catalogs
- Union Lists
- Document Delivery Service
- Exchange of Personnel and Training

The advent of electronic resources radically changed the modes of RS. Shared acquisition of electronic content and electronic document delivery have now become the most common form of RS in the world.

1.1.2 **Library Consortium**

The term consortium refers to a group of organizations which come together to fulfill a common objective. This requires cooperation and sharing of resources. Library consortium is an association of a group of libraries for delivering better facilities and services by means of cooperation. Library consortia are usually constituted by a group of libraries, preferably with some homogeneous characteristics like same subject field, institutional affiliation, affiliation to funding authorities, etc. The primary objective of such an effort is providing expanded access to information resources and services to their user communities with due adherence to copyright compliances. Other major objectives of library consortium are as follows:

- To support RS by means of cooperative acquisition of print and electronic resources
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- Enhance Inter Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery Service (DDS).
- Rational utilization of funds
- Reduce the subscription costs and maximize the utilization of resources
- Enhance the technical skills of library professionals

1.1.2a Consortia Models

Various models of consortia are being adopted by libraries as discussed below.

- Open Consortia
- Closed Group Consortia
- Centrally Funded Consortia
- Shared Budget Consortia
- National Consortia
- Regional Consortia

The successful operation of any RS activity or consortia largely depends upon the policies, plan of action and willingness to share the resources.

1.2 Engineering Colleges in Kerala

The first Engineering College (EC) in Kerala, College of Engineering Trivandrum (CET) was established in 1936 by Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, the then Maharaj of Travancore (College of Engineering Trivandrum, 2013). Until 2000, the engineering education in the state was mainly public funded. The increased demand for technically qualified professionals by the industrial sectors along with the introduction of economic liberalization and privatization policies by the governments, resulted in the establishment of self financing ECs in Kerala. This in turn changed the technical education
scenario of the state. At present there are 150 ECs in the state. Out of these 150 colleges, one is the NIT, Calicut and all the other 149 colleges are run by different groups as mentioned below:

- Colleges run directly by the government of Kerala
- Colleges run by different managements and aided by the state government
- Colleges run by Kerala Agricultural University
- Self Financing colleges run by state-owned autonomous bodies such as Institute of Human Resources Development (IHRD), Co-operative Academy of Professional Education (CAPE), and Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Science & Technology (LBS)
- Self Financing colleges run by different universities in Kerala such as University of Kerala, Mahatma Gandhi University, Cochin University of Science and Technology and University of Calicut
- Self Financing college run by the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), Kerala
- Self Financing colleges run by different private managements.

All these colleges are affiliated to the six different universities in Kerala. The Mahatma Gandhi (M.G.) University gives affiliation to 41 ECs (until 2012) under the government, aided and self financing sectors that are located at Kottayam, Ernakulam, Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts. The university offers BTech degree in 8 branches of engineering and MTech degree in 6 branches (M.G.University, 2013).
1.2.1 Engineering College Libraries in Kerala

A well equipped library is mandatory for the establishment of a college in India. The EC libraries in Kerala are established and maintained according to the norms put forth by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). All the libraries are supposed to have adequate collection, facilities and qualified manpower for handling the information needs of the academics. These libraries are having a great responsibility of collecting, organizing and disseminating the information related to engineering, produced in various forms and formats for the academic needs of its clientele. The advent of electronic resources made the scenario more complex. It has become necessary for the libraries to properly collect and manage the electronic resources produced both within and outside the institutions. A huge investment in terms of money, technically capable human resource and infrastructure facilities are required for this. In such a situation it has become difficult for most of the EC libraries in Kerala for being self sufficient.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Resource sharing is a much talked about and less acted upon area (Sridhar, 2002). The last decade witnessed the rise and success of several academic library consortia in India mainly at national level. The INDEST-AICTE and the UGC-INFONET consortia drastically changed the availability and accessibility of electronic resources in the higher education institutions in the country. But the benefits of these consortia could be reaped only by centrally funded institutions and selected universities. On the other end, the colleges under all sectors, especially the engineering and technology institutions are denied of the benefits of such efforts. The need of the hour is to form effective regional consortia
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...to ensure feasible RS activities. Along with this the possibilities and benefits of electronic resources and their sharing are also to be explored. Studying the status quo of the resources of all the colleges under a particular university helps to formulate policies to build up a regional consortium at university level.

1.4 Problem Statement and Title of the Study

Around 90 percent (%) of the ECs in Kerala are under the self financing (S.F.) sector and a previous study (Azeez, 2007) conducted in this area revealed that the library facilities of self financing ECs are not satisfactory. While the college libraries in the government and aided sectors receive several grants, the libraries of S.F. colleges are solely run by their own funds. The escalating costs of scholarly publications and strict AICTE stipulations regarding libraries and their collection, pose greater difficulties to the libraries in all sectors in finding budgets to provide quality services.

In this juncture the present study aims to identify whether the libraries of S.F. colleges actually lag behind the other two types of libraries, whether the resources in the libraries are adequate to satisfy their users, and to ascertain whether there is a need for proper resource sharing among the colleges. To make a clear examination of the aforesaid issues, the title of the study is stated as:

“Resource Sharing Among Engineering College Libraries Affiliated To Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala: A Proposed Model”
1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Resource Sharing

According to Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, the term “resource” applies to any thing, person, or action to which one turns for aid in time of need. The word “sharing” connotes apportioning, allotting, or contributing something that is owned, to benefit others. “Resource Sharing” in its most positive aspects entails reciprocity, implying a partnership in which each member has something useful to contribute to others and which each is willing and able to make available when needed (Kent, Lancour and Daily, 1978).

Ali (2006) defines Resource Sharing as “the activities that result from an agreement, formal or informal, among a group of libraries (usually a consortium or network) to share collections, data, facilities, personnel, etc., for the benefit of their users and to reduce the expense of collection development”.

Engineering College

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010) defines College as “an institution that offers post-secondary education.”

Engineering College in this study refers to “an institution that offers teaching and professional practice for becoming an engineer and that offers advanced education in engineering.”

Library

The New Standard Encyclopedia (1987) defines library as an “organized collection of books and other materials used for study, research and recreation; also, the room or building that houses such a collection. The word is from the Latin liber (book)”.
According to The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010), “library is a collection of books used for reading or study, or the building or room in which such a collection is kept.”

**Affiliated College**

According to Wikipedia (2014), “an affiliated school or affiliated college is an educational institution that operates independently, but also has a formal collaborative agreement with another, usually larger institution that may have some level of control or influence over its academic policies, standards or programs.”

**Mahatma Gandhi University**

“Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam is one of the affiliating universities in Kerala state established on 2nd October 1983 and has a jurisdiction over the revenue districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki and parts of Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha.” (Government of Kerala, 1985)

**Kerala**

“Constituent state of India, located on the Malabar Coast on the southwestern side of the Indian peninsula. It is bounded by the Indian state of Karnataka to the north, the state of Tamil Nadu to the east, and the Arabian sea to the west.” (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010)

**Propose**

“Put forward (a plan or suggestion) for consideration by others.” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014)

**Model**

Model in this study refers to “a schematic description of a system that can be used for implementation or for further study”.
1.6 Research Questions

The present study addresses the following research questions:

- What is the current status of the resources and services offered by the libraries of ECs affiliated to M.G.University?
- Whether these libraries are involved in any cooperative activity?
- Whether the user communities are satisfied with their library resources and services?
- Is there a need for proper resource sharing among these libraries?

1.7 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions enumerated under section 1.6, the objectives of the study are formulated as:

1) To analyse the status of the print resources, services and Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure of the libraries of ECs affiliated to M.G.University.
2) To identify the extent of availability of e-resources in these libraries.
3) To identify digital library initiatives and study the functions, services and problems of established digital libraries.
4) To ascertain the staff strength in the libraries and their ICT skills.
5) To identify and study the existing system of cooperation among these libraries.
6) To examine the problems felt by the librarians towards effective cooperation.
7) To propose a model for resource sharing - the virtual resource sharing centre (VRSC).
8) To analyse the awareness and use of e-resources by the students and faculty members.
9) To ascertain the level of satisfaction of the users with their current library facilities and services.
10) To analyse user's attitude towards the VRSC.

1.8 Hypotheses

H1 There is a significant gap between the colleges with respect to their library facilities.
H2 There is no uniform pattern for staff strength and salary among these libraries.
H3 There is no effective means of co-operation among these libraries.
H4 Usage and user satisfaction regarding e-resources are dependent on their category and status of institution.
H5 Majority of the users are dissatisfied with their library resources.
H6 Satisfaction of users with their library resources is dependent on category and status of institution.
H7 Users have a positive attitude towards the VRSC.

1.9 Nature and Scope of the Study

The study is of an exploratory nature making an exhaustive coverage of the library facilities and services of all the ECs (established before 2009) affiliated to M.G. University. The findings of this study have a wider scope and larger implications on the ECs affiliated to the different universities in Kerala. The findings will also be useful for the
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librarians and authorities of the ECs for identifying their strengths and weaknesses and improve their activities.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the 22 ECs affiliated to M.G. University which are established before the year 2009. The colleges established on or after 2009 under the university were exempted from the study since these colleges are at the initial stage of their development and at the time of conducting this study (ie; in 2012), the first batch of students reached only their third year. The study is also limited to the final year B.Tech students, M.Tech students and faculty members of the colleges.

1.11 Organization of the thesis

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. A brief account of each chapter is given below:

Chapter 1- Introduction

The chapter introduces the research problem, defines the key terms, states the significance, objectives and hypotheses of the study. It also includes the scope and limitations of the study and chapterization of the thesis.

Chapter 2- Review of Literature

The chapter provides the review of literature related to the topic of investigation. More than sixty national and international studies were reviewed and are presented under three categories- use of electronic resources and services, resource sharing and consortia, & virtual libraries/digital libraries.
Chapter 3- Engineering Education in Kerala
The chapter gives an overview of the technical education scenario in India, the growth of ECs in Kerala, engineering education under Mahatma Gandhi University Kerala, and a brief outline of the colleges under study. The chapter also discusses the different types of online resources available for engineering academics in India and consortial efforts undertaken by the EC libraries in the country.

Chapter 4- The Methodology
The chapter briefly describes the methodology employed in the study. It includes the population covered, the samples taken, instruments used for data collection, tools and techniques used for data analysis, etc.

Chapter 5- Analysis and Interpretation
The chapter deals with the detailed statistical analysis of the data collected by the investigator. Descriptive and inferential statistics are used to reach conclusions.

Chapter 6- Virtual Resource Sharing Centre: a Model
The chapter presents the potential model of resource sharing proposed by the study. The system and network architectures, technical infrastructure, organizational set up, etc are discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 7- Findings and Conclusion
The chapter reports the major findings of the study, presents the testing of hypotheses, conclusion drawn and the recommendations.

1.12 Citation Style
The citation and bibliographic references presented in the thesis follows American Psychological Association (APA) Style (6th edition) with slight variations.
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References


