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Challenges Faced By Academic Libraries Due To Resource Sharing And Networking Models

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Abstract

Each day millions of books, journals and ephemera are being published and to keep track of these books and literature and to provide them to the information seeking community is a herculean task for Academic Libraries. The difference between good or bad data can be explained as to how accurately the information is dispersed to the academic community. In these circumstances, it becomes significant for libraries to collectively come together and help each other by forming a resource sharing model. Across the globe numerous such models have been formed but most of them struggled to thrive on a long run. The present paper discusses the challenges faced by the resource sharing models and the possible solutions to overcome these problems for the smooth functioning of the consortia.

Key words: Resource sharing, consortia, networking, resource sharing model, inter library loan.

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Introduction

Resource sharing and networking is not a newborn concept for libraries. It was in existence way back from the Cretan war in the 17th century. According to Nagy (2020) the primitive form of resource sharing involved inter library loan which can be traced back to Alexandria and Pergamum library. This concept has seen a radical change over the period, especially after the technological revolution. The advents of ICT (information and communication technologies) in Libraries have transformed the meaning of resource sharing that was once limited only to Inter Library Loan.

The new forms and formats of digital documents and the new methodology of scholarly communication have brought a vast change on the library resource sharing and undoubtedly on the activities of libraries around the globe. ICT's have helped libraries in eliminating geographical barriers thereby saving time. Web 2.0 has brought a revolutionary change in how we access information. It has brought the whole new world to life with its tools such as wikis, blogs and cloud computing. They have massively contributed to the collection of information over internet. As the availability of information increased, it possessed a challenge to the resource centers in providing the right information to its users.

The Resource sharing model works on the theme, the right information to the right reader at the right time. The central idea is to provide the necessary information to the users without any delay. The growth of faculty and students in their field is dependent on how abreast they are with the latest developments and how fast and accurately they get the required information. No library can be self-sufficient in holding all the knowledge of the universe,

hence, the need of resource sharing arises. There are many library networks in existence today which are serving the needs of their patrons like OCLC (Online Computer Library Center), JANET (Joint Academic Network), ERNET (Education and Research Network), DELNET (Developing Library Network) and INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network). Though, some Library networks are doing a great job by cooperating with each other successfully, others fail to keep up on the long run.

Literature Review

Anasi et al., (2012) in a study says that there is a great potential in sharing library resources in the developing countries. However, inadequate funding, power outages, lack of skilled librarians, unavailability of web accessible OPACs, and the slow pace of library automation deter efficient library resource sharing.

Bouazza (1986) have classified the barriers to library co-operation in developing countries into four categories as economic factors, political factors, human and professional factors, and cultural and social factors. To overcome these barriers he has developed models or guidelines for library co-operation in the developing countries.

Bramkin (2020) in a quantitative study analyzes the concept of interlibrary lending and the perception of the librarians about the concept. Librarians' moral duty is to maintain the access of information. They must share the resources for the benefit of the society.

Cox (2020) observed that COVID-19 has forced libraries to cut down costs by resorting to digitization, virtual labs and signing resource sharing agreements.

Hogan et al., (2021) observed that the popular method of library resource sharing among the professionals in USA during the COVID-19 pandemic was interlibrary loan and electronic document delivery.

Kalbande et al., (2019) in a study identifies problems that hamper resource sharing among libraries in India. They observed that the procedural, technical, legal, and psychological factors deter resource sharing among libraries in the country. However, these problems could be overcome through networking of libraries which will provide an excellent opportunity to the users, researchers and students.

Pradhan et al., (2016) observed that schools and public libraries in developing countries do not have enough financial resources. Therefore, there is a need to share the library resources among them benefiting the users.

Sheshadri et al., (2011) mention that resource sharing among libraries depends on the cooperation of the institutions. The introduction of digital technology gave rise to shared subscription around the world bringing down the subscription rates for journals and databases. It also helps in developing institutional repositories and common library software.

The above literature review confirms the importance of resource sharing among libraries. It is observed that most of the libraries do not have a good networking model for the purpose. Also, there are many constraints that hinder the success of resource sharing among the libraries across the world. The present paper identifies the problems faced by resource sharing model and suggest suitable solutions to overcome these problems.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives and focus area of the study is:

a. To identify the problems faced by resource sharing model.

b. To suggest possible solutions to overcome these problems.

Methodology:

In the present study, researchers have adopted the document analysis method. Various documents relating to the area of study were analysed and studied for the research and the bibliographies of the same are listed below.

Why resource sharing?

Resource sharing is built on the notion that every library cannot be self-sufficient in holding all the knowledge of the universe, however rich it may be. Through resource sharing, the library books and other materials are shared among the libraries through some written legislations or guidelines. Resource sharing among libraries enables the users to access books, journals, periodicals, and other library collections from more than one single library. It helps in the accumulation of all the required materials.

Benefits of Resource Sharing

  a. It makes the libraries rich in knowledge.

  b. It is a cost-effective means of business.

  c. It satisfies the information hunger of the patrons.

  d. It is very convenient for the research scholars in the institution.

  e. Helps the users in being abreast with the latest development in their field of study.

  f. The union catalogue permits users of any library in a model to search and demand the necessary material.

  g. Saves library space.

  h. Provide users with supplementary resources.

  i. Makes staff specialized in new technologies.

Challenges to Resource sharing and networking

1. Availability of adequate financial resources

The library resource sharing model has a fixed budget for all the participating libraries to incur the operational cost of the model. Hence a library aspiring to participate in a resource sharing model has to evaluate first whether the said amount can be paid through its own budget. Many college libraries face this difficulty because they are bound by some terms and conditions set up by the management and it becomes difficult to convince them to opt for the resource sharing model. Furthermore, when the question comes of cooperative acquisition of materials, libraries need to shell out their money to jointly acquire the materials which sometimes can be a complicated process to show on where the amount is getting spent.

2. Availability of ICT and other technological facilities

ICT refers to the advancement in the technology that can store, create, share, exchange and transmit the material and information through electronic means. Information and communication technologies have played a major role in improving the exchange and communication of information among the libraries. With the help of ICTs libraries today can share their e- databases, online reference tools, e- books, scanned copies of different library materials and other web resources. The question arises here is whether all the libraries willing to join the consortia are equipped with the necessary ICT devices.

The basic ICT tools needed for an uninterrupted resource sharing model are the following:

- Computers
- Scanners
- Printers
- Fax Machine

- Uninterrupted 24/7 internet connectivity.

Libraries which cannot provide any one of the above ICT tools will be unable to deliver their full participation in the model.

3. Proper standardization of library practices

Just as every state has its uniform law which applies to all its citizens, similarly standards in libraries carry a sense of homogeneity in libraries. Homogeneity in libraries involved in resource sharing is required for the smooth functioning of its operations without which there can be maladministration and confusion among the participating libraries. Libraries make use of various standards for seamless operability of the resources. By using these standards libraries share, acquire, preserve, exchange and communicate the resources among other member libraries.

Some of the important standards which libraries make use of are:

- Metadata standards: MARC21, UNIMARC and MODS

- Cataloguing standards: AACR2, RDA and ISBD

- Markup language standards: HTML and XML

- Information retrieval standards: Z39.50, SRW and SRU

In resource sharing model interoperability plays an important role. When different standards are in use, there is a high risk of data loss. Thus, it is necessary to adopt similar standards for use in the network.

4. Absence of formal agreement and written rules and legislations

The formal written rules and regulations act as the foundation of the model. It keeps the network in proper direction towards its goal. It is important to have a formal agreement as a

set of guidelines to be followed by all the participating member libraries. The agreement will resolve various issues pertaining to:

- **Budget allocation:** How much will be the budget for the academic year of the model and where it will be getting spent.

- **Acquisition process of materials:** What are the materials that the model will be subscribing to and procuring.

- **Manpower requirement:** The type of skills people should have or acquire to handle the delivery of materials to the client libraries.

- **Officials to be designated:** Officials to be elected as head and to take up other positions of the model.

- **Term of members elected:** What will be the term of the members elected.

- **Upper time limit on the delivery of materials:** Within how much time the material should reach the other end.

- **Rules on security of materials shared:** Who is responsible for the materials lost or damaged in the process of distribution.

5. Proper training to the staff

Libraries that are opting for resource sharing, it is a new set of concept and terminology. Its staff is not adapted with its functioning and hence proper training to its staff is necessary to work out the model well. Staff training and developmental programs if held properly, its benefits can be huge, not only to the library but the organization as a whole. Training is required in handing the e- journals and e- databases which can be a demanding job for the staff that used to deal in printed resources earlier and now have to shift to electronic resources. Moreover, staff should be able to cope up with the diverse

user needs arising from all the participating libraries which was earlier limited to only the parent institution.

There are many services which needs proper training for effective resource sharing, they are:

- Inter library loan and document delivery services
- Cooperative cataloguing
- Centralized acquisition
- Reprographic services

6. Copyright issues

In today's world it is very easy to generate digital duplicates of e-materials like PDF texts, images, videos and sharing it over the Medias such as email and other social networks. Resource sharing models act as a source of copyright infringement knowingly or unknowingly. During the process of sharing resources within the model we need to take into consideration the copyright laws which are getting despoiled with the creation of online databases where one entity subscribes to the resources and others in the network are using it for free which can lead to copyright infringement. Subscribing to E-databases do not make the subscriber to own those resources, and thus one cannot share the subscribed resources without the knowledge of a copyright holder. For e.g. if a network wishes to subscribe to ProQuest database, it needs to take prior permission from ProQuest to share their resources with other members in the network. Moreover, in India many resource sharing networks get away with these issues due to section 52 of the copyright law 1957 which is "FAIR USE".

Suggestions to overcome the problems in resource sharing

As discussed above on the challenges and problems involved in library resource sharing model, the following points should be taken care of before entering in the model.

a. The library must have all the needed technical specifications to receive and dispatch materials.

b. The library must have proper manpower to assign the job of operating the model.

c. The library should be willing to spend a part of their budget on the model.

d. The libraries terms and conditions should not be a hurdle to the model's operations.

e. There should be firm rules and regulations and written agreements to participate in the model.

f. Inadequate manpower in libraries makes it difficult for libraries to opt for the model.

g. Regular training of the staff involved in resource sharing work should take place to ensure smooth and effective working of the network.

h. Appropriate channel of receiving and dispatching the materials should be finalized in advance such as dispatching materials by email, courier, or direct delivery.

i. Regular review meetings should be held to evaluate the model's operability and for future planning.

Conclusion

Library resource sharing is a necessity for the libraries. It is a step towards making a knowledge rich society. Resource sharing has numerous benefits if worked out properly. In the past, many resource sharing attempts have been made but in the long run they did not sustain. Just like any business needs time to grow, resource sharing model also require time and dedicated efforts of the member libraries to take the model forward. Today's fast-moving society requires quick, accurate and efficient information to satisfy their hunger for

information. The difference between good and bad can only be the amount of information that one retrieves fast and without delay. Academicians today depend on the libraries for information of their scholarly work. Libraries need to fulfill the expectations of their clients. The stand-alone library cannot satisfy every need of the clients. Hence, library resource sharing plays an important role. It provides a broader scope to its information reservoir.

Library resource sharing faces many difficulties to sustain for long. The main area to focus on is proper planning and implementation. Secondly, all the members should willingly accept all the terms and conditions put forward and try to follow the rules and guidelines. Financial resources act as a hurdle for some in the model because it is something which is decided by the institutions parent body but the librarian needs to put in full efforts to convince the management to opt for the model and share a part of their library budget to the model. Furthermore, proper training of staff is must in any field, it is needed to keep the staff motivated, focused, informed and acquaint them with the new technologies that they are going to make use of. Standardization is next important thing that needs to be done by all member libraries. Effective and fast sharing of resources can only be possible if all libraries opt for similar standards. The members should collectively decide which hardware and software to opt for their in-house operations and networking. The information produced today worldwide is amplified because of easy availability of primary and secondary information on the internet. Looking at the situation resource sharing is the need of an hour.

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