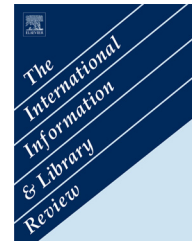




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# Library consortia in India with special reference to UGC-Infonet digital library consortium

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**Abstract** Including scholarly contents has given right to the publishers of peer-reviewed journals to keep higher subscription rates. It always affects library budget to a great extent. Since long libraries have been experimenting different ways of library cooperation so that maximum benefit, especially economic benefit, could be extracted from their joint cooperation ventures. The term 'consortia' has been considered an advanced stage of library cooperation. Advent of electronic journals has given rise to homogenous libraries and national governments to cope with scarcity of funds and unavailability of internationally produced scholarly literature by means of establishing library consortia. Various library consortia have been mushroomed all across the world and India has also not been spared from it. University Grants Commission (UGC) observed the dire state of Indian university libraries and found that only few were subscribing to some International peer-reviewed journals and many were not even subscribing to any international journal. The UGC opted electronic journals as medium and initiated a national consortium for strengthening library collection by providing thousands of international peer-reviewed journals over Internet free of cost. The consortium is known as UGC-Infonet Digital Library consortium. In this paper an effort is being made to discuss the various concepts of library consortia in India briefly and UGC-Infonet Digital Library consortium in detail.

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## Introduction

The ever increasing and complex needs of information users on one hand and accelerated rate of information explosion, dwindling of library budget, escalation of prices of information sources, etc. have given rise to a set of pressing problems in providing adequate and relevant services by the libraries and information centres all across the globe. As a solution of this problem, taking advantages of information technologies especially the Information and

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Communication Technologies, libraries have started sharing their resources and services to facilitate the end users. [Barbara and Arnold \(1998\)](#) indicated that “the most important development for libraries during the current decade has been the move from organizational self sufficiency to a collaborative survival mode as personified by the growth of the library consortia”.

The concept of library consortium is not new. Traditionally, hundreds of years back, the concept has been used by many of the libraries as ‘cooperation’, ‘coordination’, ‘partnership’, ‘association’, and ‘resource sharing’. As new technology embarked upon activities and services of the library, it was christened the popular name- resource sharing. [Kopp \(1998\)](#) defines library consortium as co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between and amongst libraries for the purpose of resource sharing. The consortia have also been defined as a series of resource sharing activities ([Asare-Kyire & Asamoah-Hassan, 2011](#)). It has also been defined as “an association of financiers, companies, etc, especially one formed for a particular purpose” ([Dictionary.com \(2012\)](#)). Merriam Webster Dictionary defined consortium is ‘an agreement, combination, or group (as of companies) formed to undertake an enterprise beyond the resources of any one member’. According to [Jalloh \(2000\)](#), “a library consortium is formal association of libraries, not under the same institutional control, but usually restricted to a geographical area, number of libraries and types of material or subject interest”.

The world of library consortia is expanding rapidly, and with it the range of services and activities undertaken. However, the underlying motivation remains the same; the sharing of increasingly expensive library resources in the most effective manner for mutual benefit and general cost savings. “There are hundreds and possibly thousands of library consortia around the world which are organized along many different lines” ([Pandian and Karisiddappa, 2003](#)).

## Library consortia

Historically dwelt, library consortium is based upon the concept of library cooperation which had been experienced by the libraries even hundreds of years ago. [Kraus \(1975\)](#) found that catalogues of manuscripts in a monastery library existed in beginning of the thirteenth century. Sharing of these catalogues was used to provide referral service to friends during the sixteenth century. In 1740, there was an agreement for sharing of catalogues between Universities of Lund, Abo and Greifswald. [Kopp \(1998\)](#) revealed that library consortium was earlier known as a library cooperation which had always been a solution to various library collection related problems. [Kraus \(1975\)](#) and [Potter \(1997\)](#) noted that sharing of resources by lending books from one library to another is probably the oldest and easiest way of library cooperation. The first interlibrary lending code was drawn up in 1917 by the ALA Committee on Coordination of College Libraries, the code was revised and updated before publishing as interlibrary loan procedure manual in 1970. The photocopying of original publication was suggested in 1917 code but photocopying process was very expensive at that point of time. The cooperative acquisitions project was established in

1945 by American Research Library and the Library of Congress.

[McColvin \(1936\)](#) studied the state of libraries in Great Britain. He revealed that many libraries of Great Britain had developed interlibrary cooperation to help each other. He further highlighted that interlibrary cooperation gives a variety of benefits such as good number of users for a book, library cooperation, users associated with any library of Great Britain can access any book from any of the library located in the Great Britain. [O’Neill and Gammon \(2009\)](#) dwelt on the history of consortia and revealed that collaborative and cooperative efforts in collection development among libraries started hundreds of years ago. Later in 20th Century, economic, social and technological changes instigated growth of consortia and enabled libraries to work efficiently in collaborative manner for collection building. [Leavitt \(1941\)](#) presented a very systematic process of library cooperation between Duke University, the Tulane University and the University of North Carolina. [Stanford \(1958\)](#) also advocated importance of resource sharing through library cooperation. He stated that since no single library can acquire and maintain all of the material needed by its user, it can only be achieved with sharing resources. [Asare-Kyire and Asamoah-Hassan \(2011\)](#) stated that the need of resource sharing and technological innovation in information transferring, without obstacles and with minimum costs, perhaps stirred up the need for consortium formation. [Shachaf \(2003\)](#) studied that electronic publishing and telecommunication had given ingredients for library consortium to expand in numbers and functions.

[Potter \(1997\)](#) stated that library consortium gets established because members benefited with combined set of resources that is greater than the resource of any single member. [Bostick \(2001\)](#) opined that “basic advantage of consortia is sharing resources but it also includes sharing of services, or process such as joint cataloguing of materials or staff and user training, etc”. [Bostick \(2001\)](#) reported that sharing with others, who in turn, shared back, meant certain items need not be purchased by every library, collective buying power yields good discount, sharing of services, sharing of staff and training, etc. as few more advantages of library consortium. Other scholars such as [Okeagu and Okeagu \(2008\)](#); [Moghaddam and Talawar \(2009\)](#) and [Burley, Gnam, Newman, Straker, and Babies \(2012\)](#) highlighted that the advantages of a library consortium includes a comprehensive collection, avoidance of duplication of non-core collection development among the participating libraries, reduction in the cost of information services, enhanced quality of services, facilitating the use of common library system, promotion of best practices, implementation of skill development programs of staff, information and resource sharing, expanding student and faculty opportunities, responding to environmental demands, promoting entrepreneurship for innovation and self sufficiency, increasing course and/or program accessibility, highlighting opportunities for external effectiveness, improving program quality and facilitating problem solving.

Some of the researchers have also pointed out the disadvantages of the library consortium. According to [Helmer \(2004\)](#), consortia may also lead to duplication of efforts,

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