

Consortia, Features, Major Objectives, Models and their Benefits for Libraries in Digital Era

*YIDAVALAPATI JAHNAVI,
GRADUATE TRAINEE,
CENTRAL LIBRARY,
IIT MADRAS, CHENNAI-36
E-Mail : jahnavi.sneha@gmail.com
Mobile No : +918143047333*

&

*Dr.M.MUTHU,
LIBRARY SUPERINTENDENT,
CENTRAL LIBRARY,
IIT MADRAS, CHENNAI-36,
E-Mail: mmuthu78@gmail.com
Mobile Number: 9442666016*

Abstracts:

A Library Consortium is a group of Libraries who partner to coordinate activities, share resources, and combine expertise. The International Coalition of Library Consortia is an informal discussion group of such consortia. Library consortia offer significant advantages to increasingly strapped libraries. This paper is mainly highlights for Consortia definition, features, Major Objectives, Needs, functions, models, funding, Licensing, Advances, factors, goals in detailed about consortia etc.,

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1. Introduction:

A Library Consortium is a group of two or more libraries that have agreed together to cooperate with each other in order to fulfill certain similar needs usually resource sharing. It is not about sharing the resources but also improving access of information. Library Consortium is a community which has formally agreed to coordinate cooperates or consolidate certain function to achieve mutual objectives. The concept of library consortia is not new and it refers to cooperation, coordination and collaboration between and amongst libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. Major advantages of library consortia include enhanced cooperation, i.e., alliance with institutions that have common interest, augmentation of resource base with less money, adoption of new technology for providing better services and rational use of library budget. Today, many journals and publications have started getting published only in the electronic form, especially in the field of science and technology. It is therefore becoming necessary that the libraries get automated and networked, for it is the networking alone which makes resource sharing and dissemination of information possible at all levels, irrespective of the form and format of information.

1.1. Definition of Consortia:

- A consortia is an association of two or more individuals, companies, organizations or governments (or any combination of these entities) with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal.
- A Consortium could be described as a group of organizations who come together to fulfill a combined objective that usefully requires co-operation and the sharing of resources. And need to have a clear mutual goal in order to ensure their success.
- A library consortium is a group of two or more libraries that have agreed to cooperate with each other in order to fulfill certain similar needs, usually resource sharing.

- **Aldrich, Bolton & Sasaki (1998)** assessed the meaning that “Consortia usually involve horizontal collaboration among direct competitors”.
- **American Heritage Dictionary**, “A Consortium is said to be a cooperative arrangement among group of institution or an association or society”.
- Cambridge online dictionary, defined “Consortium is an organization of several business or banks, joining as a group for a shared purpose”.
- **Hirshon (1999)** explained that “Library Consortia is a generic term to indicate any group of libraries that are working together towards a common goal whether to expand cooperation on traditional library services such as collection development or electronic information services”.
- **Merriam Webster Dictionary**, “Consortium is an agreement, combination or group as of companies, formed to undertake an enterprise beyond the resources of any one member”.
- **Oxford English Dictionary** “Consortium as an association typically of several companies for a common purpose, it is an association of similar type of organization who are engaged for producing and servicing the common things for providing services for a specific purpose of its users”.
- The aim should be to deliver “more than the sum of the individual parts”. A library Consortium formation can be local, regional, state, national and inter institutional level.

2. Major Objectives of Library Consortia – (Cholin & Karisiddappa):

- To develop technical capabilities of the staff in using electronic databases.
- To enhance the resource base of the individual library.
- To ensure continuous subscription to the journals subscribed.
- To guarantee local storage of the information acquired for continuous use.
- To have greater buying power.
- To have strategic alliance among institutions with common interest
- To increase the cost benefit per subscription.
- To keep up-to-date with new technology.
- To promote the rational use of funds.
- To reduce the strength of staff and storage space.
- To share technical expertise of library professionals.

2.1 Features of Library Consortia:

- **Avoids space problem:** It avoids space problem as using Library Consortia one don't need to purchase or acquire every resource in the library.
- **Back volume of information:** Library Consortia proves very helpful and supporting in providing back volume of information.
- **Collection development policy:** Library Consortia assists in building collection of document at national and international level and in planning of a policy for development of collection for a library/institution/organization etc.
- **Development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) environment:** It helps in development of ICT environment which make possibility of obtaining best reading for the largest number per institution.
- **Different subscription level:** It provides different subscription level of different publishers and reciprocal borrowing.
- **Direct purchase from publisher:** Library Consortia assists in direct purchasing from publisher. It is the cooperative task to reduce the cost of purchase. As a result end users can take benefits of more resources than would be available through one library.
- **Easy interaction:** Library Consortia provides easy interaction with quality of service.

- **Economy in financial resources:** It makes more effective use of central financial sources economy in maintaining and access to unsubscribed materials.
- **Effective and cheaper operation:** Library Consortia creates more effective and cheaper operation in the library.
- **E-Publishing:** Library Consortia promotes e-Publishing of information variously.
- **Joint licensing:** It results in better term of license and provides joint licensing of resources in all formats.
- **Language barrier:** Information is publishing in various formats and languages regardless of place, race, nation etc. Library Consortia make it possible, sharing of information and resource in different formats or languages etc. In this way, it avoids barrier of language.
- **Problem solving:** Library Consortia proves problem solving as it is difficult to be influenced by the individual institutions.
- **Research and development activities:** Library Consortia supports research and development activities and proves very helpful in growth of research related activities.
- **Round the clock availability:** Library Consortia provides round the clock availability of information and resources to the users.
- **Sharing of resources:** Sharing is an important task for using resources at different formats for different purposes. Library Consortia promotes sharing of resources which make it easy to handle information in different platform.
- **Staff development:** It is helpful in developing efficiency of staff and results in staff development.

2.2. Need for Library Consortium:

- Diversity of user needs
- Financial crunch
- Impossibility of self-sufficiency
- Information explosion
- Professionalization of library services
- Shrinking budget
- Technological advancements

2.3. Functions of Library Consortia:

- **Access to electronic resources:** To provide access to electronic resources and integrating them into library programs.
- **Agreement:** To make a concrete agreement needed to be established for the participating libraries in consortia to achieve a common target.
- **Annual meetings:** To organize annual meetings of consortium members.
- **Bridging the gap:** To bridging the gap between resource rich and information resources deficient libraries.
- **Coordination:** To coordinate all activities concerned with subscription of e-resources on behalf of consortium and to stimulate for further co-operation between libraries and information centers.
- **Joint venture:** To look after that all the participating libraries under Library Consortia must work jointly just like a joint venture in business sector to make it a total success.
- **Maintenance:** To maintain a web site for the consortium for the benefit of its members and to encourage sharing of resources in an online mode.
- **Nodal Agency:** To act as a nodal agency for increasing the cooperation amongst the participating institutions.
- **Propagation:** To propagate the Consortium with other institutions and enroll new members into the consortium.
- **Review the progress:** To review the progress of consortium at various stages and also review progress on other related issues like discontinuation of print or e-journals etc.

- **Set up work groups:** To set up work groups on different subjects and organize their meetings with an aim to improve the functioning of consortium as well as identify new resources and evaluate the existing resources.
- **Smooth administration:** To establish a rational fort and to run for the smooth administration of Library Consortium.

3. Governance, Funding, Operations and Management:

- The structure, membership, and funding of consortia vary largely from funding agency, participating members and subject disciplines.
 - ❖ National Steering Committee, Negotiation Committee, Review Committee and Working Groups are responsible for Licensing, purchasing, managing electronic resources and training.
 - ❖ Various Committee monitor, evaluate and review the consortium.
 - ❖ Negotiation committee members are from various other bigger consortium besides members from funding agency
- Consortium negotiates and sign agreements on behalf of member libraries
- One of the Institute is designated as a nodal centre for operation and implementation of consortium.
- In India most of the consortium are funded and supported by Government agencies.
- In open ended consortia, participating libraries contribute for subscription of resources.

4. Consortia Models:

4.1. Open Consortia: This type of consortia is open ended and member libraries have the freedom to join or leave from consortium at any time. In this case publishers define a minimum number of libraries for the consortium to take off, at a specific rate per product. INDEST consortium, run by ministry of human resources department government, of India is an example of this type of consortia.

4.2. Closed Group Consortia: This type of consortia formed by the same type of member and has a common need to cross the resources in specific area. Here the formation and operation of the consortia guidelines and its administration are fairly easy and simple. CSIR, DAE, IIM are examples of this type of consortia.

4.3. Centrally Funded Model: This type of Consortium depends on the central funding agency and parent body shoulders the financial responsibility of running the consortia. INDEST, UGC INFONET, CSIR, ICMR, MCIT are examples of this model.

4.4. Share Budget Model: This type of consortia comes out with the appropriate sharing of funds with of participation member. The management of fund is individually handled. IIM and FORSA are examples of this model.

4.5. Publishers Initiatives: Publisher offered a deep discount consortium price to participating libraries on national level. SCIENCE DIRECT, EMERALD are examples of this type of model.

4.6. Specific Group Consortia: These types of consortia deal with specific group. LISA plus consortia of university library is example of this type of model.

4.7. Subject based Consortia: These types of Consortia deal with specific subject. FORSA, UGC, DAE are examples of this type of model.

4.8. Regional Consortia: These types of Consortia covers specific region. Chandigarh Library Consortia is example of such type of Consortium.

4.9. E-Journal Consortia: INDEST, JIM Consortia, ICAR Consortia are examples of E-JOURNAL Consortia.

4.10. National Consortia: This model of consortia covers national level licensing of product like INDEST, UGC INFONET and is called national level consortium.

4.11. International Consortia: In this consortium libraries belonging to different countries participate. This may be formed either by the individual libraries such as OCLC or by bringing different national consortia under one umbrella.

5. Table.1. List of Consortium with Funding Agency:

Sl.No.	Name of Consortium	Funding Agency
1	UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium	INFLIBNET Centre
2	INDEST-AICTE Consortium	MHRD/IIT, Delhi/
3	NKRC E-journal Consortium. (CSIR/ DST)	NISCAIR
4	DAE Consortium	Department of Atomic Energy
5	MCIT Library Consortium	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
6	IIM Consortium	IIMs
7	DRDO Consortium	DESIDOC
8	FORSA Consortium	Indian Institute of Astrophysics
9	RGUHS-HELINET Consortium	Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Science
10	DeLCON Consortium	Department of Biotechnology (DBT),
11	ERMED Consortium	National Medical Library
12	Consortium for E-resources in Agriculture (CeRA)	Indian Council of Agriculture (ICAR)
13	N-LIST Consortium	INFLIBNET Centre

5.1. Funding:

- It is desirable that the consortia device innovative ways of generating and managing funding to sustain its activities.
- Adequate funds must be set aside for consortium operations and management, which includes user education and training, development and deployment of technology and infrastructure to improve access to resources, etc.
- Substantial funding is also imperative to subscribe to more e-resources, support uninterrupted subscription, and operational cost

5.2. Licensing:

Consortia licensing is a legal process of acquiring usage rights of the intellectual property governed by the copyright laws for a community of members. License should address following;

- Publishers and consortium sign license agreement which is binding for both. The standard license agreement addresses following clauses:

- ❖ Authorized users
- ❖ Restriction of commercial use
- ❖ Course packs
- ❖ Electronic reserves
- ❖ Fees, Members, secure network, subscription period, usage rights, ILL and other terms and conditions etc.
- **Simultaneous Users:**
 - ❖ There should be no limit on number of simultaneous user on any of the resources subscribed by the Consortium. Any number of users can access e-resources including e-journals and bibliographic databases at any given time.
- **Walk-in Users:**
 - ❖ Walk-in users, physically present at the subscribing institute should also be allowed to use the resources
- **Inclusion of additional Titles**
 - ❖ The Licensor should provide access to new journal titles that are added during the contract period at no additional cost.
- **Electronic Link:**
 - ❖ Licensor should use suitable technology to establish electronic links to all the articles of licensed materials.
- **Print Copy of Journal:**
 - ❖ A print copy of the digital content should be kept as a backup of journals subscribed under the consortium
- **Perpetual Access and Archival Rights:**
 - ❖ In case of termination of the agreement or on the expiry of the agreement, licensor should extend perpetual access to e-resources for the paid period of subscription along with their back files offered during the subscription period
- **Print-independent Subscription:**
 - Subscription to e-resources should be print-independent. Discontinuation of print subscription which is available through consortium should not be binding to member Institutes.
- **Protection on Increase of Price:**
 - ❖ There should be no annual increase of the price. Annual increment of the price should be below 5%.
- **Inter Library Loan:**
 - ❖ Licensee should be allowed to fulfil ILL requests from non-authorized users using (Arial software) electronic copy of article downloaded from the licensor's Web site

6. Advantages and Disadvantages:

6.1. Main Advantages of Consortia:

- **Access to wider number of e-resources :** It come up with the newly generated knowledge published in different forms, such as printed and non-printed documents, electronic media on various disciplines, multi-disciplinary and new generated subject area.
- Adoption of new technology for providing better services.
- As resource base increases user satisfaction becomes much more.
- Augmentation of resource base with less money.
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- **Available comprehensive collection:** Consortia are very helpful in developing suitable collection and acquisition policy.
- Consortia-based subscription to electronic resources provides access to wider number of electronic resources at substantially lower cost;
- **Cost sharing for technical and training support:** Use of Library Consortia proves cost sharing for providing training and technical support.

- **Electronic document delivery to user via the libraries:** It provides electronic document delivery to the end user which promotes easy access to electronic resources.
- Electronic Journals demand neither library space nor shelving costs nor can they be stolen from the library
- **Eliminate the need for different passwords for each titles:** Use of Library Consortia reduces the need for passwords for every title accessibility.
- Enhanced cooperation, i.e., alliance with institutions that have common interest.
- **Enhancing the visibility image of the library:** It publicizes and disseminate information about libraries and its activities as widely as possible in appropriate context.
- **Ensure continues subscription:** Consortia based subscription to electronic resources provides access to wider number of electronic resources continues and at substantially lower cost.
- Facilities to build up digital libraries and better Services
- **Gateway of information:** Library Consortium functions as a central gateway for users, to access locate transform and utilize information resources in a variety of printed and electronic formats via applications, databases etc.
- **Harness developments:** A consortium proves to be very effective in harness development in IT, facilitating building digital libraries.
- **Helpful in proving better library services :** Library Consortia are considered now a medium of proving better libraries services as enhanced library services are provided with an emphasis on access to new electronic resources including online databases and services offered through the internet and World Wide Web.
- **Improve better resource sharing:** It provides each institution with the ability to share resources without sacrificing the individuality.
- **Improve existing library services:** Consortia promotes improvement in existing library services which helps in boosting professional image
- **Increase the access base:** Library Consortia with the dawn of internet era are compelled to provide relevant information essential to its end user within a short span of time either from its in house holdings or from resources available in other libraries.
- **License for use, archival access and preservation of subscribed electronic resources:** The consortium facilitates the library to get benefit for wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost and at the best terms of licenses. The consortium have been offered better terms of licenses for use and archival access.
- **No fear of wear, tear and thefts:** Library Consortia promotes use and sharing of electronic resources which demand neither library space nor shelving cost nor can they by ear or tear and nor they can be stolen from the library.
- Optimum utilization of funds.
- **Optimum utilization of funds:** Through Library Consortia, member intuitions can subscribe electronic resources at highly discounted rates of subscription.
- Provides a platform for discussing and sharing professional issues.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative resources:** It provides the community with physical and virtual access to the shared resources having qualitative and quantitative value of all libraries.
- Rational use of library budget.
- **Rational utilization of funds:** Consortia identify priority for funding within libraries and to be proactive in influencing national agendas/priority for funding for research support.
- **Seamless access easy and round the clock access:** A consortium provides seamless and east access and resource sharing on internet by creating databases among the libraries.
- Sharing of professional expertise among the member libraries.
- Small libraries can derive more benefits out of their small budgets.
- The newly generated information appeared in different forms such as printed and non-printed documents, digital media on various disciplines etc. can be procured.
- The thirst for information by the vast community of users can be met.
- Unit cost of information can be reduced drastically.
- Various problems faced by the libraries in providing different services to the users can be eliminated.

- **Virtual reference services:** It provides a platform for online and virtual reference service to researchers.

6.2. Benefits of E-Journals Consortia:

- A single interface and access point
- Also allow the inclusion of audio-visual material as well as the other formats and technological innovations that are available on the Internet, such as keyword searching
- Articles include links to other cited journals, e-books, and other supporting material making research more convenient
- Availability and monitoring of usage statistics
- Better scope for developing a union catalogue among participating libraries
- Can be read anywhere in the world, at any time, by any number of people as long as the readers have an internet connection
- Developing common resources databases
- Effective document delivery systems
- Enhanced search facilities
- Getting deep discounts through joint pricing negotiations –hence lower unit cost of information
- Reduced storage costs
- Scope for electronic archives

6.3. Disadvantages of Consortia:

- Absence of a printed copy of Journals
- **Back Up of databases:** The problem of back up of databases after discontinuation from the Library Consortium.
- **Bureaucracy:** Since there is no completion, so bureaucracy may arise in a Library Consortium.
- Consortia require high initial investments in licenses and information and communication technology.
- Copyright issues
- Copyright problems
- **Excessive contribution fee:** Library Consortia suffers from it as sometimes organizing body may charge excessive contribution fee which is quite high and dependent on their will.
- Fear of loss
- **High initial investment:** It required high initial investment in licenses and Information Communication Technologies.
- **Information technology:** It suffers from limitation of information technology.
- **Insufficient bandwidths:** Sometimes Library Consortia consists of insufficient bandwidths which require necessity of Internet access ID.
- Insufficient knowledge
- **Insufficient service:** A Library Consortium deals with shortcomings in respect of insufficient mutual information service provided to user.
- Lack of archiving and back files availability
- **Lack of coordination:** Library Consortia are lacking for co-ordination of present activities and preparation of new ones. Integration already acquired information sources and their interconnection with book catalogues, collective catalogue etc.
- Lack of standards
- **Long term perspective:** Library Consortium require long term perspective from state assistance in concerned field.
- Negative attitudes Lack of archiving and back files availability
- No tradition of cooperation or Reluctance to participate
- Outdated technology
- **Problems of e-journals:** The users are not accepting E-Journals as with print journals .They even now feel difficult to download, acquire and access it.
- Require training of staffs in handling electronic documents etc.

- **Rights direct access:** The problem of access rights, direct access from publishers and through nodal agency by mounting the database on them.
- **Special skills in handling e-resources:** Library Consortia required special skills in handling E-Resources.
- **Subscription Cost:** The source of funding to meet subscription cost is another problem because it requires a major investment at the initial stage to develop necessary infrastructure and purchasing of computers and other equipment. There is aggregate chance of manipulation of funds.
- **Unreliable telecommunication link:** Library Consortia consists of unreliable telecommunication link which creates hurdles in communication among member institutions.

6.4. Factors affecting Consortia:

There are a number of factors, which prevent the successful operations of library consortia in the country. The following are important among them;

- Absence of strong professional associations to motivate to participate in consortium.
- Copyright issues and Pricing strategy.
- Difficulties in arriving at mutually agreeable collection responsibilities.
- Ever changing user expectations.
- Insufficient and improper trained manpower.
- Insufficient funds.
- Issues relating to archival of digital resources.
- Lack of a national body to build up and coordinate library consortia.
- Lack of awareness about consortia and its benefits.
- Lack of awareness among library professionals.
- Lack of bibliographical tools.
- Lack of coordination among library professionals.
- Lack of fair use of information available through consortia.
- Lack of indigenous databases.
- Lack of interest on the part of users in using digital resources.
- Lack of sufficient IT infrastructure in libraries.
- Lack of support from higher authorities.
- Lack of technological compatibility.
- Legal, political, organizational and administrative barriers.
- Licensing issues-access for a defined period.
- Multiple consortia membership.
- Negative attitude to resource sharing.
- Problem in budget allocation and funding.
- Problem in transfer of funds
- Unreliable telecommunication services.

6.5. Most Important Issues Licenses- (Maskell, 2009):

- The provision of access to the electronic information by non-registered users on site.
- The use of the electronic files to generate electronic copies for electronic document delivery to other university libraries.
- Guarantees on the permanent storage, archiving of the information and the conditions for access in perpetuity.
- The separation of electronic data and the applications. Several publishers desperately want to provide only access to their material in their preferred manner of form.
- Seamless linking between bibliographic data acquired from intermediaries and the full text from different publishers in order to provide an integrated access to heterogeneous information.

6.6. Library Consortia Challenges- (Arora & Agarwal, 2003):

- **Achieve stronger influence over the quality of the product:** It required qualitative resources sharing to result in effective document delivery service and to increase the research productivity of the institutions in both terms qualitative and quantitative.
- **Address an ever-changing array of needs and services:** Consortium should be focuses changing needs and services of the present scenario.
- **Combine their buying power for better prices:** It brings pressure on commercial publisher to reduce the growth rate in the cost of information and to bring down the unit cost of information.
- **Determine publisher and vendor policies:** The subscriptions have steadily eroded since funds available to universities have not been able to cover the rising cost of the literature. Policies should be determined for publisher and vendors.
- **Developing ICT:** Information and Communication Technology has touched every aspect of life due to its tremendous capacity to provide exceptional power. Consortia can play an important tool in providing resources with ICT application.
- **Disaster preparedness:** It lacks readiness to put into quick use by scholars.
- **Hosting distance education classes and programs:** It requires more attention.
- **Marketing Libraries:** Consortia can be a great benefit to member libraries in publicizing their collections and services, as well as the Consortiums work.
- **Political Action:** Consortia are increasingly involved in political action. For example, in the United States a major concern is the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act, known as UCITA, which will have a profound effect on software licensing. Many American library groups oppose UCITA, and Consortia are working together to both understand its implications and provide a united response to it.
- **Virtual Catalogs:** Virtual catalog is both within a consortium and among consortia are another popular activity, particularly in those consortia where the members do not use the same integrated library system. Virtual catalogs of this sort, and the delivery options that go along with them, are emerging technologies and will soon become more commonplace. Olen and Smed (2011) stated, delivery of materials, with or without a virtual catalog, is an important problem that does not have one specific solution. Web portals are becoming an increasingly important component of a consortium work.

7. Consortia Goals:

The consortia being an association of like-minded libraries and in the present context to provide access to e-Journals and databases. It can have its own structure of governance and can act as a corporate body on behalf all members with set goals and benefits mentioned below;

- Avoid price plus models - Pay for up-front products not for R&D
- Cost sharing for technical and training support
- Enhanced image of the library - Visibility for smaller libraries
- Ensure the continuous subscription
- Harness developments in IT - Facilitate building digital libraries
- Improve existing library services - Boosting professional image
- Increase the access base – More e-Journals
- Increase user base – Access from desktops of users
- Qualitative resource sharing - Effective document delivery service
- Rational utilization of funds - A little more pays a lot

7.1. Means and Ways to make a Consortium Successful:

- Archival issue
- Authority to Take Action
- Centralized Funding
- Centralized Staffing
- Constant Support & Commitment

- Copyright, Healthy Licensing & Technology Infrastructure
- Culture of Shared Vision & Mission
- Deep Interest to Obtain Real Benefit
- Last but not the least, designing and launching a library consortium should be long term sustenance and robust models towards achieving the goals.
- Linkage
- Long run planning of the technology infrastructure in future
- Price issue should be economically favorable
- Resources identification on the basis of usage and usability

8. Conclusion:

- At present scenario academic society is information hunger society, and he wants information on any form, cost, and place so library consortia are best solution for everyone. Library consortia helps to library to achieve library objective, every library have common objective “right information to right user, at right time” for satisfy our users.
- In the present age, access to information resources is more important than the collection building. Libraries in India are facing a lot of problems due to static budget and growing prices of library collection. A lot of efforts have been taken in past few years to overcome the problem of finance by resource sharing thorough consortia. It is impossible for a single library to monitor all the explosion of knowledge filed and accumulate for the users.
- In the light of above discussion establishment of better Consortium integrating intellectual access are all the distinct steps moving towards the 21st century libraries. There must be accessibility to the variety of information reserves particularly in an environment of proliferating electronic information resources in order to education, research and lifelong learning. It would therefore be best to consult with the established consortia to achieve this goal.

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