

## E-RESOURCES CONSORTIA IN MEDICAL AND AGRICULTURE SCIENCES: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Research and development organizations spend a huge amount towards library acquisition annually. In spite of this, they are not in a position to maintain the subscription of their core journals. The accessibility to international journals in Indian universities and technical institutions has improved many folds with setting-up of Government-funded library consortia. In this article an attempt is made to describe the Consortium in the field of Medical Science and Agriculture.

**Keywords:** Library consortium, E-Journal consortium, Medical Science, Agriculture

### INTRODUCTION

The word consortium is derived from Latin, meaning association or partnership. It means the collaborative acquisition of rights of access to electronic databases and journals. Journals play a major role in research and development, but unfortunately the cost of journals is increasing enormously<sup>8</sup>. Due to the financial crunch and rising costs of journals, many research or scientific libraries cannot subscribe to all the required journals and databases<sup>7</sup>. The crisis arises not only because of rise in cost of journals but also the rate of inflation, increase in number of journals and the paucity of funds available to the library.

Major research and development organizations spend a huge amount towards library acquisition annually. In spite of this, they are not in a position to maintain the subscription of core

journals. The accessibility to international journals in Indian universities and technical institutions has improved many folds with setting-up of Government-funded library consortia. These development naturally force Indian universities and R&D organizations to form the consortia for accessing more and more e-journals<sup>2</sup>. Prior to setting up of these consortia, the access to e-journals was restricted to a premier institutions like IISc, IITs, IIMs and a few Central Universities who were subscribing to few e-resources including bibliographic databases on CD ROM, few e-journals accessible free against the subscription to their print versions<sup>1</sup>.

### LIBRARY CONSORTIA

In present scenario the library is facing some major problems such as rapid expansion of knowledge, proliferation of literature, shrinking budget, escalation of price, growing demand of users and

variant user requirements etc., to overcome all these problems, libraries come forward and sharing the resources among themselves. With the advent and application of ICT in libraries, the concept of Resource Sharing has gained popularity and eased the sharing of resources from one library to another library. This concept is also known as library cooperation which is a very old concept.

At present the more accepted system of resource sharing is library consortia. Consortia approach is one of the many ways of maintain cooperation and coordination among the libraries and in fact it has emerged as the 'state of the art' in library cooperation in recent years<sup>5</sup>.

## DEFINITION OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA

According to Webster's 3rd New International Dictionary Library consortia is an agreement, combination, or group formed to undertake and enterprise beyond the resources of anyone member<sup>11</sup>.

Online Dictionary Library and Information science (ODLIS) defines library consortia as "association of independent libraries and/or library stems established by formal agreement, usually for the purpose of sharing, membership may be restricted to a specific geographical region, type of library (public, academic, special) or subject specialization"<sup>6</sup>.

According to *Oxford English Dictionary* Consortium means "Temporary cooperation of a number of powers, companies, etc. a for a common purpose, It is an association of similar type of organization/institute who are engaged for providing and servicing the common things for providing services for a specific purpose of its users"<sup>10</sup>.

## CONSORTIUM IN MEDICAL AND AGRICULTURE SCIENCE

There have been few attempts over the years facilitating resource sharing among Indian libraries. Due to some important and outstanding

developments in library and information networking, some formal library networks came into existence in country such as ADINET, BONET, CALIBNET, DELNET, MYLIBNET, PUNENET etc. The establishment of INFLIBNET by the UGC in 1998 gave a real boost to automation and networking of University libraries in the country. Now days library consortia in India are growing fast<sup>3</sup>. After launch of the "Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Sciences and Technology (INDEST) Consortium" in 2003 and "UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium" in 2004, availability and accessibility of e-resources increased phenomenally in centrally-funded technical institutions (IITs, IISc, IIMs, IIITs, etc.) and universities, setting in a new culture of electronic access and browsing in educational institutions. A number of library consortia have emerged in India in past few years. In India, major initiatives regarding consortia in Medical Science and Agriculture and their activities are described below:

## CONSORTIUM IN MEDICAL SCIENCE

### ERMED (Electronic Resources in Medicine) consortium

National Medical Library's Electronic Resources in Medicine (ERMED) Consortium is an initiative taken by Director General of Health Services (DGHS) & Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW) to develop nationwide electronic information resources in the field of medicine for delivering effective health care. 70 state and centrally funded Government Institutions including all AIIMS are selected as its members. The members are divided into Level-I and Level-II on the basis of number of end-users in different institutes. There is no membership fee charged from members and the MOHFW has provided funds required for the purchase of electronic journals under the NML-ERMED consortium project. The consortium is coordinated through its headquarter set up at the NML. The consortium is working under the guidance of Director, National Medical Library. 242 high quality online e-journals are presently purchased from 5 leading publishers:

- British Medical Journal Publishing
- Cambridge University Press
- Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
- Oxford University Press
- John Wiley

NML started ERMED consortium in 2008 with 40 members including 28 ICMR, 10 DGHS, AIIMS and NTR Health University, Andhra Pradesh. It provided electronic journals from 5 publishers. The ERMED invested Rs. 2.6 Crore for electronic journals in 2008. In 2009 the ERMED members increased from 40 to 72 Government Medical Colleges/Institutes across the country. Even though ERMED gives more focus on medical journals there are some journals from other subject also such as: Engineering, Arts and humanities, Agriculture, Business, Economy & Management, Chemistry, Engineering etc. but naturally Health Science and Life Science journals are the majority.

#### **NTRMEDNET CONSORTIUM:**

This consortium was started in July, 2008 with a group of teaching institutions affiliated to Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences. It was started with a vision to improve the quality of education and research in all the affiliated medical colleges through enhanced access to the high quality medical literature. Its main goal is to provide greater access to information at a minimum cost, which is cost-effective. The Consortium has successfully accomplished the task of developing an E-journal consortium and a resource-sharing model that network the health science colleges in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India.

The consortium started with 43 members in 2008 and reached to 401 colleges in 2015. There is remarkable increase in the E-resources subscribed by the consortium in number as well as quality of the journals. The consortium subscribes to all specialties in Modern Medicine, Dental, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Medical Lab Technology and Indian Systems of Medicine with peer reviewed journals like The New

England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet, Nursing journal etc<sup>12</sup>.

#### **IndMED:**

IndMED was developed by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) & National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1986. It contains the biomedical journals along with back volume archives. IndMED indexes Indian Biomedical journals. It is accessible from (<http://medind.nic.in/medind-project.html>) to the medical professionals, free of cost. The database aims at covering peer-reviewed journals from 1985 onwards. To supplement IndMED with full text of articles, a resource was developed to host full-text of indexed Indian biomedical journals. This IndMED portal is accessible free of cost to medical community in India as well those outside the country. The journals includes from NML, Science, NEJM, Lancet, Nature etc<sup>9</sup>.

#### **MUHS Digital Library Consortia:**

MUHS digital library consortium was launched on 14th Nov. 2005 to provide full text e-resources to all institutions affiliated to the university. All colleges related to health sciences including medical, dental, ayurvedic, homeopathic, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, unani etc (except pharmacy) are under the umbrella of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences The consortium enables medical and allied health sciences libraries to access large number of scholarly journals from reputed publishers, aggregators and societies with very less amount of subscription. This consortium consists of over 1600 medical journals, magazines, newsletters, bulletins etc. The university intends to run this project on "No profit- no loss" basis<sup>9</sup>.

#### **ICMR e-Consortia**

This consortium has been subscribing the E-journals like Science, NEJM, Lancet, Nature and BMJ to the all ICMR institutions. It has also subscribing to JCC@ICMR and full text databases i.e. ProQuest.

#### **Health Science Library and Information Network (HELINET) Consortium**

Health Science Library & Information Network conceived by the RGUHS since 2002. The HELINET Consortium was started with a vision to improve the quality of education and research in the colleges affiliated to RGUHS in the state of Karnataka through enhanced access to high quality medical literature. HELINET's goal is to deliver information to user's desk-top, with round-the-clock-access. The Consortium has successfully accomplished the task of developing an e-journal and e-book consortium and a resource sharing model that networks 660+ health sciences colleges in the state of Karnataka.

HELINET Consortium is first of its kind in the country when it was started in the field of health sciences information network in the year 2002. About 600+ core international e-journals, 2000+ e-books, 1500+ videos and databases was being subscribed/ procured and provided to students and faculties and research scholars pursuing their studies in various faculties of health sciences of all the respective affiliated colleges under RGUHS<sup>13</sup>.

Now, HELINET has expanded its access to 709 journals from 200+ publishers. The main publishers are AMA (American Medical Association), BMJ (British Medical Journal), Annual Reviews, Blackwell, Elsevier, Lippincott, Ovid, Springer-Verlag, Taylor & Francis, WB Saunders etc<sup>14</sup>.

## Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA)

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is a major agricultural scientific autonomous organization in the country. The (NAIP) National Agricultural Innovation Project had funded for establishing the Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Delhi in November 2007. Duration of the project was five years, from 2007-08 to 2011-12. Total cost of the project was Rs. 938.542 lakhs, to facilitate accessibility of scientific journals to all researchers/teachers in the National

Agricultural research system by providing access to information specially through online journals which is crucial for having excellence in research

The CeRA Consortium of IARI (Indian Agricultural Research Institute) facilitates institutions under ICAR and it was launched on April 2008 at its headquarters at New Delhi. CeRA acts like a catalyst to enhance agricultural research, education and extension activities of NARS institution in achieving excellence and setting high standards in output and service to the society. Researchers can search and browse more than 2000 CeRA Collection, as well as the full text or abstract or pdf or html format, through on-line 24X 7 availability. It enhances increased level of scientific activity/output<sup>4</sup>.

The major objectives of CeRA are:

- To develop the existing R & D information resource base of ICAR institutes/ agricultural universities, etc. comparable to those existing in world leading institutions.
- To create an e-access culture among scientists/teachers in ICAR institutes.
- To develop a Science Citation Index (SCI) facility at IARI for evaluation of scientific publications.
- To assess the impact of CeRA on the level of research publications measured through SCI. CeRA has helped in developing the world class R&D information base of ICAR institutes/ agricultural university, and an e-access culture among scientists/ teachers<sup>4</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

A single library cannot success to provide the all kind of library resources, and for that, resource sharing among the libraries is essential. The consortium has been providing a fruitful service to the users by disseminating their required information with the help of various scientific E-journals. The consortia should provide a safety umbrella for all the online journals and databases which they subscribe to its

participating libraries. Resource sharing through consortia has been fulfilling the gaps of required information to those libraries which are not able to procure their resources due to insufficient budget. The concept of consortia has carried the challenges by sharing the resources among the user community like the utilization of better and maximum resources among the libraries, use of new e-resources and technologies and minimizes the financial crisis. The greatest advantages of CeRA consortia are online accessibility of all important journals related to agriculture and allied sciences to researchers and students of the Consortium members. Quick access to R & D information as available worldwide along with permanent archive of the subscribed e-databases, improvement in the quality of scientific publications, teaching and research guidance, Avoiding duplication in research work, ensuring quick retrieval of information, promoting resource sharing, and providing a permanent solution to the problem of space are some of other advantages of CeRA. CeRA consortium is no doubt helping quality research and improving crop yields, and thereby indirectly helping grass root level workers i.e. farmers. As far as medical libraries are concerned, Medical libraries need a drastic change and with the advancement of new technology of the present century. All in all it can be said that the consortium has promoted the unity, harmony and collaboration among the libraries and it has become the necessity of the libraries of modern world.

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