

Concept, issues and importance of library consortium: *Problems and prospects of university library consortium in Bangladesh.*

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Abstract

This is an age of information explosion. No library, however big it may be, is able to satisfy all the needs of its user due to various constraints. It is because of this phenomenon that the concept of library consortium has developed. Consortium of libraries is well known for sharing of resources all over the world. Information explosion, emergence of internet and particularly World Wide Web as a new medium of information storage make the concept more come into sight than earlier. This study aims to explore the concept, issues and facilities offered by the library consortium and shows how the library consortium is making resources available among the member libraries. Bangladesh has plenty of libraries but the concept is still at a nascent stage in library arena. It is essential to have some ideal consortia models for university libraries to adhere for optimum utilization of their resources and services. This study also aims to identify the possibilities, problems of building library consortium and make viable recommendations, suggest models for the future prospect of university library consortium in Bangladesh. It believes that establishment of university library consortium will make university libraries more productive and effective to their user community.

Keywords: University library, Resource sharing, Library consortium, Library services, University Library Consortium

Prologue

The emergence of the internet, particularly the World Wide Web, as a new medium of information storage and delivery in the 21st century. In the age of information explosion, the most challenging tasks for the information professionals and information centers all over the world is to supervise the huge information that are being produced and developed in the world . It is impossible for a single library to monitor all the explosion of knowledge fields and accumulate for the users. To cope up with this situation, the phenomenon of consortia has become very important in the last few years. Initially the term used for resource sharing activities was library cooperation. Though cooperation theoretically could embrace almost all library activities, practically it was confined to

inter-library loan of library documents. But due to physical distance and other reasons even this limited system of cooperation was not being practiced widely. However, with the advent of ICT and its application in library activities, new opportunities opened up for greater cooperation among libraries. At the global level Internet and at the national and local level several library networks came in vogue and databases created for information sharing. In recent years availability of information resources in digital or electronic medium has further facilitated exchange of information resources among libraries, thus creating favorable condition for increased resource sharing. Emergence of library consortia is a very promising development in this direction (Chaterjee, 2002).

Consortium of libraries is well known for sharing of resources all over the world. Several libraries in the world have formed consortia to share their human and electronic resources. However, Consortium now being overheard everywhere is because of digital form of information. It refers to co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between and amongst libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. Currently, university libraries are purchasing materials to answer the needs of their users. This task is difficult for a single library. By forming a consortium among libraries, it becomes possible to purchase information in stabilized and reasonable prices. In Bangladesh, many library and information centers are making steps for building library consortium. In case of university library, University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is taking initiatives for digital resource consortium for university libraries in Bangladesh.

Literature review

Though the idea of cooperation was in existence for many years now, library consortium is still at its nascent stage in many countries. Being an emerging development where the number of participating libraries is increasing everyday much attention is placed on library consortia and consequently a good number has been written about it. Most of the literature is on case studies determining the feasibility aspects of consortia. (Nfial & Darko-Ampen, 2002) traces the history of library consortium from 1960's through 2000 and report that in 19997, an international association of library consortium was formed. (Rao, 2001) reports about the status of the existing library and information networks in India. (McClean, 1999) examined the characteristics underpinning resource sharing among university libraries in Australia on how the information revolution poses global

challenges in times of infrastructure and use of internet. They argue that Australia lack resource coordination at a national level, but several important initiatives are underway. (Ashoor, 2000) suggest few guidelines for the Arabian Gulf regions and concludes that libraries in the region should enter into partnership to establish consortium. (Giordano, 2002) traces the history of information communication technologies in Italian libraries with reference to library networks and digital cooperation initiatives. (Fordyce, 2004) writes an article on 'New Zealand University Library Acquisitions consortium for the supply of print monograph resources' where author discusses different consortium related issues. The Committee of New Zealand University Librarians Acquisitions Consortium (CONZULAC) was developed to gain maximum value from expenditure on print monograph resources, to achieve operating efficiencies and to improve levels of service. This paper looks at the issues that arose during its development. (Rona , 1999) writes an article on 'The very model of a modern library consortium' where they discusses at what stage and under what circumstances does an informal consortium need to think about changing from an alliance of non- affiliated institutions to a formal legally incorporated body? This paper draws on research funded by the Western Australian Group of University Librarians (WAGUL). It is evident from the literature that every region or country appears to have some unique and confined problems. However, identification of the factors implementing library consortium is vital in order to address the issue suitably.

Methodology

The available literature on the topic has been studied and reviewed to examine the consortium concept in the country. The conceptual and textual information related to the present study were collected both from primary and secondary sources of information such as books, professional journals, magazines, newspapers, conference proceedings as well as from unpublished sources. Relevant literature was also made browsing different notable websites. In some cases observation method was also applied for collecting data on different university libraries.

Objective of the study

The study intends to explore the university library consortium systems in Bangladesh. It is specially focused on the following issues:

- To be familiar with the concept, issues and identify the facilities offered by the library consortium in case of information availability.
- Examine the existing situation of library consortium and finds the most advanced university libraries for building University Library Consortium in Bangladesh (ULCB).
- Determine the impact of university library consortium and identify the major constraints of building consortium in Bangladesh.
- Suggests some effective measures and to provide certain future directions for introducing University Library Consortium in Bangladesh (ULCB). A road map is also discussed for implementing university library consortium.

Library consortium

Although no particular date can be cited as the beginning point of library consortium, the concept as a consortium as being an association or partnership has long been a tenet of librarianship (Kopp, 1998). The idea of consortium is not new. There were instances of several libraries coming together voluntarily for the mutual benefit of respective users just like cooperatives, it was the earliest stage of library cooperation. In the second stage, computerized networks come into vogue for sharing of resources. Till this period, the library resources were mainly in traditional printed format. The networks created their bibliographical databases. The users of the participating libraries could get the required documents from other libraries through document delivery services. With the advent of e-resources, the concept of consortia has been mooted mainly for acquisition of e-journals. As the resources that are procured today through the consortium are mainly e-resources, it has become possible for the users to access and download the required materials without even going through the elaborate process of inter-library lending. Though library consortia have been created with narrow purpose, these can be turned into efficient instruments for sharing all types of library resource.

A consortium could be described as a group of organizations who come together to fulfill a combined objective that usefully requires cooperation and the sharing of resources, and

need to have a clear mutual goal in order to ensure their success. The aim should be to deliver “more than the sum of the individual parts”.

Before pursuing specific discussion a brief consideration of the term would be useful. The ‘Consortia’ is the plural form of ‘consortium’ but is often used in place of singular form. The term is derived from the Latin word for ‘fellowship’; the meaning emphasizes the coming together of separate groups for a purpose. Homogenously it is used as, ‘alliance’ ‘coalition’, ‘collaboration’, ‘cooperation’, ‘partnership’, etc. Consortia are complicated organizations. It is “an association” in the sense that is not commonly understood; i.e. a consortium is not a library association, although some association of libraries engages in consortial activity (Scepanski, 2002).

By definition a consortium is said to be “a cooperative arrangement among groups or institutions” or “an association or society”. Library consortium would be organization of libraries formed to realize the benefit and opportunities of collaborative activity. It is a comparative alliance of libraries to share human and information resources. (Hirshon, 1999) defines library consortia ‘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. It is now used perhaps too broadly, and encompasses everything from formal legal entities to information groups that come together solely to achieve better pricing for purchasing electronic information’.

However, the common things of all the definition is the ‘coming together of libraries having common interests and needs to achieve a common goal that is beyond what an individual library could achieve on its own.

Issues related to library consortium

Various factors to be taken for an effective functioning of a successful consortium. The major issues of consortia approaches are

- ↳ Selecting a coordinating agency to deal on behalf of the entire group of participants and executing and monitoring the work.
- ↳ Sources of funding to meet the subscription cost
- ↳ Identifying and negotiating the potential publishers / vendors or aggregators to provide access under consortia purchase.

- ↪ Source of funding to meet the subscription cost
- ↪ Legal issues involved in contracts and usage of material within the consortia.
- ↪ Identification of libraries interested in participating and agreeing on common terms and conditions.
- ↪ Identifying the necessary infrastructure for electronic access to resources
- ↪ Issues related to backup and archival of database
- ↪ Documentation and training to staff.

Last but not least, designing and launching a library consortium should be long run substance and robust models towards achieving the above goals.

Importance of library consortium in the information society

Access to resources is now considered more important than the collection building. The consortium facilitates the libraries to get the benefit of wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost and at the best terms of licenses. A consortium, with the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it, is in a better position to resolve the problems of managing, organizing and archiving the electronic resources (Bedi & Sharma, 2008).

The phenomenon of information revolution has posed several problems and this has far reaching implications in the society. The nation or society which possesses more information will lead the world. This is also true in case of individuals. The persons have more information will guide a group or society and they will be superior to others. This power of information has induced the nations and individuals to acquire and control more and more quantities of information. But in this race, the poor nations, societies, institutions or individuals will be back as compared to the others. This has created a big gulf in the availability and use of information. The library consortia can be an ideal solution in this context. Perhaps the most important advantages of library consortia would be their enhanced ability to serve the society by giving better library services. The advantages of library consortia may be summarized as following:

1. To leverage resources by sharing existing resources or collection through virtual union catalogue and sharing of
 - ↪ Collections and collaborating on collection development; each library is able to contribute unique titles to the consortium – avoid duplication

↳ Electronic resources including the creation of digital collections-sharing among consortium members need not be just in terms of licensing products- it can also include sharing in the creation of digital collections.

↳ Storage of resources – Space is an issue for many libraries

↳ Sharing the archiving of resources

↳ Sharing staff expertise- a consortium provides opportunities for staff members to develop new skills and interact with a variety of people who would not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise

↳ Sharing risk- by sharing risk, members of a consortium can undertake projects that are larger than one institution can safely take on its own.

↳ This form of cooperation enables the consortia libraries to borrow books, periodicals, articles, and scientific journals, which are not available locally.

↳ Electronic access enables the user initiate their own search of remote catalogues and make requests for information.

↳ Sharing catalogues—to enable user's greater access to larger collection

↳ CD-ROM union catalogue that provides access to books, videos and recording for each institution.

↳ Union List of Serials that provides access to the journal holdings of all member libraries.

2. To reduce the cost of library operations by obtaining a group purchased price for information product.

3. To bring pressure on, providers especially publishers to reduce the rate of rise in the cost of purchasing information.

Thus, library consortium are commonly formed to negotiate joint purchases (e.g. of equipment, software, books, library materials and licensed electronic databases and resources) and to share resources.

Growth of library consortia in the world

Libraries, especially academic libraries have long formed consortia for the purpose of sharing existing physical resources--principally books and journals held by member libraries. Library consortia, does not have any remarkable history but the consortial arrangements started with the concept of resource sharing since long back. In 1990's,

new types of library consortia began to flourish that exploited the advances in information technology. The global development of OCLC in USA is a prime example. Over time the growth of newer consortium like; Colorado's CARL, Georgia's GALILEO, Illinois's IDAL, Maryland's SAILOR, Missouri's MIRACAL, New Zealand's CONZUL, CAUL, MetroNet, North America's CRL, North Carolina's embryonic NCLive, Ohio's OhioLink, Pennsylvania's PALCI, Portland's PORTALS, Texas's TexShare, Virginia's VIVA, Washington's WRLC, CIC in South Asia , CURL in UK, CALIM in Manchester, Concord in Britain, Metroweb in NewYork etc came into existence in the international scenario (Wikipedia, 2007). In India, major initiatives are regarding consortium is J-GATE form Informatics India, IITS-BARC-TIFR Co-operation, TIFR Libraries Consortium, ISI Library consortia, SNDT consortia of LISA, STI Network, FORSA consortia, INDSET and INFLIBNET consortium under UGC InfoNet.

Present scenario of library consortium in Bangladesh

At present there is no library consortium in Bangladesh. In the past, UGC had taken many initiatives for sharing information resources of different universities for the benefit of the universities. Since 1980's there have been a number of attempts by UGC to unify the library catalogue systems and even to arrange some form of cooperative journal subscription for sharing resources (Awal, 2005). However, it is yet to be realized due to financial constraints. In 1998, there were a networking attempt called Bangladesh National Scientific and Library Information Network (BANSLINK). This project was initiated by the Bangladesh National Scientific Technical and Documentation Center (BANSDOC). It ventured to connect libraries across the country by setting up a network with 15 libraries 6 out of Dhaka and 9 in Dhaka via dial up links. The initiative fell apart due to administrative reorganization at the top and subsequent lack of appreciation

In case of university library consortium the situation is worse than other research organizations. Since the inception of the country in 1971, the libraries of its higher education institutions never got a chance to be in competitive shape. In Bangladesh there are 21 public university and 54 private university libraries (UGC, 2006). The Dhaka University is the oldest university of the country and it was established on 1 July 1921.

University libraries are facing a lot of problems and their improving scenery is remaining low. Some of the large public universities have sound collection and private university libraries are essentially empty. Most university libraries have almost no audio-visual collections. In case of subscription journal, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) reportedly dropped the number of titles from 700 to 200 between 1974 and 2005. In a 2005 survey, out of 17 public universities 5 and out of 39 private universities 9 responded to have some form of E-library. In 1998, Dhaka University started Dhaka University Library Automation Project (DULAP) where the university uses world prominent software Graphical Library Automation System (GLAS). Initially, this is the large and first one library automation project in the country. BUET has just completed the local made software for their library named BUETLIB but yet to launch. None of the public universities, including the largest technical and research universities Open University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Dhaka University can provide access to any electronic journals to its students or faculties. Few private universities provide access to limited collections namely DOAJ, AGORA, HINARI, OUP eGermany, EMERLAND and JSTOR (Uddin & Chowdhury, 2006). Not a single institution in Bangladesh could afford the institutional membership to any major medical, engineering, technology collections such as ACME, IEEE or Elsevier, Academic Press Journals and proceedings. After 1992 Private University Act, many private universities particularly some top ranking universities came forward and emphasized to establish an automated modern library in respective premises with all IT facilities i.e. computer network, Internet and email, etc. Out of 54 private universities, two or three of them have their own VSAT. However, another attempt has been taken to build e-catalogue for university library entitled 'A Networked E-Union Catalog for Public University Libraries'.

Barriers to University Library Consortium in Bangladesh (ULCB)

Consortia have its inherent benefits but those benefits can be maximized, while minimizing the negative aspects. (Helmer, 1999) express that the benefits of the consortia can threaten by several issues, results the failure of consortia. Sometime it has been found that the consortia initiatives could not materialized, especially in Bangladesh, reasons may be the following:

- (a) **Lack of awareness and understanding:** University librarians especially in Bangladesh do not fully comprehend the concept of consortia based subscription to electronic resources and are not very keen to go whole-heartedly for formation of consortia of libraries. Sometimes they do not have good understanding about consortia benefits.
- (b) **Speed of decision making:** Notion that, belonging to consortium the speed of decision making of individual libraries can slow down. Though it depends how centralized or decentralized the consortium is.
- (c) **Budget and funding:** These are always thorny issues. Belonging to a consortium means that part of library budget will be transferred and the issue of loss of control raises again. Lack of initial funds of university libraries may be a barrier to starting university library consortium.
- (d) **Lack of decision making and control:** There is a fear that if a library joins a consortium, local decision making, autonomy, and control will be adversely affected.
- (e) **Technological compatibility and security:** The compatibility of the members computing system is critical if a consortium is to achieve the maximum benefit from technology. Different university library uses different library software and library tools, so it becomes difficult for the university librarian to acquaint with different systems. Security is also another technical issue.
- (f) **Fear from local identity:** Most of the university libraries don't want to feel like they are losing their individual identity. They think, if they enter into a consortium they may lose their local identity.
- (g) **Type of agreements:** Agreements between member libraries can have major impacts on the consortium's effectiveness. It has been found that some libraries did not join in the consortia simply because of the agreement that was not of their choosing.
- (h) **Egos and attitudes:** Egos and attitudes of individuals or organizations can have a big impact on the success or failure of a consortium. Bangladeshi university librarian always makes different strategy and operating models.

- (i) **Consortial as a legal entity:** Consortia of libraries need to have a legal entity with permission and authority to deal with institutions like banks and other institution for collecting subscription amount on behalf of the participating libraries.
- (j) **Lack of complete automation:** A consortia without sharing the resources of the participating libraries is limited to online subscriptions made available from gateway portal. Many libraries are allowed to jump into the ban wagon of consortia without considering its automation status. With the availability of some internet connectivity this will allows such libraries to access the resources of other member libraries but their resource remain inaccessible till complete automation is done.
- (k) **Lack of resource:** The resources of all participating libraries needs to be balanced to certain extend. Without some form of parity of collection of each library there is a risk of one library becoming a lending library while others remain borrowing libraries. A participating library with very few resources is a loss to the libraries which have lots to offer. This is major problems in Bangladeshi university libraries as some of the universities have rich collection and some of have poor collection.
- (l) **Absence of any culture of interlibrary lending:** No university libraries in Bangladesh started interlibrary lending activities among them. Traditionally, interlibrary loan facilities or any form of co-operation is functional in the university library in Bangladesh.
- (m) **Unavailability of web environment:** Unavailability of web environment among the university libraries is one of the major problems for accessing in the university library consortium. Internet connectivity is still in primitive stages which make online consortia almost unfeasible.
- (n) **Lack of leadership:** Excellent library leadership will begin with the notion of enabling every one who works in the library to grow in knowledge, ability, and commitment as the primary task. University libraries have lack of creative leader and skilled management body for removing all the barriers for introducing university libraries in Bangaldesh.

Bangladesh University Library Consortium (BULC) and a road map

Bangladesh like many other countries in the developing world is undergoing a phase of rapid expansion in higher education. University Grants Commission (UGC) is facing an uphill battle to keep up the existing libraries. Private universities are also facing the same battle. However, the silver lining is that more than ten public and private university libraries are now almost in sound phases in collection development and modern facilities. These University Libraries began to operation for consortium, subsequently rest of the university libraries will be added in second and third phases. There can be no better time to launch a federated university library consortium. A national university library consortium initiative will ensure the following strategies benefit immediately (Khan, 2006).

- (a) Access to latest scientific publication has reached almost none in public universities. Universities have dwindling access to books, journals and periodicals. This is having crippling effect on the future of national science and technology readiness. A university library consortium model offers only realistic possibility to reverse the situation. It will not only restore this access to a respectable size and quality, but also make it comparable to that at developed world.
- (b) Vast amount of electronic books, courseware, and multi-media content are already available open access. A university library consortium with ICT facilities can make them instantly accessible to the students, faculty and researchers of Bangladesh.
- (c) For Bangladesh almost none of the institutions individually are found to be capable of subscribing important periodical collections such as IEEF, ACM or even the supposedly low cost new mode scholarly publishing (such as SPARC or Digital Library Science). But, roughly, any federation with four members breaks even the cost-a federation with 30 members may expect about 7-5 times reduction in cost per institution.
- (d) Some publishers are very large as organizations. Federation provides better negotiating positions to keep the cost under control. Increasingly the publishers are bundling journals as Big Deal. Individual institutions may not find all titles in

a bundle useful but a large federation with more research diversity will benefit more from Big Deal.

- (e) Even free access collections have restrictions such as Creative Commons licensing. Due to the complexity of intellectual property laws and their variations across nations many of these collections are reluctant to enter into access contracts with small entities. It is easier to work out access contracts if the universities approach as a federation.
- (f) The automation of the libraries will help in improving other library services including better collection management, accounting and reduce floor-space usage. Demand and usage can be tracked more accurately with new tools.
- (g) Information property is fast becoming a major commodity in the 21st century. Developing countries may lose squarely rights on its intellectual resources due to digital divide. Locally originated content and intellectual properties may have to be bought back.

University Library Consortium in Bangladesh, like other countries, is expected to be capital saving and pay-off in few years. The members may want to pool together a part of their current library resources. It is expected that the saving from journal budget alone will pay for the best part of the cost. However, international assistance funding is also expected to be available provided the libraries can internally organize themselves.

A Road Map

Initiating and initiative

- (a) UGC can start by convening a conference inviting all the public and private university library management.
- (b) Invite participants from the three communities (i) professional librarians (ii) interested faculty researchers from library and information sciences, computer science and engineering and related fields, and (iii) chief operating officers. Form a steering committee to decide the mission, membership, planning and budgeting.
- (c) The next step will be to discuss the concept and collect letter of interest and initial commitment from interested organization. With the concept and a unified platform of the

university library of Bangladesh under UGC leadership seek national and international funding. The new consortia may seek technical cooperation by partnering with some established consortia.

Organizing the consortium

(a) Establish key technical committees in areas including (i) software development (ii) standardization and interlibrary cooperation (iii) collective resource procurement (iv) publishing and hosting support services (v) user services and training to lead in respective technical areas.

(b) Initiate signing a memorandum of understanding by university library members. There should be some commitment such as subscription, library facilitation to make their libraries consortium based.

Functions and services

(a) Being immediately: Roll out the first version of the University Library Consortium, UGC and the members should establish an initial budget and may roll out very basic consortium systems.

(b) Expand access: Join large international, multi-national, regional and trans-continental consortium federations to further obtain leverage in gaining access to content.

(c) Expand services: University Library has to create an editorial process management, publishing, hosting and permanent archiving facility to the journals and proceeding published by the faculty and researchers of the universities in Bangladesh.

(d) Move for unified cataloguing, classification, digitization and sharing local content. Establish Interlibrary Loan Programme to complement the interlibrary catalogue sharing.

Technical issues for the University Library Consortium in Bangladesh (ULCB)

The technical challenges of ULCB are another factor for the countries. It would require technical experts in information and library sciences and experts in user areas. It also requires permanent professional librarians and ICT engineers in central and member library sites. Training will be very important due to rapidly changing nature of the technology. Provision has to be built into the budget of the proposal.

- (a) Library automation System Software: At present different university library uses several library software's for running library operations. CDS/ISIS, LIBSYS, GLAS, BUETLB is some of the examples of university library software in Bangladesh. A local team can build a LAS and web based access versions. There are several free open source library software developed by UNESCO and other organizations. Bangladeshi specialists have to consider for federated access management, multi-lingual document management and other involving issues. Thus Bangladesh will gain strategic advantage by grooming local developer team.
- (b) Master catalogue and digitization: The driving force behind most university library consortium was to pool together the materials owned by their members. However, now the remote digitized materials are the gem attractions of library consortium. University libraries of Bangladesh may be encouraged to make union catalogue and make digitization with priority given to the collections and unique value. It can even join hand with international digitization initiatives.
- (c) Standardization: The University Library Consortium in Bangladesh (ULCB) cataloguing system will require many interoperability standards. A technical committee within the initiative should familiarize themselves with the ongoing issues with related international standards such as Dublin Core, IEEE LOM, Open Archive Initiative, TEI, APPM, AACR2, MARC, ISBD, OWL, etc, and advice the initiative as needed. The body should undertake leadership role in advancing standards related to Bengali records and make other Bengali language constituencies.
- (d) Indigenous collection: It will be a timely idea also to simultaneously initiate a digital publication services for scholarly publications of the local origins. There is currently no local digital archival and circulation system though there are quite a few journals and regular conferences within the country. An offer to host local academic journals and proceedings by ULCB is expected to be highly appreciated. Such initiative will offer greater global visibility to local scholars and researchers and to their research problems and would provide important advantages to retain the intellectual property rights of the local scholars.

Model and implementation for University Library Consortium of Bangladesh (ULCB)

There is not a single university library in Bangladesh that is fully automated. Some libraries are in the initial stages of the automation and networking process. A few libraries have CD-ROM access, but no initiative has been taken in action to produce information products on CD. Some libraries have an online connection and are providing external resource sharing on a limited scale. Only a few university libraries have started networking or resource sharing or have used the telecommunication system for data transfer. The following university library can be included in the first phase of University Library Consortium in Bangladesh. The entire scenario of the proposed university libraries are:

Name of the library	Collections	Internet facilities	Software	Website	Access to E-journals	Catalogue of E-journals
DUL	5,00,000	√	GLAS	√	√	-
BUETL	1,34,746	√	BUETLIB	√	-	-
JUL	90,578	-	CDS/ISIS	√	-	-
RUL	3,00,000	√	CDS/ISIS	√	-	-
SUSTL	41,000	√	CDS/ISIS	√	√	-
AUBL	1,79,666	√	-	√	-	-
NSUL	26,990	√	NSU Library Management Software	√	√	-
EWUL	10,666	√	EWU LMIS	√	√	-
IUBL	19,947	√	LIBRARIUM	√	√	-
SUL	5,314	-		√	-	-

(Source: University website, brochure of university library and visit) (Dhaka University Library-DUL, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Library-BUETL, Jahangirnagar University Library-JUL, Rajshahi University Library-RUJL, Shahjalal University of Science & Technology Library-SUSTL, Agricultural University of Bangladesh Library-AUBL, North South University Library-NSUL, East West University Library-EWUL, Independent University of Bangladesh Library-IUBL, Satmford University Library-SUL)

There is no single best model for a library consortium. Even it is also ambiguous, who can become partners through consortia. (Allen & Hirshon, 1998) suggests three potential partners (information providers, service providers & libraries) are wishing to participate in a consortium. Initially, library consortia were most prominent in the academic sector. This feature of library consortia is changing. Basically consortia models are grouped into two; proposed models and observed models. In the perspective of Bangladesh, as consortium is in not existence, it will be more effective to apply here proposed models. Considering the size and volume of efforts to be required to implement the whole initiative. It will help to understand the potential requirements, processes and above all

the costs involved in undertaking the proposal in real situation. Below framework can be helpful at the implementation level

1. Development of information infrastructure

- ↪ Identification & evaluation of existing infrastructure within the university library
- ↪ Assessment of extra requirements of the participating libraries
- ↪ Installation of hardware and software
- ↪ Establishment of the network
- ↪ Establishment of human resources
- ↪ System analysis and design
- ↪ Creation of databases
- ↪ Data conversion, customization, routine maintenance, promotional activities, etc.

2. Formation of the consortia

- ↪ The caption & call for “sharing resources, sharing risk, sharing success”
- ↪ Identification and evaluation infrastructure requirements
- ↪ Identification and evaluation for electronic resources subscription, digitization, tools and so on.
- ↪ Establishment of integrated model to enable single web based interface, online access.
- ↪ Cost effectiveness, copyright issues, right management, services and benefits to be offered.
- ↪ Training and workshop, quality improvement, etc.

University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) will act a coordinating agency to implement the programme. UGC will engage all universities to draw, design, and prepare a work plan for implementation of the ULCB. However, administration of the programme will be run by the UGC. Three phases implementation plan may be made for the university library consortium.

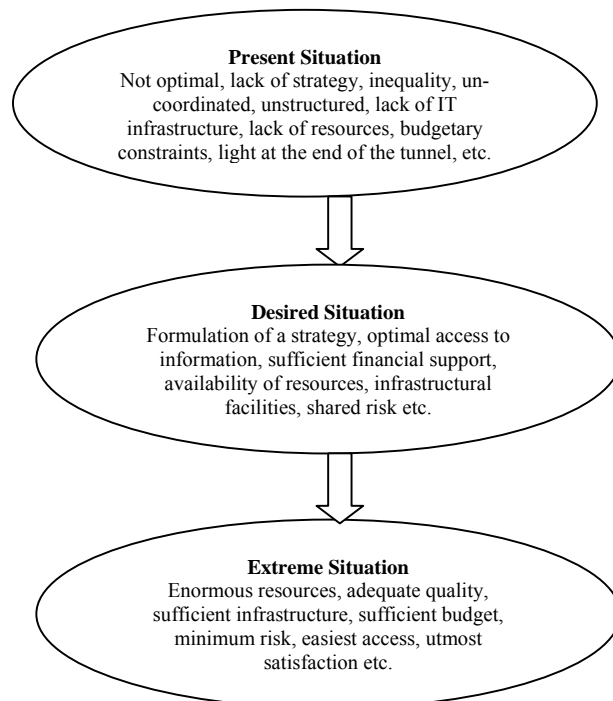
Phase I. Consortium may be launched immediately by the advanced ten university libraries, which are connected with internet and having basic IT facilities.

Phase II. Participants of phase I consortium may take part in dialogue for sharing experiences gained in phase I. On the basis of the concerned issues and less advanced ICT facility based university libraries may be included in phase II. Less advanced means that parts of the processes of the library will be carried out by the application of modern ICT facilities.

Phase III. Phase I & II plan may be implemented in phase III with all IT facilities and ensure dissemination of information through the consortium with reduced cost but maximum benefit. Keep an eye on the programme, review it and take steps for further improvement if required.

However, if the above operations and proposal is being implemented, the following things can imagine in the perspective of ULCB which are shown in a figure;

Figure 1: Involve & evolve of University Library Consortium in Bangladesh (ULCB)



This above figure shows that how the university library consortium will make the present position more convenient, user friendly and fruitful for the future university libraries in Bangladesh.

Major recommendations

ULCB consortium initiatives have vital importance and are being recommended to consider the following activities with an immediate effect.

- I.** There is need to evaluate the existing network infrastructure available in the university libraries in Bangladesh and to identify the gaps that exists therein, for providing adequate number of internet enabled PC's and a secure internet connectivity with higher bandwidth among the consortium library.
- II.** There is need to evaluate strengths and weakness of the existing information resources, systems and services available in the university libraries , for providing much required impetus in order to formation of the consortia.
- III.** There is need to identify the maximum electronic resources options available for accessing in a consortia mode, desire for the university libraries, and to identify the possibilities of electronic content creation in a co-operative manner among the university libraries.
- IV.** There is a need to induct and motivate the library peoples that the technology driven co-operative arrangements of electronic resources could accomplish the library services far more than they can individually. It is also necessary to organize the training for existing library personnel in turn with the new environment and regular flashing of messages, like sharing resources means sharing success.
- V.** It is also recommended that the active consideration of the ULCB could bring a reasonable solution before the crisis threatens to the university libraries of Bangladesh, in the age of 21st century. It is also recommended for the formation of an apex body that would functions as central node for coordinating activities of the consortium.
- VI.** It is important to recommend that the budgetary requirements for major technical up-gradations and consortia based activities may be provided to each university libraries from the external funds, as advocated by the consortium focal point.

Conclusion

The possibilities of ICTs, digital information, electronic document delivery, library consortia, web based resources, etc. have helped to provide better services to the users. But wide disparity in the availability and use of academic information still prevails among different universities in Bangladesh. This justifies the establishment of University Library Consortium which automatically will bring economy, efficiency and equality in information availability and use.

Bangladesh being a developing country should form a body among the university libraries to catch the new opportunity to make proper university library consortium in the present time. The ULCB initiative is expected to trigger remarkable development of the university libraries in Bangladesh. Proposed consortium would bring a special attention to its members for its systematic approach and will ensure a sustainable growth of the university libraries.

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