

## **Master of Library and Information Science Second Semester**

### **Resource Sharing**

Resource sharing is a concept quite often talked about in the literature of LIS. Literally, the term implies, using each other's resources. Edmonds defines it as 'the reciprocally beneficial sharing of resources, developed or pre-existing, by two or more bodies.' In the context of libraries, it refers to libraries sharing their resources, including the sources of information, staff expertise, infrastructure, and finance. The question arises, why should they do so? They are already so heavily burdened by requests from their own users, how will they cater to the needs of other libraries? The answer lies in knowing the situation in which they find themselves in, which is presented in the following paragraphs.

**Need of Resource Sharing:** The stock in trade of libraries, i.e. documents is available in plenty. Their rate of increase is such that it is termed explosion. They are available in variety of formats, at times being duplicated also. The channels of availability of these documents are also varied adding to the complexity of their acquisition. Prices of documents are on the increase. Results of a sample study of periodicals in USA show a price rise of 7.9% in 2002. As a majority of the publications are from USA, it implies increase in prices of documents. Rate of conversion of currency is also against libraries particularly for developing countries, e.g., India. It affects the capacity of libraries to buy. Increasing number of documents also demand physical space, which is a limitation for libraries.

Libraries exist for users; any change in their demands and requirements requires libraries to adapt. Users are now more demanding, expecting to be satisfied as early as possible. Libraries have to show their accountability; they have to satisfy the users in the best possible way. Customized services are the talk of the day. Staff has to be more interactive with the users knowing about their area of interest and their requirements to serve them in the best possible way. This requires that the professional staff does not have to attend to the routine chores, technical procedures. Resource sharing enables libraries to function effectively and efficiently in view of the above situation. Sharing of resources may solve the problem as under:

- i. All libraries would not have to acquire all the documents that they require. They would share the documents thus overcoming the problem of increased prices and space for storing them.
- ii. Libraries by sharing would have access to large number of documents thus satisfying the increasing demand for documents. Sharing would also allow them to use documents in different formats.
- iii. It would also allow them to share the expertise of staff, thus saving costs as well as the time of the staff. They would now be freed from the routine technical procedures, as that would be done on a common basis between them.

### **Concept of Resource Sharing:**

Literally resource sharing means joint use of resources. Resource refers to the source which one uses to get some work done. Brewer defines it as ‘an umbrella term for a wide spectrum of cooperative processes and mechanisms’. Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science defines resource as a person, thing or action to which one resorts to, when needed. To be more specific, we can say the resources in a library are staff, infrastructure, documents, and services. Sharing entails a relationship of reciprocity where the two parties offer their resources to each other for mutual benefit. Philip Sewell opines that resource sharing is an evolution of the concept existing earlier as Library Cooperation, the only difference being that library cooperation assumes two or more libraries existing and working jointly to achieve their goals. In resource sharing, it is presumed that there exist a group of users putting demand on libraries. Libraries on the other hand come together to pool their resources to satisfy these demands. Resources may be physical or intellectual, the former refer to the documents and infrastructure, whereas the latter refer to the human resources (expertise), which libraries can utilize to plan, implement or evaluate their services and routines. Library cooperation could be done in two ways: by working separately and sharing or by working together. The sharing could be of materials or information (reference or bibliographical). While working together, they collaborate to produce bibliographical tools, software, acquire materials, organise conferences and workshops for research and training of personnel. Another difference between the two concepts is due to the developments in information technology. Library cooperation was more of a concept that could not be put in practice successfully due to: a) Geographical distance between the participating libraries and b)

Transmission and duplication of documents not being possible, It made the cooperation among libraries difficult. It is only due to the developments in technology for production, storage, duplication, processing, and transmission technology that has enabled resource sharing. Desktop production, e-publishing, storage in magnetic and optical media and developments in telecommunications enabled easy duplication and transmission of documents for sharing among libraries. Data and telecommunication networks enabled library networks to materialize and this made possible sharing of all types of resources at any time, from anywhere across the globe.

### **Historical Background:**

Library cooperation in modern times can be traced back to the efforts of Library of Congress when it started cooperative cataloguing, thereby enabling participating libraries to know about each other's resources. It also helped the libraries to save on their resources and resulted in standardization in practices. It led to a chain reaction when libraries everywhere started preparing union catalogues. The system of sharing to satisfy personal needs existed in the society and it was no exception in libraries. Kaul quotes instances of library cooperation existing as early as 200 B.C. between Alexandria Library and Pergamum Library. He also cites Kraus mentioning cooperation between monastery libraries in the 13th century. Starting with mutually satisfying each other's needs as and when required, library cooperation became more systematic with time. Institutions took initiative in this regard. Mention may be made of FID, IFLA, and UNESCO. In 1895 Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine from the forum of FID attempted to compile a world index to published information, and finally gave UDC as a tool for representing published information. FID had one of its objectives as improvements in the availability of information. IFLA has two programs to its credit in this direction viz., Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) and Universal Availability of Publications (UAP). UNISIST, the World Science Information System exists with the aim of providing processed information in science and technology to all. The cooperation extended in other areas e.g., indexing and abstracting. Abstracting services started providing abstracts of literature international in scope. Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts and Physics Abstracts are some examples, which are the result of cooperation among institutes. International coverage would not have been possible without cooperation. Further development in cooperation saw

the establishment of Information Systems. INIS, AGRIS databases had inputs from national centers in different countries e.g., BARC and IARI(Indian Council of Agriculture Research) in India. Another example of cooperation that took place was the formation of ADONIS(Article delivery over network information system). It was a Document Delivery System consisting of publishers- John Wiley, Elsevier, Pergamon, Blackwell Scientific, Academic Press and Springer Verlag. They provided index to articles appearing in 219 biomedical journals between 1987 and 1988 in CD- ROM. BLDSC(British Library Document Supply Service ) was actively involved in this venture and developed the software for retrieving the information.

**Purpose of Resource Sharing:** Libraries have joined hands to cooperate and coordinate at various levels to form networks. These are formed at local, national and regional level. These networks exist to:

**i. Maximize the resource base of libraries**

The primary purpose of resource sharing is to maximize the resource base, i.e., collection, staff, infrastructure, as well as services of the participating libraries. They would be benefited by the resources of other libraries adding to their own resources.

**ii. Provide wider access to information**

We are living in the information age where information is a commodity needed by one and all. We are highly dependent on information. It is a resource as important as energy. Information is required for decision making at different levels. In view of this scenario, one should not be deprived of information needed. Libraries have different document collection. They are strong in some areas and poor in others. They lack resources to excel in all areas. If libraries share amongst each other, they can overcome this limitation of poor document collection.

**iii. Rational acquisition**

Resource sharing results in a rational acquisition of documents. A library should only acquire those documents that are core to the area of its organization. It can satisfy minor or auxiliary needs from other libraries with which it shares. Similarly it can satisfy the minor needs of other libraries. It would result in a rationalized acquisition of documents.

**iv. Save resources**

Libraries share their resources to save and use them optimally. Cooperative acquisition enables them to save on money spent on documents. Cooperative cataloguing and classification enables them to save on staff salaries, efforts, and time spent on technical processing.

**v. Enable uniform practices in routines**

A central agency can be entrusted the task of cataloguing and classification, which can be followed by others which results in standardization. Uniform practices are helpful to users as well as staff. It is a result of sharing and a requirement too.

**vi. Acquisition** Rationalization of acquisition is one the major functions of library networks. Libraries can come together to identify duplication of resources thereby avoiding wastage. Funds could be diverted for resources, which are found lacking in a particular geographical area. It would result in better allocation of funds and widespread availability of resources. Core collections could be built up for all libraries. Documents, which are rare or costly, could be acquired strategically in different locations to enable maximum use.