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Library co-operation through resource sharing (RS): Models for Lahore libraries

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Library Co-operation Through Resource Sharing (RS): Models for Lahore Libraries

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Introduction

The spread of knowledge sources available in various formats and financial constraints has made it difficult for libraries to satisfy their users' needs. However, the problems of information explosion, ever changing users' needs, shrinking library budgets and currency devaluations can be overcome, to some extent, through resource sharing. Library professionals need to explore options to extend users' access to information sources by forming partnerships with other local libraries having similar collections. These collaborative arrangements enable patrons to access resources otherwise out of their reach. This requires each participating institution to contribute in the network of their extended libraries' family and do not operate in isolation. It is widely acknowledged that no library, no matter how large and well-funded it is, can be self-sufficient in meeting its users' demands. Hence, libraries in Pakistan need to develop cooperative plans to meet the challenges posed by rapid growth and diversity of knowledge sources, increased users' demands and expectations, decreased budgets, hiking prices of books, journals and databases are the major reasons for cooperation amongst libraries. This paper intends to suggest some possible ways for libraries in Lahore to get the benefits of RS.

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Methods of RS in Pakistan

Two major methods of RS are generally being practiced internationally: (a) Conventional, and (b) Advanced.

Conventional Method of RS

In this method, RS of traditional printed materials is practiced. Two or more participating libraries issue their catalogues and union lists of periodicals with archival holdings. The participating libraries also publish union lists. On the basis of these lists of holdings, they share their resources through interlibrary loan (ILL) arrangements.

Advanced (Automated) Method of RS

Libraries are making use of information and communication technology (ICT) to further enhance RS initiatives. The advent of electronic formats has increased both the ease and efficiency of finding and producing virtual scholarly documents. This equips libraries to share their information sources to greater extent. The following are some examples of use of ICT tools to facilitate RS.

WWW: A global network of Internet servers providing access to documents written in a script called Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) that allows content to be interlinked, locally and remotely. The libraries are widely using this to share their resources to each other.

Web OPACs: Online public access catalogues accessible via the World Wide Web. OPAC has replaced printed catalogues and periodical lists. Web OPACs facilitate identification and the availability of materials of other libraries. This provides the quickest answer to "Which library has what?"

Electronic Formats: Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Portable Document Format (PDF), Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG), etc. These formats are used to convert data (text, image) into electronic formats which are easily transferable

through the internet. This is helpful for libraries to share their documents in this digital age.

Email (Electronic mail): An Internet protocol that allows computer users to exchange messages and data files in real time with other users, locally and across networks. If the web OPAC of a library is not available, the availability of needed document can be checked by this service.

MARC: An international standard digital format for the description of bibliographic items. It facilitates the creation and dissemination of computerized cataloging from library to library within the same country and between countries. Widespread use of the MARC standard has helped libraries acquire predictable and reliable cataloging data, make use of commercially available library automation systems, share bibliographic resources, avoid duplication of effort, and ensure that bibliographic data will be compatible when one automation system is replaced by another.

Z39.50: A client-server protocol that allows the computer user to query a remote information retrieval system using the software of the local system and to receive results in the format of the local system, often used in portal and gateway products to search several sources simultaneously and integrate the results. This protocol definitely saves time and effort of technical staff of any library. It should be a part and parcel of a standard RS programme.

Digital Libraries: A library in which a significant proportion of the resources are available in machine-readable format (as opposed to print or microform), accessible by means of computers. DLs are very important in RS initiatives, easier to send and easier to receive the electronic documents, whether in text, HTML, PDF, or any other readable format, to participating libraries [13].

By using these ICT tools, libraries are helping each other at local, national, and international level.

Local Scenario

Mostly informal RS is being practiced among local libraries in the absence of any formal arrangements. This is a sign of the awareness of the need for RS among librarians. However, there have been a few noteworthy examples of formal RS projects in the country i.e., Lahore Business and Economics Libraries Network (LABELNET), Pakistan Parliamentary Libraries Development Project (PPLDP), Management of Agriculture Research and Technology (MART). Among all of these efforts, LABELNET was the only project developed in the provincial metropolis. This project was jointly sponsored by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada and the Lahore University of Management Science (LUMS). The specific objectives of this programme were:

- To create a computerized union list of serials held by participating libraries

- To create databases of government documents, research reports and monographs

- To develop and implement an interlibrary loan system among participating libraries

- To prepare an index of Pakistani periodicals subscribed by member libraries

- To input relevant bibliographic records to DEVINSA through the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

- To provide information services to researchers, planners business community and other users of the participant libraries as well as the public at large [14]

LABELNET came into being in 1990 as a network of nine libraries of Lahore in the areas of public administration, business administration, management and economics. Lahore University of Management Science (LUMS), Pakistan Administrative Staff

College (PASC), Civil Services Academy (CSA), National Institute of Public Administration

(NIPA), Punjab University Economics Department (PUECO), Hailey College of Commerce (HCC), Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI), Punjab Economic and Research Institute (PERI) and Directorate of Industrial & Mineral Development Punjab (DIMD) were the participatory libraries in this project. The LABELNET produced the following publications and outputs:

- A union list of serials

- A union catalogue of literature on Pakistan business and economics

- Index to Pakistan's business and economic periodical literature

- Database searching on request

- SDI on request

- An inter-library loan system

IDRC support for LABELNET started in 1990 first as a 2-year project and later extended to 5 years (1990–1995). The project was even operational till April 1997. The database of government documents, research reports and monographs of participating libraries is still available in LUMS library. The participating libraries of this project are sharing their material occasionally.

Apart from the above mentioned formal RS projects, Higher Education Commission (HEC) took an initiative towards RS in 2003. HEC has secured inclusion in the Program for Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) initiated by the International Network for Scientific Publications, Oxford, UK. PERI aims to support capacity building in the research sector in developing and transitional countries by strengthening the production, access and dissemination of information and knowledge. HEC describe this programme as:

A programme to provide researchers within public and private universities in Pakistan and non-profit research and development organizations with access to international scholarly literature based on electronic (online) delivery, providing access to high quality, peer-reviewed journals, databases and articles across a wide range of disciplines [6].

The programme has been widely appreciated in the country. HEC is expanding this programme continuously and is now providing remote access to more than 20,000 journals to university and research libraries of Pakistan through its digital library initiative.

Future Prospects

Due to the extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) in libraries, it is high time to develop formal RS programmes. For this purpose, librarians should seek their respective institutions/organizations' support to establish such programmes in a documented manner. Professional associations can also play a vital role in organizing such programmes by defining policies, procedures, structure and standards. Similarly funding agencies like Punjab Library Foundation and other donor agencies should support RS programmes amongst the libraries. Directorate of Public Libraries Punjab can take an initiative with the support of other library professional bodies.

Potential Networks of RS in Lahore

In the provincial metropolis (Lahore), there is considerable scope to start concrete RS projects because of the large number of libraries. The city is famous for having all kinds of libraries. Different genres of libraries can develop different kinds of mutual RS projects. Libraries of academic institutions in the public sector (universities/colleges) can develop collaborative programmes to share their print and online resources. They can further be divided

into college level and university level. Similarly institutions in the private sector can devise their own RS programmes. They can formulate policies after consulting their peer institutions.

Following are examples of some potential library networks in the public sector:

University Libraries: Punjab University Library, University of Engineering & Technology Library, Government College University Library, Lahore College for Women University Library.

College Libraries: Islamia College Railway Road Library, Islamia College Civil Lines Library, Government College of Science Library, Queen Mary College Library.

Medical Colleges Libraries: Libraries of King Edward Medical College, Fatima Jinnah Medical College, Allama Iqbal Medical College, Postgraduate Medical Institute, Institute of Public Health and Punjab Institute of Cardiology.

Public Libraries: Punjab Public Library, Quaid-e-Azam Library, Dyal Singh Trust Library, and Model Town Public Library.

Special Libraries: Libraries of Pakistan Administrative Staff College, National Institute of Public Administration, Civil Services Academy and Libraries of NGOs.
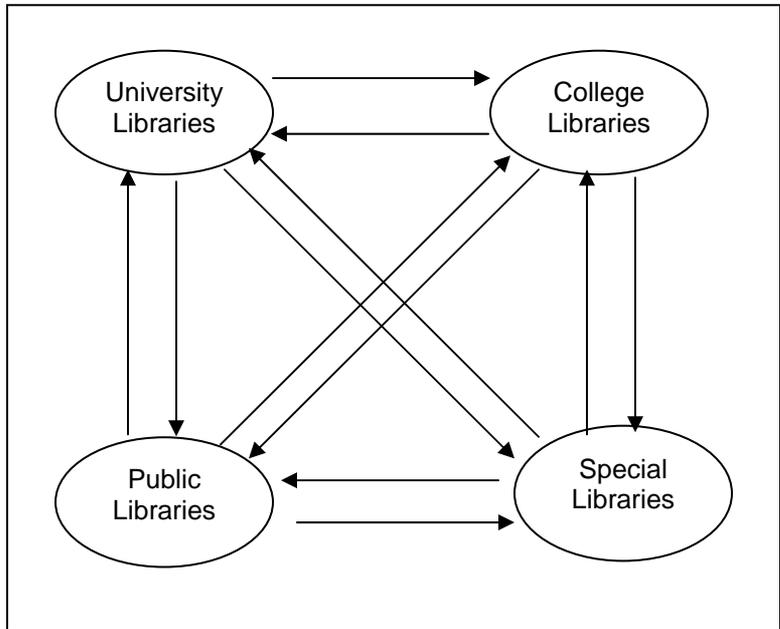
Models

Under the situation stated above, the followings are some suggested RS models among libraries in Lahore.

Model-1 (Inter-Type RS)

In this model, different types of libraries in the city, regardless of their scope, resources, and clientele, can share their resources. This model provides an opportunity of RS in a broader scope. Under this arrangement, university libraries can share their resources with any or all types of libraries i.e., college, public and special libraries. For example Punjab University library can share its resources with Government College University library or
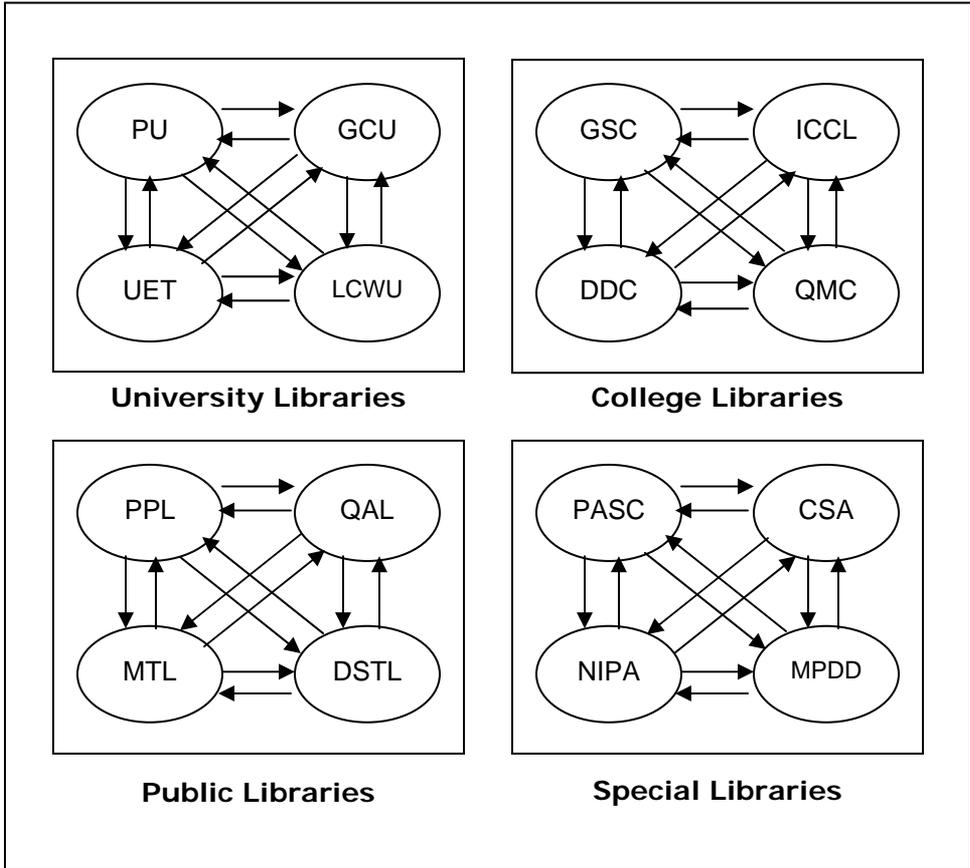
Punjab Public Library or Civil Services Academy Library. The participating libraries may have equal status.

Model 1: Inter-Type RS

Model 2 (Intra-Type RS)

In this model, a library can share its resources with another library of the same kind. Since the level of participatory libraries will be nearly the same, this model can be easier and more beneficial to adopt. Thus, amongst university libraries, Punjab University (PU) can develop a network with Government College University (GCU), Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), University of Engineering and Technology (UET), etc.

Model 2: Intra-Type RS

There will be a better understanding of resources, services and the clientele among the participating libraries. The same kind of networking can be developed among college, public, and special libraries. Government Science College (GSC), Government Islamia College Civil Lines (ICCL), Government Dyal Singh College (DSC), Queen Mary College (QMC) and other colleges can share their resources. Similarly, public libraries of Lahore i.e. Punjab Public Library (PPL), Quaid-e-Azam Library (QAL), Model Town Library (MTL), Dyal Singh Trust Library (DSTL) can build their own network. Special Libraries like Pakistan
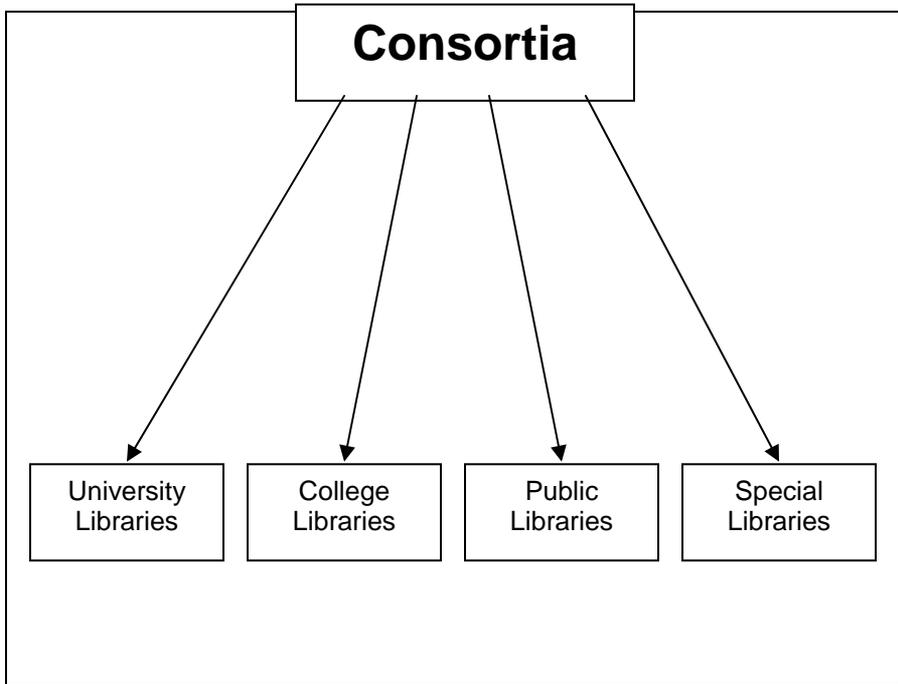
Administrative Staff College (PASC), National Institute of Public Affairs (NIPA), Civil Services Academy (CSA), Management and Professional Development Department (MPDD) can also be networked under this model.

Model-3 (RS through consortia)

In this model, resources (selected print and electronic) can be housed at a central place and access can be provided to the institutions/organizations. The example of online databases already exists as Higher Education Commission (HEC) is providing full access to several databases through a consortium arrangement. Public sector universities and organizations are enjoying access to all databases subscribed by the HEC while the private sector has been provided access to some of these databases. However, the HEC model can be replicated in other areas. Directorate of Public Libraries can plan RS projects amongst all the public libraries of Lahore. Punjab Library Foundation has enough funds to feed this RS project.

Conclusion

RS is an effective tool towards providing extensive access with limited financial resources. Users' demands and expectations have also arisen with the speedy growth of knowledge resources. Because of budgetary cuts, libraries are unable to purchase the needed material, so they should aim for mutual cooperation. At present, professionals are sharing their library resources as a professional and personal courtesy. There is a dire need for mutual formal cooperative programmes at different levels.

Model 3: RS through consortia

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