Editorial

Consortia access to electronic resources is a little more than a decade old in India now. Today, there are more than a dozen consortia in the country, large and small, operating under the aegis of different institutions such as the University Grants Commission, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Biotechnology, Defence Research Development Organization and so on. The formation of these consortia has led to increased accessibility of electronic resources, predominantly electronic journals and databases, in Indian institutions. Accessibility to a large number of e-resources has significantly changed the information access behaviour of users. Users now have access to a large pool of resources, easily accessible from the comforts of their workstations and these electronic resources have become an integral part of academic and research institutions in India.

Considering the fact that a new consortium was being formed in India almost every year in the last ten years, it is time to give a fresh look at access to electronic resources in the country through consortium. This special issue on *Consortia-based Access to E-Resources* discusses some of the important aspects of this increasingly prevalent form of electronic resources provisioning and also reports the operation mechanism of a couple of consortia.

There are a number of challenges when it comes to licensing of electronic resources. Malhan and Rao, in their article entitled "Refocusing attention on institutional and collective responsibility for an effective consortia model" (p. 143) have portrayed some of these challenges and go on to describe how the changing landscape of libraries and the emergence of e-learning environment are influencing consortia access. The authors discuss the prevalent licensing models, their merits and demerits. Chandel and Saikia, in their article entitled "Challenges and opportunities of e-resources" (p. 148) have also focused on the challenges and opportunities with regard to e-resources. They emphasize the need for development of an electronic resource management system. Sreekumar, in his article entitled "Strategies on e-resource management for smart information systems" (p. 155) also makes a strong case for an integrated model for access and management to all information resources in the library, including the licensed resources and suggests use of open source digital library technologies to make all the library resources and consequently the library itself more visible and accessible.

INDEST was among one of the earliest consortia formed in India. Sahoo and Agarwal, in their article entitled "INDEST-AICTE Consortium: a decade of service to engineering, science and technology community of the country" (p. 170) give a comprehensive report on the AICTE-INDEST Consortium, e-resources, its activities and services, governance, etc. The DelCON (Department of Biotechnology) Consortium is of a more recent origin and an account of this consortium is given by Lal in his article entitled "Consortia based electronic information resource sharing in Department of Biotechnology Institutes in India" (p. 181).

The effectiveness of licensed resources is largely assessed based on their usage. As e-resources proliferate, the analysis of their usage becomes time consuming and complex. In large consortia such as the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium that have more than 200 core members, analysis of usage statistics is a daunting task. COUNTER and SUSHI standards have the potential to ease the work of a consortium administrator by minimizing the time involved in manual downloading of usage statistics allowing more time for analyzing the usage statistics for better decision making. Pradhan, Rai and Arora, in their article entitled "Implications of SUSHI for analysis of usage statistics of e-resources: a case study of UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium" (p. 187) give a brief of the implication of

SUSHI for creating a usage statistics portal at the INFLIBNET Centre for monitoring the usage of the member universities. Moorthy and Pant, in their article entitled "Assessing the use of electronic information resources in DRDO institutes: An analytical study of DRDO e-journals consortium" (p. 194) analyse the usage of the DRDO consortium and give an account of the increase in expenditure, resources, cost per download, etc.

One of the first issues that were flagged since the early days of the appearance of e-resources and consortium has been that of its preservation. Multiple strategies have been proposed for preservation of licensed electronic resources in published literature, however, it is quite unlikely to find a single solution that is appropriate for all data types, situations or institutions. As such, digital preservation of subscribed content remains a concern for consortium managers. However, there have been a few global initiatives to assure perpetuity to electronic resources and these have been brought out in the article entitled "Role of consortia in preservation of e-journals" (p. 204) by Gaur and Tripathi.

While the Consortia in India, with their decade-long existence, have been able to provide equitable access to electronic resources to a large number of students, researchers and scientists in the country, challenges that have emerged have not gone unnoticed. The very philosophy of consortia access is that it provides an economy of scale. However, over the years, the licensing costs have gone up considerably forcing some of the consortia to revisit their access model. However, it is to be seen whether appearance of more and more open access journals, open access digital repositories and increasing awareness among the users about these will have implications on the licensed electronic resources or not? While we expect that open access will have an impact, the next ten years will be interesting times in the saga of consortia model for accessing electronic resources.

I thank all the authors who have contributed to this special issue and hope that readers of the journal will find the articles herein interesting and useful.

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