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LIBRARY RESOURCES SHARING ON THE INTERNET AND WORLD WIDE WEB

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SYNOPSIS

The paper views concept related to library resource sharing and provides details of many Internet and Web-based resource sharing efforts. Architectural details of some of these system are also discussed Synopsis of the paper is given below.

Library resource sharing is a partnership where several libraries share one or more of their functions, for example, acquisitions, processing, storage and delivery of services. Each member has something useful to share, is willing to share and a plan exists to accomplish this Major goal of resource sharing is to augment the local holdings by providing access to collections of other libraries

Libraries have always been under tremendous pressure to share their resources. Inflation, almost static or dwindling library budgets, information explosion and escalating prices of publications have all contributed towards this situation. No library, however richly endowed in resources, is in a position to meet all the requirements of its users from its collections alone.

What can libraries hope to share? These can be categorized into mainly two types materials and services and procedures. Resource sharing of materials includes cooperative acquisitions, which requires access to the catalogue, on-order and in-process information of participating libraries, inter-library loan, which mainly involves finding the location of the required document, verifying its availability and physical transfer; and sharing of common storage for less used material. Resource sharing of services and procedures includes; bibliographic access to holdings catalogues for cataloguing and classification.

How do we measure in library resource sharing is successful? Two main criteria are speed and cost of resource sharing. Resource sharing procedures must occur with sufficient speed so that the client has the desired material in hand well before the need has evaporated. Cost should be less or at least equal to the cost of purchasing the same material for the local collection.

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Several key requirements need to be met for successful resource sharing. These include availability of appropriate communication, technology and delivery systems, formal agreement among the participating libraries for implementing cooperation (in terms of acquisition policy, sharing of materials, bibliographic control, loan period, renewals etc.) and strong management and governing mechanism. More importantly, as it has been repeatedly demonstrated, successful resource sharing has to do more with behavior modification than technology.

In the pre-Internet years, resource sharing mainly dealt with technical processing (e.g. shared cataloguing) and inter-library loan. Less dominant were resource sharing for acquisitions and storage. Printed and card-based union catalogues were not uncommon Library automation and computerization of union catalogues was carried out on main frames using proprietary software, communication protocols and user interfaces. Towards the later part of 1980's and early 1990's many resource-sharing networks distributed their union catalogues on CD-ROMs to the participating libraries.

With the availability of the Internet, librarians quickly realised that they need not spend their efforts and resource to develop proprietary networking solutions. Internet and Web technologies have been effectively used in resource sharing efforts with several additional benefits. Key advantage is that the Internet can be used as the carrier network by all member libraries of a resource-sharing network. They just need to have good Internet connectivity. The common users interface provided by the Web browsers enable integration of access to shared resources (e.g. union catalogues) and also to local library collections and services. Integration of messaging and file transfer protocols in the Web enable easy support for inter- library loan and cataloguing efforts. Since Internet offers platform independent protocols and public domain tools, development of new applications and services and value addition to existing services becomes quite easy.

We have several examples of web-based systems supporting resource sharing, collection development and professional enhancement. Applications include union catalogues, cataloguing, cooperative acquisition, inter-library loan, reference and referral services, retrospective conversion and so on. A few such efforts include.

- Texas State Electronic Library (http://link.tsl.state.tx.us/)
- State Library of California (http://www.library.ca.gov/index.html)
- Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURI www.curl.ac.uk)
- Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester (CALIM, http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/calim)
- Colorado Library Information Network (http://www.aclin.org/)
- Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC, www.wrlc.org)
- BIBSYS (shared university, research and national library of Norway (www.bibsys.no/english.html)

Internet and the Web have given a strong impetus for consortia-based resource sharing of bibliographic databases and electronic journals. Database vendors like the Institute for Scientific Information and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts are promoting consortium approach to the use of their databases (e.g. Web of Science) among institutions with strong intranet and

internet connectivity. Similar approach has been followed by journal publishers like IEEE and Elsevier in providing access to their electronic journals. This would not have possible but for the availability of Internet. Internet has been used to provide nation-wide access to databases, for example the ELSA (Electronic Library of South Africa) in South Africa and BIDS (Bath Information and Data Services) in United Kingdom.

Mathematics and Physics reprint services operated on the Internet by LANL (Los Alamos National Laboratory) and AMS (American Mathematical Society) have successfully demonstrated the Internet use for resource sharing among researchers around the world Recent projects like the NCSTRL (Networked Computer Science Technical Reports Library) and NDLTD (National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations) are excellent examples for distributed access to large information bases.