# UGC-INFONET DIGITAL LIBRARY CONSORTIUM: A BOON FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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## Abstract

The Article presents the comprehensive depiction of various aspects of UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium. It also describes INFLIBNET and Library Consortium. All the important aspects of the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium have been included such as Activities/Services, Origin, Governance, Aims and Objectives, Benefits, E-resources subscribed, Membership etc. in systematic and organized manner. The paper concludes that this consortium is very significant for higher education in India and being proved as boon to the library and information centres in India in modern age.

**Keywords: INFLIBNET, Consortia, UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, Library and Information Centres, India**

## 1. Preamble

The modern era is witnessing the information/knowledge revolution. The information needs of the society are growing continuously at tremendous speed, hence the production of information. Only answer to manage this new information scenario is the resource sharing. The ever growing information needs of the modern age can be satisfied by the resource sharing among the library and information centres. "Traditionally, the primary purpose of establishing a Library Consortium is to share physical resources including books and periodicals amongst members. However, the mode of cooperation has gone under a transformation with infusion of new information technology from print based environment to digital environment. The emergence of Internet, particularly the World Wide Web (WWW) as a new media of information delivery triggered proliferation of web based full-text online resources"[1]. Considering the emerging ever growing scholarly academic requirements of the Indian higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has launched two ambitious and revolutionary programmes for academic community in higher education institutes under its purview. The first initiative namely "UGC-INFONET connectivity Programme" aims at networking university campuses with state-of-the-art campus wide networks and Internet bandwidth and the second initiative is known as " UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium" which provides access to selected core and peer reviewed electronic journals and databases in various disciplines. The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) is the executing and monitoring body of both the programmes. In this paper authors have tried to depict important aspects of UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium.

**2. Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET)**

INFLIBNET emerged as a front runner, facilitates automation and networking of academic libraries for resource sharing. INFLIBNET's beginning was made in 1991 as a major programme of UGC under the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA). The INFLIBNET Centre was established in May 1996 as an independent, autonomous Inter-University Centre (IUC) of the University Grants commission (UGC) in Ahmedabad, India with the target to network all the academic libraries of higher education in India.

The main activities and services of this centre include automation of academic libraries and information centres, creation of union databases of resources of academic libraries, promotion of resource sharing among academic libraries, promotion of information access and transfer, supporting scholarship, learning and academic pursuits etc. The centre is a nodal agency for networking of higher education and R&D institution Library/Information Centres to promote scholarly communication in India.

**3. Library Consortium**

The word 'Consortium' has been originated from the Latin in early 19th Century in the sense of partnership. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary depicts consortium as 'a Group of people, countries, companies, etc. who are working together on a particular project' [2]. A library consortium is a network of Libraries/Information Centres that agree for resource sharing in order to satisfy the information needs of users on the basis of library cooperation. Potter (1997) identified the following reasons for formation of Consortia [3]:

- Better sharing of existing resources and jointly acquiring new resources at great savings
- Providing enhanced library services with an emphasis on access to new electronic resources including databases and services offered through the internet and the WWW.
- Expediting inter library borrowing, which has evolved into providing as many electronic resources as possible at the lowest cost to consortia members.

Some of the significant consortia are as follows:

**At International Level**: Consortium of University Research Libraries(CURL), The British Columbia Electronic Library Network(ELN), Texas State Electronic Library Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester; Colorado Library Information Network and Washington Research Library Consortium and Library Consortia in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, GALILIO, Ohiolink, Texshare, VIVA and SUNYConnect in USA; CALIS in China; CONCERT in Taiwan.

**National Level**: UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Science and Technology (INDEST) Consortium, Inter-University Centres (IUC-DAEF) Consortia Atomic Energy, FORSA (Forum for Resource Sharing in Astronomy and Astrophysics, CSIR-Journal Consortium, HELINET(Health Science Library and Information Network), CeRA (Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture)[4].

**4.     UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium**

This Consortium is the front runner among the Library Consortia in India.

**Introduction**

The UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium is major initiative of UGC to bring qualitative change in academic world in India. It was formally launched in December 2003 by Honorable Dr.

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the then President of India, soon after providing the Internet connectivity to the Universities in the year 2003 under the UGC-Infonet programme [5]. This consortium is an ambitious programme for providing access to scholarly electronic resources including full-text and bibliographical databases in all subject disciplines to academic and research community in India in order to bring qualitative change in teaching, learning and research in Indian higher education. Currently the consortium provides current as well as archival access to more than 5,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and 09 bibliographical databases in various subjects from 23 publishers and aggregators. Presently total membership of this consortium is 189 and thus in terms of users, this has become the largest consortium in India.

## 4.2 Aims and Objectives [6]

The main objective of the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium is to provide access to qualitative e-resources including full-text and bibliographic databases to academic institution at a lower rates of subscription. The major aims and objectives of this consortium are as follows:

i. to provide access to a high-quality and scholarly electronic resource to a large number of academic institution including universities and colleges at substantially lower rates of subscription and at most favourable terms and conditions;

ii. To promote rapid and efficient access to scholarly content to the users and to create and promote use of ICT in teaching and learning in universities in India;

iii. To extend the benefit of consortium to its associate members including private universities and colleges;

iv. To impart training to the users, librarians, research scholars and faculty members of the institutions in use of electronic resources with an aim to optimize their usage;

v. To promote use of e-resources with gradual decrease in print subscription;

vi. To promote interaction and inter-library co-operation amongst the participating universities;

vii. To evaluate the usage of the subscribed resources and to identify new resources that are required to be subscribed under the programme;

viii. To bring qualitative change in teaching, learning and research with an aim to meet the ever growing challenges of globalization of higher education and

ix. To increase the research productivity of the institution both in terms of quality and quantity of publication.

## 4.3 Benefits

There are many benefits of this Consortium in the modern information age. It acts as a single-window service for a big number of academic institutions, with their vivid research and academic interests in India. This consortium makes available e-resources to participating institutions at highly discounted rates of subscription with most favourable terms and conditions of agreements. The rates offered to the consortium are lower by 60% to 99% depending upon the category of institutions [7]. Through the consortium instant access to resources is being established at zero incremental cost for accessing backfiles which were earlier not subscribed.

## 4.4 Major Activities

Major activities of the Consortium are as follows [8]:

i) To arrange subscription to electronic resources identified and negotiated by the members of its National Steering Committee;

ii) To measure usage of existing e-resources and its impact of research output in terms of number of research publications;

iii) To identify new resources relevant to the user community in universities;

iv) Interaction with member Libraries to ensure optimal utilization of subscribed electronic resources;

v) Ensure access to subscribed electronic resources to member universities as per their subscription;

vi) Organize training programmes for the member institutions on use of electronic resources;

vii) Interact with the officials in UGC for continuation and promotion of the programme;

viii) Interact with ERNET India for providing uninterrupted Internet bandwidth in the member universities;

ix) Initiate additional activities complementary to the present activities of the Consortium and;

x) Encourage interactions amongst member Libraries.

Thus the Consortium is conducting a wide range of activities.

## 4.5 Membership

This Consortium has currently following types of members:

### 4.5.1 Universities under purview of UGC (Core Members):

All Universities covered under 12B of UGC Act are entitled to be the member of the Consortium. These Universities are considered as core members. All expenses on subscription to e-resources for these universities are borne by the UGC. As per the diversity of resources needed and ICT infrastructure available in these universities, 158 universities currently covered under the programme under the following three phases:

- Universities covered under Phase I  – 50
- Universities covered under Phase II – 50
- Universities covered under Phase III – 58
- IUCs & Other Institution          - 04

### 4.5.2 Associate Members

The Associate Membership programme for the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium has recently been introduced wherein e-resources subscribed by the Consortium are made available on subscription to private universities and other academic institutions at low rates of subscription and favourable terms and conditions of subscription. Currently total number of Associate Members is 27.

### 4.5.3 College Model of the Consortium

There is also a proposal to extend services of this Consortium to Colleges with Potential for Excellence (CPE) as well as to autonomous colleges having adequate ICT infrastructure.

Besides, the INFLIBNET Centre is also actively working closely with MHRD to extend the services of the Consortium to all its affiliated colleges under the National Mission on Education through ICT. The proposal named "National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content"(N-LIST) is being evolved in collaboration with the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium and the INDEST-AICTE Consortium, IIT Delhi.

Thus currently total members of this Consortium are 189[9].

## 4.6 Governance

This Consortium is being executed and monitored by the INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad.

## 4.7 Electronic Resources

The Consortium subscribes to e-resources covering all major subject disciplines for academia. It provides current as well as archival access to more than 5,000 core and peer reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic databases from 23 publishers and aggregators in various disciplines. These electronic resources can be broadly categorized in two parts as follows:

The Consortium subscribes to 19 full-text e-resources and 10 bibliographic databases which have been depicted in the following table [10]:

**Electronic Resources Subscribed by the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium**

| Sr. No. | Electronic Resources | URL |
|---------|----------------------|-----|
| | | *Full-text Resources* |
| 1 | ACS | http://www.pubs.acs.org/ |
| 2 | AIP | http://www.scitation.org/ |
| 3 | APS | http://www.scitation.org/ |
| 4 | Annual Reviews | http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/ |
| 5 | Blackwell Publishing (Wiley InterScience) | http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/ |
| 6 | CUP-STM | http://journals.cambridge.org/ |
| | CUP-HSS | http://journals.cambridge.org/ |
| 7 | Cell Press(Elsevier) | http://www.sciencedirect.com/ |
| 8 | Emerald – Lib.Sci. | http://iris.emeraldinsight.com/ |
| 9 | Institute of Physics | http://www.iop.org/EJ/ |
| 10 | Jstor | http://www.jstor.org/ |
| 11 | Nature | http://www.nature.com/ |
| 12 | OUP | http://www.oxfordjournals.org |
| 13 | Portland Press | http://www.portlandpress.com/pp/default.htm |
| 14 | Project Euclid | http://projecteuclid.org/ |
| 15 | Project Muse | http://muse.jhu.edu/journals |
| 16 | RSC | http://www.rsc.org/ |
| 17 | SIAM Journals | http://epubs.siam.org/ |
| 18 | Springer Link | http://www.springerlink.com/ |
| 19 | Taylor & Francis | http://journalonline.tandf.co.uk/ |
| | **Bibliographic Databases** | |
| 20 | JCCC | http://jccc-infonet.informindia.co.in |
| 21 | MathSciNet | http://www.ams.org/mathscinet |
| 22 | SciFinderScholar | http://www.cas.org/SCIFINDER/SCHOLAR/index.html |
| 23 | ISID | http://isid.org.in |
| 24 | Royal Society of Chemistry(6 Databases) | http://www.rsc.org/publishing/CurrentAwareness/index.asp |
| 25 | Web of Science(Through N-LIST Programme) | http://isiknowledge.com/ |
| | **Open Access Resources** | |

**4.8    Using E-Resources**
**4.8.1   How to Access E-Resources?**
    The access to electronic resources is IP-enabled for the member universities/institutions. As such a user does not need "Login ID and Password" to access resources available to his/her institution, in stead, the resources are accessible to them across the campus network. The Consortium also maintains a website (http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/econ/).
**4.8.2    Creating Awareness**
    Creating awareness about access to e-resources among participating members is very necessary in order to make the maximum benefit of the Consortium. The INFLIBNET Centre organizes "One-Day User Awareness Programme" and "Two-Days User Awareness Programme" at participating Universities/Institution. Till now more than 62 such programmes have been organized.
**4.9    Future Endeavors**
    Considering the actual demand of the user's community, the consortium has proposal to add more e-resources to its list including electronic books, full-text journals and bibliographic databases, datasets and reference books etc. The Consortium has plans to strengthen and expand "Associate Membership Programme". Dr.Jagdish Arora, the Director INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad  has expressed his view about future endeavors in following words "I have an elaborate agenda that has been laid-out for me by my predecessors to accomplish in years to come"[11].
**5    Conclusion**
    UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium is one of the largest consortia in the world which is providing access to numerous e-resources for academic and research community facilitating the scholarly communication in India. Thus it is being proved as a boon to the library and information centres and higher education in India in modern age.

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