
A PLAN FOR COOPERATION AND NETWORKING AMONG ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGICAL LIBRARIES IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Librarians of today are facing two major problems. They are a) information explosion and, b) price escalation of library materials.

The production of publications in various fields, especially in the field of science and technology is rapidly increasing. It is estimated that the primary source literature of science and technology was becoming double in every fifteen years and now it doubles in ten years and thus this doubling time is rapidly coming down.

According to the UNESCO statistics of world book production, about three lakhs of books are published every year. The number of learned periodicals in the field of science and technology has now increased to 60,000 adding at the rate of 1,000 periodicals annually.

Thus, this vast publication of literature is posing a problem to the librarians to take a decision about what to acquire and hold in their individual collection.

Another major problem the librarians are facing is the price escalation. Publication costs have been increasing rapidly because of the rising costs of labour, materials and facilities. The price of all the publications, especially the subscription rate of current periodicals is increasing every year. It is surprising to note that, in the year 1940, the annual subscription of the Chemical Abstracts was only $12 and today it is $12,000.

Thus, it is virtually not possible for any library, however big and rich it may be, to acquire all the publications that are required for a comprehensive coverage.

In order to find a solution to these problems, the concept of cooperation has emerged among the libraries.

THE CONCEPT OF COOPERATION

In simple words 'library cooperation' is a combined effort of two or more libraries to share their resources and functions, to provide better facilities and services to their users and decide ways and means of reducing cost in the library functions.

The engineering and technological libraries are academic in nature, and these libraries aim at equipping themselves with the materials that are needed for the undergraduate and postgraduate students, research scholars and the faculty members of the institution.

The engineering and technological libraries can be grouped mainly into three types:

a) Five IIT libraries situated at Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Madras.

b) Fifteen REC Libraries situated in different states

c) 142 Engineering college libraries.

NEED FOR COOPERATION AMONG INDIAN ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGICAL LIBRARIES

Cooperative network for sharing resources among engineering and technological libraries has become a necessity for the following reasons:

1) The difficulty in acquiring the full range of library resources.

2) Insufficient financial support for acquiring library resources.

3) Steady increase in the cost of library materials.
The questionnaire was sent to all the 162 engineering and technological libraries. Out of which 87 i.e. 53.7% responded. The data is analysed and presented briefly as follows.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1) Results of the evaluation of engineering and technological libraries show that about 55% of total book stock, 61% of total current periodicals, and 90% of total bound periodicals are available only with the high group of libraries. The average collection of these materials per library is also more in high group libraries in comparison with other groups of libraries.

2) The collection of thesis, reports, patents, specifications, photocopies, translations and non-print materials which are essential for research activities are also available with high group of libraries.

3) It is observed that low group of libraries are facing the problem of shortage of staff. Moreover their professional manpower is being wasted on routine functions, such as acquisition, classification, etc.

4) Forty five engineering and technological libraries have sixty two photocoping machines. The number of machines per library range between one to five.

5) A majority of engineering and technological libraries have a uniform acquisition policy. Out of the total personnel available in these libraries, 13.4% are working in the acquisition activity to procure more or less the same type of documents.

6) Majority of engineering and technological libraries follow common classification and cataloguing practice. Out of the total library personnel, 8.3% of library staff are working in technical processing sections processing the common documents.

7) No formal cooperative activity exists among engineering and technological libraries. The activities such as, interlibrary loan and exchange of the lists of new additions to the library are maintained informally. Librarians expressed that there is no formal agreement or policy for inter library loan.

8) While assessing the opinions of the librarians about the twenty one proposed cooperative activities, almost all the librarians expressed that these activities are highly desirable.
Table 1
Link between Engineering and Technological Libraries in different states/Union Territories with Zonal Operating Centres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>State/Union Territories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. North Zone</td>
<td>J&amp;K, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, Himachal Prades, Haryana, Chandigarh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIT, Delhi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Central Zone,</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIT, Kanpur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. East Zone,</td>
<td>Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIT, Kharagpur</td>
<td>Tripura, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkin, Andaman and Nicobar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. South Zone,</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Pondicherry and Lakshadeep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIT, Madras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. West Zone,</td>
<td>Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Daman and Diu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIT, Bombay</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

9) The responding librarians opined that the problems of lack of library cooperative policy, lack of planning, lack of human resources, lack of financial support and lack of spirit of cooperation are crucial and necessarily must be overcome.

PROPOSED COOPERATIVE NETWORK

Based on these findings a cooperative network is proposed:

Network Structure:

The proposed network structure for engineering and technological libraries would be both centralised and decentralised. Each IIT library would function as a Zonal Operating Centre (ZOC). All the engineering colleges in that zone would be the members of the ZOC.

The geographically distributed engineering and technological libraries in different states and Union Territories would be linked in the network of five zones with each IIT as its Zonal Operating Centre as shown in Table 1.

The network would function at three levels as shown below:

First Level

All the five IIT libraries would act as Zonal Operating Centres. These centres would be supported by NISSAT and INSDOC for their development. They would interact with each other and be linked with sectoral centres of NISSAT and regional centres of INSDOC.

Second Level

All the regional engineering college libraries would act as Sectoral Operating Centres. They will also be linked with regional centres of NISSAT and INSDOC.

Third Level

All other engineering college libraries would act as Local Centres. These centres would directly avail the services of the Sectoral Operating Centres.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

It is proposed that engineering and technological library network might be established under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, in the Department of Education. Members from zonal and sectoral operating centres, UGC, DST, NISSAT and INSDOC might represent the Board of Directors of the engineering and technological library network. A coordinator might be appointed to serve as the chief administration and planning officer. One of the directors might be elected as the chairman of the board.
Various working committees might be setup for planning and presenting proposals for cooperative action in the specific areas.

The Advisory Council would be established to advice and assist the Board of Directors. The members of the council might include the directors of IIT's, principals of REC's, directors of INS-DOC and NISSAT, chairman of UGC and DST. This group might meet annually with the board to review the progress of network and give further suggestions (Fig. 1).

CONCLUSION

Although the proposed plan is only a theoretical one, it is hoped that the plan will give directions to Indian engineering and technological librarians for the establishment of a cooperative library network. it will also be a base for the development of national library network in India.