

# LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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*Resource Sharing Amongst the  
Special Libraries at Jorbat in  
Periodical Acquisition\**

INTRODUCTION

LIBRARIES all over the world are facing the problem of catering to the information needs of readers whose interests are many and diverse, while the resources at their reach are very limited. No library in the world can be self sufficient in its resources however financially sound it may be. This is more so for libraries in the developing countries like India which are heavily dependent on foreign countries for books, journals and other documents. The increasing cost, scarcity of foreign exchange, the constant increase in the exchange rate of foreign currencies and shrinkage of library budget are some of the perennial problems that confront the libraries in acquisition of information materials. Many libraries are now running down due to resource constraints. This is a matter of great concern not only to the libraries alone but to the users of libraries as well. The libraries have now come to realise that some sort of co-operation in acquisition, sharing of resources amongst a group of libraries, avoiding of wasteful duplication and filling up of the resource gap through co-operative efforts would go a long way towards solution of these problems. Some attempts towards this end started in India since 1965 when INSDOC first started compiling the Union Catalogue of Scientific Periodicals at local, regional and finally on national level (NUCSSI). Through

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NUCSSI it is now possible to locate a journal available in any Indian library and get photocopy of any article from the journal directly from the host library. A maiden attempt in active library co-operation in India was made by BOSLA (Bombay Library Association) in 1970. Since then BOSLA has been very effectively sharing the resources of 16 libraries through inter-library lending and exchange of services and expertise.<sup>1</sup> On the creation of NISSAT in 1970s interlibrary co-operation received a new dimension. Under the NISSAT programme more than half a dozen of sectoral information centres set up in 1980s are now in operation catering to the information needs of S&T personnel throughout the country pertaining to these sectoral areas. Lately NISSAT is engaged in setting up few important networks in metropolitan cities like Delhi and Calcutta through pulling the information resources of the major libraries in the concerned cities to a common pool and making them available to all the participating libraries through sharing. Through DELNET five CSIR libraries are sharing resources among themselves using NIC facilities. On full implementation of the project 50 major libraries in Delhi will be included in the network. The first phase of CALIBNET which includes 12 major libraries in Calcutta has become operational and many of the important libraries of institutions like Jadavpur University, Central Glass & Ceramic Research Institution, Indian Institution of Chemical Biology, Indian Institute of Cultivation of Science, Bose Institute, etc. are participating in this network for sharing of resources. Effective resource sharing is being practiced within the DRDO laboratories/establishments also. A very comprehensive network named INFLIBNET is being planned by UGC with over 400 nodes in all the universities, P.G. colleges and R & D Institutions all over the country. On implementation INFLIBNET will be a mile-stone in India in resource sharing. To-day resource sharing amongst the libraries has become a burning topic and various aspects involved in it has been widely discussed.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

In view of this topical importance, an attempt is being made by the authors to assess the feasibility of sharing the periodical resources amongst the libraries in North Eastern Region of India in general and those at Jorhat in particular. The study is kept confined to S&T periodicals only as these periodicals provide

80-90% information needs of scientists and academicians engaged in research and development and absorb the bulk of the library budget — in foreign exchange. The Indian periodicals are excluded from the study as these journals are relatively cheap.

### METHODS AND MATERIALS

*Coverage* : Sometimes in 1991 circular letters were sent to all the librarians of the major libraries of the N.E. region to send us the list of periodicals being subscribed to his/her library for the year 1991 along with the price. In response information were received from the libraries of Tea Research Association (TRA), Jorhat, Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, Dibrugarh University (DU), Dibrugarh, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, North Eastern Council (NEC), Shillong and Cotton College (CC), Guwahati. However, we could not get any information from libraries of the Gauhati University, Botanical Survey of India, Eastern Circle, Manipur University and ICAR Complex, Shillong. The lack of information from these libraries has impaired the coverage of our study to a great extent.

*The Libraries of Jorhat* : Jorhat has more than a dozen of libraries attached to various academic and R&D institutions besides a major public library but only three special libraries namely the libraries of RRL, Jorhat, AAU and TRA are of all India standing. Few special libraries attached to the Science College, Tata R&D Centre, Teok, Silk Research Station, Coal Survey Station, Institute of Rain & Moist Deciduous Forest Research (IR&MDFR), Institute of Biotechnology and Geotectonic Studies (INBIGS), etc. are very recent and have very few foreign periodicals. The TRA library is the oldest special library in this region which had its origin in 1911. The AAU library was upgraded to an University library in 1966 from the Agricultural College Library established in 1948 and the RRL Library was established in 1964. All the libraries have a fairly good collection of information materials on general science, agricultural science, tea and related fields and technology. The libraries are situated within a diameter of about 15km, the AAU and TRA libraries are contiguous and the RRL is situated about 12-15km away from them. RRL is on the National Highway and the other two are also well connected through good roads.

*The Periodicals* : All the libraries together subscribed to 815 periodicals of which 399 are Indian and the rest 416 are

foreign origin. (AAU-162, RRL-178 and TRA-76). However, of these 416 titles only 358 are separate titles and the rest 58 are subscribed either in duplicate or triplicate by the three libraries. The list of such titles are presented in Table I,II,III and IV. A total picture of the periodicals available in the seven major libraries in the N.E. region is given in table-V.

### DISCUSSION

It will be seen from table-I that both AAU and TRA subscribed to 21 common titles costing about Rs. 1.126 lakhs, AAU and RRL (Table-II) subscribed to 6 common titles costing Rs. 0.427 lakhs, RRL and TRA subscribed (Table-III) to 13 common titles costing Rs. 1.207 lakhs and AAU, RRL and TRA subscribed to 9 common titles costing Rs. 0.54 lakhs. If single copy of these titles are subscribed and the titles are made accessible to all the three libraries by the host library an amount of Rs. 3.84 lakhs can be saved or 58 foreign titles can be acquired to make up deficiency and serve the needs of the scientific and academic community more comprehensively.

If multiple copy subscription of titles is avoided between the Jorhat group of libraries and Dibrugarh University library an additional amount of Rs. 2.5 lakhs can be saved as there are as many as 30 titles subscribed by the D.U. library which are common to that of Jorhat group of libraries.

Through avoidance of multiple copy subscription by the other major libraries in Shillong namely NEHU and NEC a further amount of Rs. 3.46 lakhs can be saved as NEHU library has 52 common titles with the Jorhat group of libraries (AAU-19, RRL-17, and TRA-16) valued at Rs. 2.75 lakhs and NEC has 4 titles common to AAU and 9 titles common to RRL costing Rs. 0.71 lakh.

From the above it transpires that through co-operative acquisition of foreign periodicals and avoiding duplication of subscription it is possible to conserve foreign exchange to the extent of Rs. 9.80 lakh by all the libraries and if this amount is spent for acquisition of periodicals, about 150 titles can be added to the library network in the entire N.E. region. The figure is likely to go further if the periodicals of the missing major libraries are taken into consideration.

However, sharing of resources amongst the libraries is beset with many a barriers and problems such as administrative, geographical, psychological etc. But once these are removed and the libraries come forward with open minds, sincerity and willingness, a fair degree of success can be expected. What can possibly be done to begin with the sharing amongst the contiguous libraries such as AAU, RRL and TRA :

- 1) Prepare the list of foreign periodicals that each library proposes to subscribe during the next year and circulate the same amongst the librarians of the co-operating libraries.
- 2) Arrange a discussion amongst the librarians to select the periodicals to be acquired by each library avoiding wasteful duplication and identifying the deficient areas for filling up the gap.
- 3) Each library will send regularly photocopy of the content pages of these periodicals subscribed by it, to other libraries not subscribing to these but requiring the content pages. These libraries will display or circulate these content pages amongst the users, collect requisitions for relevant articles and procure them from the host library. An account for rendering such photocopy service can be maintained by each library which can be settled up at the end of each financial year. Alternatively these journals can be lent to other libraries, through courier service (to avoid delay, damage and loss in transit) for a period of 5-10 days after the display period in the host library is over. Content page service will be more preferable to inter-library loan of periodicals to the libraries situated at distant places in view of the poor communication system in the region.
- 4) Free access to users of other libraries :

It must be noted that duplication of periodicals amongst the participating libraries at times may not be wasteful as some libraries naturally will not prefer to rely on other libraries for periodicals core to their areas of work. However in many libraries where the essential periodicals are slipping out of reach due to budgetary constraints, the librarians must avoid the subscription to titles falling in peripheral areas and sharing these from other libraries where such periodicals may fall in core areas. The librarians must be very cautious in selection of indexing and abstracting periodicals

which are many in number and are comparatively more expensive than primary periodicals. Abstracting periodicals are very useful for scientific community for retrospective search of literature. After examining their overlapping a few of such abstracting journals may be selected and the subscription to them may be assigned to a library having maximum utilization. Indexing journals can be shared more easily. For example — there is no point in subscribing to all the parts of the "Current Contents" published by ISI by a single library in Jorhat. Instead these can be divided between the three libraries — say RRL can subscribe to (i) Physical, Chemical and Earth Science and (ii) Engineering, Technology and Applied Science, TRA can subscribe to (iii) Life Science and AAU to (iv) Agriculture and Biological and Environmental Science. Through inter-library lending it is possible to make all these parts available to all the R&D personnel of these institutions leading to a saving around Rs. 1 lakh in foreign currency.

It must be noted that N.E. region does not have many major special and academic libraries nor adequate stock of books and journals to enable to share the resources whereas such facilities are widely available in cities like Delhi, Calcutta etc. For example Delhi has alone 65 well organized scientific libraries, and in 1982 out of 13406 titles available throughout the country, Delhi alone had 8326 titles of which 83.75 were received from foreign countries.<sup>5</sup> So if a scientist/academician does not get a journal in his/her own library he/she can get it in one of the other libraries within the city. But in Jorhat libraries we have only 358 foreign periodicals which is about 5.00% of foreign periodicals available in Delhi, about 3.00% of the foreign periodicals available in India and about 0.5% of total S&T periodicals available in the world. If we compare the total number of foreign periodicals available in the entire North Eastern Region with that of Delhi, India and World figures we get a very dismal picture. So, in order to meet the minimum information needs of the scientific and academic community of the region, the S&T information base in the region must be strengthened through acquisition of more scientific and technical journals covering the various areas of R&D. The North Eastern Council, the U.G.C. and the State Governments should take abiding interest in this respect.



## CONCLUSION

The scientific and academic community of the region is handicapped due to the non-availability of adequate information. Through co-operative efforts in acquisition and sharing the resources amongst the libraries the situation can be eased to some extent. But for strengthening the S&T information base of the region adequate incentives from NEC, UGC and concerned State Governments will be required.

Table 1 : FOREIGN JOURNALS SUBSCRIBED BY  
AAU & TRA (IN 1991)

1. Agronomy Abstract	...	Rs.	301.20
2. Agronomy Journal	...	Rs.	1,916.85
3. Annals of Applied Biology	...	Rs.	6,090.00
4. Annals of Entomological Society of America	...	Rs.	3,653.69
5. Biotechnology	...	Rs.	540.00
6. Bulletin of Entomological Res.	...	Rs.	4,389.20
7. Current Content, Life Science	...	Rs.	10,584.00
8. Ecological Entomology	...	Rs.	4,410.00
9. FAO Qdly Bull of Statistics	—	Rs.	740.00
10. Field Crop Research	—	Rs.	6,615.50
11. J Agriculture Science	—	Rs.	7,728.00
12. J Agricultural Economics	—	Rs.	1,197.20
13. J American Soc For Hort Sci	—	Rs.	8,050.00
14. J Applied Ecology	—	Rs.	6,216.00
15. J Food Science	—	Rs.	3,124.80
16. Mycologia	—	Rs.	2,472.00
17. Plant Cell	—	Rs.	15,049.50
18. Proc National Academy of Sci	—	Rs.	11,532.00
19. Soil & Fertilizer	—	Rs.	12,797.60
20. Soil Science	...	Rs.	3,360.00
21. Soil Science Society of America Journal	...	Rs.	1,906.80
Total		Rs.	1,12,674.25

**Table 2 : FOREIGN JOURNALS SUBSCRIBED BY RRL & AAU DURING 1991**

1. Canadian J Microbiology	...	Rs. 1,486.35
2. Nature	—	Rs. 7,933.50
3. Phytoparasitica	...	Rs. 2,079.00
4. Plant & Soil	...	Rs. 26,297.37
5. Plant Disease	—	Rs. 3,999.60
6. Scientific American	...	Rs. 914.80
Total		Rs. 42,710.62

**Table 3 : FOREIGN JOURNALS SUBSCRIBED BY RRL & TRA DURING 1991**

1. Agriculture & Biological Chem.	...	Rs. 3,402.00
2. Analytical Chemistry	—	Rs. 7,523.20
3. ADAC Journal	...	Rs. 3,697.89
4. Biotechnology & Bioengineering	—	Rs. 16,669.80
5. Chemical	...	Rs. 6,072.30
6. I&EC Research	—	Rs. 8,277.86
7. J American Chemical Society	...	Rs. 38,216.28
8. J Biological Chemistry	—	Rs. 14,607.65
9. New Scientist	...	Rs. 3,874.50
10. Phytochemistry	—	Rs. 19,647.20
11. Plant Cell Report	...	Rs. 7,811.90
12. Review of Agricultural Entomology, SER-A	—	Rs. 6,061.28
13. Tropical Pest Management	...	Rs. 3,685.50
Total		Rs. 1,20,748.42

Table 4 : FOREIGN JOURNALS SUBSCRIBED BY AAU, RRL &amp; TRA DURING 1991

1. Crop Science	---	Rs. 1,362.38
2. Experimental Agriculture	---	Rs. 2,940.00
3. Horticultural Abstract	---	Rs. 12,474.00
4. J Agriculture & Food Chemistry	---	Rs. 5,531.24
5. J Economic Entomology	---	Rs. 3,503.26
6. Phytopathology	---	Rs. 4,441.50
7. Plant Breeding Abstract	---	Rs. 10,078.64
8. Review of Plant Pathology	---	Rs. 6,237.48
9. Science	---	Rs. 7,500.42
Total		Rs. 54,158.81

Table 5 : PERIODICALS SUBSCRIBED BY ALL THE LIBRARIES OF N.E. REGION UNDER REVIEW DURING 1991

Libraries	Indian	Foreign	Total	
1. AAU	148	162	310	Total reports 168 Foreign 258 Indian Libraries
2. RRL	126	178	304	
3. TRA	123	76	201	
4. NEC	119	48	167	
5. NEHU	132	53	185	
6. DU	206	499	705	
7. CC	21	5	26	
Total	877	1021	1898	637 for all the 7 libraries under review.

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