# Developing a Digital Resources Consortium for University Libraries in Bangladesh: Proposed Role of UGC

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**Abstract.** University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh has taken an initiative to form a Digital Resources Consortium for the university libraries in Bangladesh for sharing integrated library systems and computer databases, collection development, purchasing of electronic journals, and digital resources. As of today there is no formal platform of consortium is established in Bangladesh. This paper attempt to analyze the suitability of formation of consortium in Bangladesh based on the requirement and usage of digital information and gives some overview of progress in developing a consortium for academic libraries in Bangladesh, with an emphasis on the role of UGC Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Digital libraries, Consortia, Information services, Information technology, Bangladesh.

## 1 Preamble of Consortium in Bangladesh

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh [1] initiated Digital Resources Consortium in Bangladesh would unveil enormous opportunities in the field of education and research. In order to provide the current literature to academia, UGC has initiated for formation of Digital Resources Consortium in Bangladesh. A 4-member Committee has already been assigned at UGC to draft a concept paper on forming a consortium in Bangladesh.

## 2 Methodology

In order to provide a detailed analysis of the literature on digital resources consortium for university libraries in Bangladesh, many webliographic sources were consulted. We attended meetings, which were conducted by the UGC Bangladesh. We also participated in the discussion of UGC meeting, exchanged views, shared opinions, and finally submitted a concept paper on Consortium of University and Research

Libraries in Bangladesh (CURLB) to the UGC. The draft concept paper was developed by the authors of this article and other two authors. Current situation of consortium in Bangladesh, documentary sources and direct observations are the major methods of this article.

## 3   Local Librarians' Initiative for Consortium

About a year back a small group of local librarians including the author of this article working at private university libraries discussed many issues on the development of academic libraries including information resources sharing in the line of reducing journals' prices, inter-library cooperation, jointly acquiring new resources at a great savings, and strengthening professional relationship among universities. The co-author of this article informed us that he has already started subscription to very expensive e-journals through Balani-Infotech, New Delhi, India, who is the sole agent for some e-resources of this region. Two Librarians (author and co-author of this article), in charge of East West University and Independent University, Bangladesh shared opinion each other on inter-library cooperation as the university management wants to have the best services from their libraries but at the reduced cost. In the month of August 2005, Mr. Nirmal of Balani-Infotech came to Bangladesh for exploring new institutional subscribers. Mr. Nirmal held some meetings with the local librarians and also held a meeting with the member of UGC, where the local university librarians participated. As a result an overview paper was prepared for forming a consortium in Bangladesh [3]. About three months back, the local librarians particularly four major top private university librarians of North South University (NSU); Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB); BRAC University (BU); and East West University (EWU), sat together, floated ideas and exchanged views with each other on library resources for sharing what the universities don't have. After a few months, Dr. Javed I. Khan, Fulbright Senior Specialist, Kent State University, USA, visited Bangladesh and expressed his interest to guide for formation of Research and Education Network (REN) and Bangladesh Digital Library Consortium (BDLC). He has recently submitted a draft proposal to the UGC. Recently Bangladesh Association of Librarians, Information Scientists, and Documentalists (BALID) organized a seminar on Impact of Digital Libraries for Higher Education and Research in Bangladesh where Mr. S.I. Khan presented a keynote paper [4].

## 4   Present Scenario of Consortium in Bangladesh

At present, there is no library consortium in Bangladesh. In the past, UGC had taken many initiatives for sharing information resources of different universities for the benefits of the universities. Since, 1980s' there have been a number of attempts by UGC to unify the library catalogue systems and even to arrange some form of cooperative journal subscription for sharing resources. However, it is yet to be realized due to financial constraints. None of the public universities, including the largest research and technical universities Open University (OU) and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) can provide access to any

electronic journal to its students or faculty. Few private universities provide access to limited collections namely DOAJ, AGORA, HINARI, OUP, eGrannary, EMERALD, ACM, IEEE, and JSTOR. Not a single institution in Bangladesh could afford the institutional membership to any major medical, engineering, or technology collections; such as ACM, IEEE, Elsevier, Academic Press journals, and proceedings [2]. After 1992 Private University Act, many private universities particularly some top ranking universities came forward and emphasized to establish an automated modern library in respective premises with all IT facilities i.e. computer network, Internet, and email, etc. Out of 54 private universities, two or three of them have their own VSAT.

In 1998, there were a networking attempt called Bangladesh National Scientific and Library Information Network (BANSLINK). This Project was initiated by the Bangladesh National Scientific, Technical and Documentation Centre (BANSDOC). It ventured to connect libraries across the country by setting up a network with 15 libraries- 6 out of Dhaka and 9 in Dhaka via dial-up links. The initiative fell apart due to administrative reorganization at the top and subsequent lack of appreciation [2].

We are not highly ambitious for formation of consortium in Bangladesh at this moment, because of our limited infrastructure facilities and resources. But we are very much interested to form this consortium for the greater interest of our own existence in the global village. Proposed Consortium may be divided into three phases. In 2003, UGC recommended in the light of the National Conference of Inter-University IT Professionals in Bangladesh that "a common library for all Universities is required"[5]. We all must admit that the problems were too hard and too expensive for libraries to undertake alone. Both private and public university libraries will achieve great benefits from this form of co-operation (please see the table).

**Table 1.** Beneficiaries of the Proposed Consortium

| Types | Institutions |
| --- | --- |
| Public Universities | 20 |
| Private and International Universities | 54 |
| Public Medical and Dental Colleges | 14 |
| Private Medical and Dental Colleges | 17 |
| Open University | 1 |
| National University | 1 |
| Research Instituites/Centres | 58 |
| Research Academy | 3 |
| Total Universities and other Institutes | 168 |

## 5   Implementation Plan for Formation of Consortium

UGC of Bangladesh will act as a coordinating agency to implement the project. UGC will engage all universities to draw, design, and prepare a work plan for implementation of the said project. UGC, Donor Agency, and participant university partners will work together. However, administration of the project will be run by the UGC. Three phases implementation plan may be made for formation of Consortium -

**Phase 1.** Consortium may be launched immediately by the university libraries, which are already connected with Internet and having basic IT facilities. Interested Research Organizations which have basic IT facilities in Bangladesh may join this proposed Consortium in phase 1. Which institutions do not have those facilities, they should join in phase 2 plan.

**Phase 2.** Draft proposal submitted to the UGC by Dr. Javed I. Khan may be considered for implementation in phase 2. Dr. Khan has given some guidelines for formation of Bangladesh Digital Library Consortium in his proposal. That proposal will be considered as a national project. Participants of phase 1 consortium may take part in dialogue for sharing their experiences gained in phase 1. E-Journal Consortium project may be upgraded in phase 2. Prepare recommendations for implementation of project in phase 3.

**Phase 3.** Phase 1 and phase 2 plan may be implemented in phase 3 with all IT facilities and ensure dissemination of information through the consortium with reduced cost but maximum benefit. Keep an eye on the project, review it and take steps for further improvement, if required.

## 6   Conclusion

Bangladesh being a developing country should form a body among the university libraries to catch the new opportunity to make her people competent for the world. UGC's initiative for formation of Consortium would develop facilities for making suitable environment for higher education and research by which the country will be benefited ultimately.

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