

Library Consortia for Agricultural Research in India: A Study

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Abstract: India is an agricultural-based country, and is also known as the middle pillar of the Indian economy. Agriculture contributes about 17.04 % of the Indian GDP. More than 50 % of the country's population is engaged in agriculture and its allied activities. It is the only sector which survives and feeds the Indian population in covid-19 pandemic and gives employment to the people who lost their livelihood. The Government of India always took agriculture as an important list and made new policies to boost the sector for its sustainable development. To enhance agricultural productivity, improve soil fertility, and agricultural-related activities scientists and researchers play a vital role that are always trying to improve this sector's productivity and making efforts to enhance the farmer's income. To fulfill the information needs of scientists and researchers, agriculture libraries play a vital role in delivering the best information, which they utilize for their research. Now it is noticed that the research activities might be refined due to e-resources which give a wider window. Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) supported by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for National Agricultural Research Education System (NARES) Libraries to support the research fraternity through strengthening and developing library services. The paper is a simple attempt to discuss the background, main features, and benefits of the CeRA for agriculture research and development.

Key Words: DKMA, ICAR, CeRA, E-Resources, NAHRES, E-Content.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India is an agricultural-based country and agriculture has a large portion of its GDP. More than half of the population of India depends upon agriculture and its allied activities and lives in rural areas. The demand for agricultural products is increasing day by day and our field and farmers are lacking to fulfill this demand. To fill the gap, agriculture institutes, colleges, universities and scientists play a vital role to enhance the productivity and income of the farmers'. Agricultural libraries through Information and Communications Technology (ICT) have undergone tremendous change in the process of information needed by the researches of agriculture in terms of growth and development. Timely & easy availability and accessibility of agriculture related latest information to researchers helps a lot for the development of agriculture and farmers of India. In this regard, Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) has been established to fulfill the requirement of agricultural related latest information and knowledge management.

2. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY:

- To know the concept of library consortia.
- To know the initiatives of CeRA.
- To know the different features of CeRA.
- To know the impact of CeRA in agricultural research.
- To identify the advantages and disadvantages of consortia.

3. METHODOLOGY:

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives a detailed study of different articles, journals, research papers, theses, websites etc. on library consortia has been done before writing this paper. The main sources of this study are the content available on ICAR, CeRA, INFLIBNET, DESIDOC, IASLIC, WIPO, IFLA, ALA and other reputed journals, organizations and authenticated websites related to library consortia and it's used in libraries. Based on this study, the findings of the study are submitted in the form of a conclusion.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Many studies have been done to know the perception of users of electronic resources in the fields engineering, management and medicine but research related to agricultural universities are very few. Agricultural Information Transfer System "AITS" still in the developing phase due to the constant development of information and communication technology (ICT), transforming development methods, documentation, dissemination, and Dissemination (4 D) of information. The impact of E-resources is visible in every field of education due to easily available and accessible digital content in comparison with printed journals. (Kumar & Shukla, 2009) discussed that library resources as journals quality and quantity reflects the position of any library in any university or academic library. There is a need for proper monitoring and control of the management of journals. The major problem they observed in their paper was the steep increase in journal prices. (Corcoran, 2023) discussed that a huge amount spent by the libraries to subscribe library resources for his users and money has been wasted if that resources are not utilized by the users of that particular library. (Kannappanavar & Jayaprakash, 2012) with the rapid development of internet facilities and advances in web technology, almost all reputable international journals are available online and easily accessible to researchers Online. As ICAR has a network connection between institutes and the state community. So, the National Agricultural Innovation Project (PNIA) is funded for establishment of the electronic resources in agriculture association (CeRA) within the framework of Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) in November 2007 to make scientific journals accessible to all National Agricultural Research System researchers/teachers by granting access to information, including access to online journals, which is critical to achieving research excellence.

5. CONSORTIA:

To fulfill the users' information demand libraries are facing difficulties due to exponential growth of information and a steep rise in library material both print and non-print. Nowadays a user of any library wants to get the desired information in a very short time; his expectation is very high to get the desired information from the library. Libraries are struggling with many issues already; one of the major challenges is cutting the library's budget. To overcome this issue the concept of library consortia is developed to cater the user demand, latest and quality information, less price etc. "Consortia" or sometimes known as "Library Association" refers to cooperation, coordination and collaboration between libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources.

5.1. Library consortia in India:

In India, Astronomical Research Sharing Forum and Astrophysics (FORSA), one of the oldest library consortia which are a national body for physics established in 1982. History of the library association for online subscriptions and domestic online access was introduced about three decades ago with the establishment of the Information Center and Library Network Center (INFLIBNET) (Chakravarty & Singh, 2005). It is a National institution founded by University Grants Commission (UGC) of India in 1991. After that, various project-based consortiums have been established to improve the quality and status of research and development, in particular CSIR-DST Electronic Journal Consortium for Scientific Information for CSIR and DST laboratories (also known as National Knowledge Resources Association), National Digital Authority of India National Library of Engineering, Science and Technology (INDEST) for engineering and technology organizations. Electronic Resources in Medicine (ERMED) Association of Medical Faculties/Institutions and DBT Electronic Library Consortium (DeLCON), etc. which are good in their respective fields. CeRA is one of the ultimate corporations dedicated to agricultural research and education (Thomas, 2004). Among academic corporations, UGC-Infonet is the largest, with plans to reach more than 200 universities, associates and colleges. CeRA is the second largest corporation, next to UGC-Infonet.

5.2. CeRA:

It is an electronic resources association in agriculture research that was created to facilitate access to reputed scientific journals related to agriculture and related fields to all National Agronomist Researchers System (NARS). The basis for this initiative is achieved by providing internet connectivity to most Indian Institute of Agricultural Research Council (ICAR) Lectures under the National Agricultural Technology Program (NATP) over 2 decades ago. It was done with the ultimate goal of providing access to information, including access to online journals, books, articles, data etc., which is important for excellent research in the agricultural and its allied field. It has been observed that subscription of reputed journals for agricultural education is declining due to the high cost of related good journals that also degrade the research output in agriculture. Furthermore, the increasing cost of international good journals has forced many librarians to reduce their number of subscriptions because money is to always be at the forefront of the international arena is the availability of journals. To overcome this problem, an initiative was launched with the creation of Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) in 2008 as part of National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) to ensure online accessibility of searching the articles from selected reputed publishers. It was created to upscale the

quality of research in the agricultural and its allied fields (“Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture,” 2023a).

5.3. Objectives of CeRA:

To improve the research and development of ICAR Institutions' and State Agricultural Universities' to a level that is equivalent to the best organisations and institutions in the world. To develop an e-access culture among researchers of ICAR facilities and agricultural universities by subscribing to reputed and qualitative online journals and e-resource (Visakhi, 2009).

5.4. Facilities provided by CeRA:

It provides subscribed reputed journal and electronic resource access with IP authentication and developed a system for Document Delivery Requests (DDR). It provides the access of e-resources via EZ-Proxy's remote access facility.

5.5. CeRA Publishers:

1. CeRA has subscribed the following reputed publishers:
2. M/s Informatics Publishing Ltd. (J-Gate)
3. Elsevier
4. Oxford University Press
5. SpringerNature (Formerly Springer)
6. SpringerNature (Formerly Nature Publishing Group)
7. Taylor & Francis
8. Wiley
9. IndiaagriStat.com

5.6. CeRA E-Textbook:

- CeRA has 408 Spingers e-textbooks on different agriculture and its allied subjects.
- CeRA has 1174 Eslevier e-Textbooks on different agriculture and its allied subject.

5.7. J-Gate:

An electronic gateway to the world's e-journal literature is J-Gate, which was introduced in 2001 by Informatics India Limited that offers simple access to millions of e- journal articles that are supplied by 13,243 publishers online. There is currently a sizable library of journal literature on it that has been indexed from 48,0211 e-journals and links to the full texts on publisher websites. J-Gate also intends to provide electronic document delivery, archiving, online journal subscription, and other related services (“Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture,” 2023)

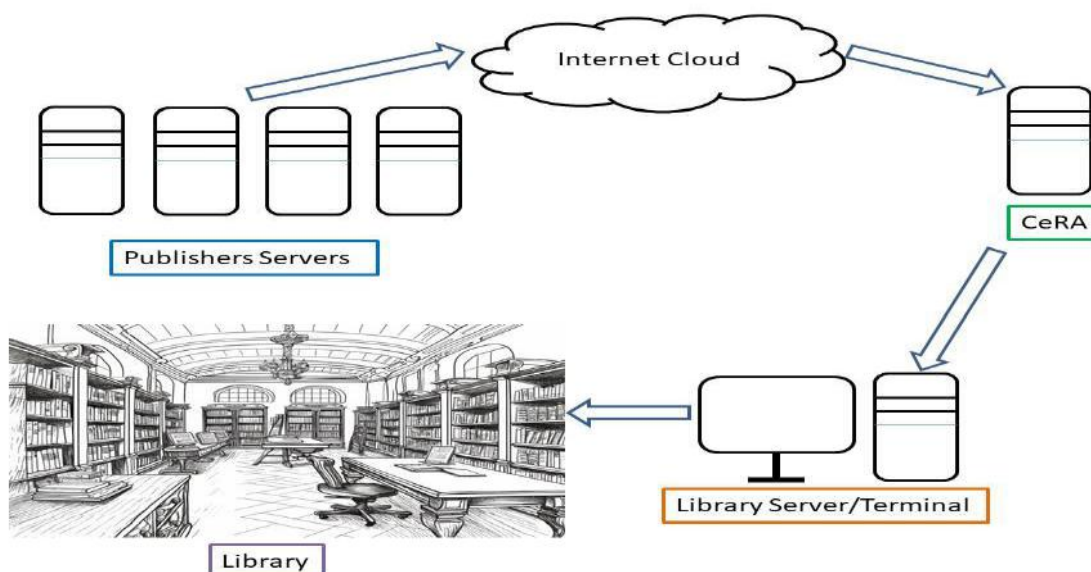


Figure 1. Functioning of CeRA

6. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA:

Advantages

The following has the advantages to become a member of any library consortium:

- It can give access to shared e-resources.
- It can give uniform information equality, efficiency and economy to e-resources use.
- It provides the platform to access the resources of other institutes apart from their own resources.
- It fills the gap between the information rich libraries and libraries which have limited budgets to subscribe to costly resources.
- It can support the small libraries with rich information resources by paying less.

Disadvantages

The following has the disadvantages to become a member of any library consortium:

- It reduces the buying power of the libraries.
- It increased the duplication of resources.
- It creates a dilemma for libraries, patrons and suppliers.
- Sometimes desired resources are not found in the subscribed consortia and due to members of any library consortia, competent authorities will not allow subscribing demanded resources.

7. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

CeRA is a significant knowledge-based resource for agricultural students, research fraternity in agriculture education. CeRA provides the platform for recognition in agricultural research not only at national even international level too. It has reputed publishers' e-textbooks, journals, articles, databases etc. which help to provide the current information to the researchers in the agricultural field. After UGC INFONET, CeRA is the second biggest library consortium. It helps to compete with others agricultural libraries to the information rich resource libraries in terms of research and development. It provide the online access of reputed and costly research library resources which is not in the budget of small libraries with paying a nominal membership charges or its membership is free for government agricultural institutes, colleges and universities (Singh, 2004). There are some drawbacks of any library consortia as it reduces the freedom of library to select resources as per their users demand. The rapid growth in research literature and quality of research papers, CeRA alone is not sufficient to fulfill the demand and hunger of information because all agricultural and reputed publishers are not available in the CeRA platform. We look into other factors too to provide better management control and enhance the number of reputed publishers. CeRA has helped the agricultural research fraternity of ICAR Institutes, agricultural colleges and universities, and provides a new learning culture among students, teachers and researchers. It is the fundamental duty of libraries to provide the best quality information to its users, agricultural libraries may suggest to the CeRA team from time to time adding those publishers who have the good quality research papers and data to fulfill the demand of their users. So the second law of library science (*i.e. every reader his/her book*) would be justified by the agricultural libraries.

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