

Library Consortia in United Arab Emirates: An Opinion Survey

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the authors attempted to understand the perception of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals towards the consortia of Libraries in United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research team attempted to explore the notions that are prevailing among the LIS professionals in UAE towards consortium and development of the same in the region. Researchers explored the attitude of LIS professionals towards scope and functions of consortia, nature of resources that can be shared among the members of consortia. It also attempted to understand the possibility of initiating the consortium and identify the thrust areas of cooperation and resource sharing, which might benefit the member libraries. The study was conducted with an overall objective of understanding the perceptions of LIS professionals towards the formation of consortium in UAE. The specific objectives of the study are (i) to understand the attitude of LIS Professionals towards library consortium, (ii) to gather their opinion in developing the consortium in UAE, (iii) to identify the thrust areas for resource sharing and networking and (iv) to suggest the areas that need attention of LIS professionals in developing a consortium. In order to meet the objectives of the study, the authors considered the libraries attached to the universities and institutions those are offering Undergraduate (UG) & Postgraduate (PG) level courses in Medicine, Technology, Management and Humanities / Social Sciences in UAE. While searching DubaiFAQ website, the authors identified 81 institutions in UAE that can be considered as target population for the study. Searching of websites of individual institutions and contacting few individual librarians provided contact details of 91 LIS professionals working in these institutions. As the researchers were desirous to have comprehensive viewpoints from the target population, they considered all the 91 LIS professionals for the study. Personal discussions were held with fellow LIS professionals and existing leading consortia models were examined for obtaining the inputs for designing the survey instrument. The web-based instrument was sent to the target population for responses and follow-up was made with repeated reminders. Out of 91 respondents, the study received 71 responses resulting in 72.8% of response rate. It is observed that about 80% of the LIS professionals did feel that there is a strong need for establishing a consortium of libraries in UAE. About 86% of respondents agreed that the functions of consortium cross the boundaries of library resource sharing to cover the other areas of cooperation. Overwhelming majority of respondents (95.8%) opined that the consortium helps in subscribing online databases and print journals at discounted rates. A majority of them (91.5%) felt that it would facilitate pooling journals among libraries in the region and helps in negotiating with vendors for higher discounts (84.5%). A majority of the respondents (93.0%) expressed that the consortium helps in combined collection development and 91% of them did feel that their authorities will support such movement for an effective collaboration. The paper attempted to identify the factors those influences the functioning of consortia and present some more interesting results.

Keywords: Consortium; Resource sharing; Library network; Cooperation; United Arab Emirates.

INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital information, the Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals across the globe are challenged with managing the huge sets of information that are being produced on any specific subject in the universe of knowledge. With the intensifying cost of information resources and dwindling financial resources, it is impossible for any library to be self-sufficient to serve its users with its own resources. This phenomenon has urged libraries to adopt new philosophies and techniques for collection development and reduce the cost of information acquisition. Of late, the libraries are showing interest towards the consortium approach as a strategic means of collection development of electronic information resources and of circumscribing the power of information providers.

Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consortium>) defines a consortium as - “An Association of two or more individuals, companies, organizations or governments (or any combination of these entities) with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal”. Woods worth (1991) describes it as a formal or informal agreement between the libraries based on a common principles and it varies in type, goals, structure, membership and funding. In other words, consortium is networking of libraries formed to meet challenges and embrace opportunities for mutual benefit and optimal utilization of resources with limited budget. The terminologies such as cooperation, networking and consortia are often used to represent the same function of libraries towards resource sharing. However, the term consortium is used more often related to information in digital media.

A review of literature revealed the scarcity of published studies on consortium approach among universities in United Arab Emirates (UAE). Hence, this urged the authors to look for the other related scholarly literature on the topic of research. Library cooperation or networking is not a new phenomenon in library setting. It exists through ages in the form of inter library lending and document delivery among the libraries. The resource sharing was seen as resultant of such cooperation. With the emergence of digital information, the term consortium is gaining interest among LIS professionals. Chaterjee (2002) points the transformation of Cooperation – networking- resource sharing to Consortia. He says that Cooperation was used for resource sharing activities. Though cooperation theoretically could embrace almost all library activities, practically it was confined to inter-library loan of library documents. But due to physical distance and other reasons even this limited system of cooperation was not being practiced widely. However, with the advent of ICT and its application in library activities, new opportunities opened up for the greater cooperation among libraries. Emergence of library consortia is a very promising development in this direction.

According to Allen and Hirshon (1998), perhaps the most important development for academic libraries during the current decade has been the move from organizational self sufficiency to a collaborative survival mode as epitomized by the growth of library consortia. Consortia enable libraries to meet the spiraling costs of printed journals and of online resources. It has been embraced worldwide by all categories of libraries. After all the basic philosophy of librarianship is the concept of sharing. Frederick Friend (1999) says that, Library consortia have given strength to the very fact that few libraries can exercise individually but all libraries can exercise collectively. Barrionuevo (2000) expressed that the commonality of their activities and the relaxation of geographical boundaries fostered by information technologies have encouraged libraries (worldwide) to join consortia in order to remain relevant in the current library services context.

The International Coalition of Library Consortia's website (2010) describes that the number of library consortia existing worldwide has grown steadily since the pioneering days of the mid 1990's. Today more than 200 organizations are listed on the International Coalition of Library Consortia's Web site, representing international, national, regional, state-wide, as well as other initiatives. The libraries and information centers are one of the major supporting agencies involved in the process of information transfer and finally the diffusion of information and information technology. Consequently, both the Information Systems and the Information Professionals are adapting to meet the changing needs and growing expectations of the users as described by Jalloh (2000). The initiatives and development in the areas of automation, networking, resource sharing, consortia, digital libraries, electronic document delivery, etc. have caused to emerge new practices in the operations and management practices of the Library and Information Systems worldwide.

According to Manjunatha and Shivalingaih (2003), in the age of digital evolution and escalating price of electronic information, resource sharing is critical for effective functioning of libraries. Increased availability of information in digital format and high costs of journal subscription compels the libraries to work together. Technical advancements provide a platform for digital resource sharing and offer many opportunities for librarians to become stronger technically and professionally. Shivalingaih, Sheshadri and Manjunatha (2009) in their research paper on “LIS research in India” traced the pioneering doctoral research on consortium and networking studies awarded by Indian universities. They traced Library cooperation as a subject of research interest prior to 80s and networking & resource sharing in 80s and 90s. The term consortia is of recent origin and it has gained attention since 2000. This could also be linked with significant growth of electronic resources.

STATUS OF CONSORTIUM IN UAE

The state of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates with eight major cities. Educational opportunities in the UAE have blossomed since the establishment of the Federation when only a tiny minority of the urban population had access to formal education. Today, the UAE offers a comprehensive education to all male and female students from kindergarten to university, with education for the country's citizens being provided free at all levels. There is also an extensive private education sector, while several thousand students, pursue courses of higher education abroad at Government expense. Now that the infrastructure is in place, the educational focus is on devising and implementing a strategy that will ensure the youth of the country are ready to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century workplace.

In order to ascertain the need for forming a library consortium, the authors examined the existence and nature of library consortium in the country. The team observed the existence of five consortiums of libraries functioning in UAE. The consortiums are briefly explained below.

- UAE Health Libraries Consortium (UAEHLC): The UAE Health Libraries Consortium, a national level consortium founded in November 2006 out of a desire to strengthen the relationship between the National Medical Library and the libraries of healthcare institutions affiliated with the UAE University's Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences. At present, other consortium members consist of libraries at teaching and community hospitals under the direction of Health Authority Abu Dhabi (HAAD) and Zayed Military Hospital (ZMH). In line with the purpose and mission of the consortium, it is hoped that membership will continue to grow.
- UAE Higher Education Library Consortium (UAEHELCC) is the national level consortium, which has very few participating Libraries. The concept of consortium is recently evolved which is in embryonic stage and taking its shape for the benefit of the participating libraries. The vision for the UAE higher education library consortium is that all students, faculty, and staff will have timely and efficient access to the collections and resources of all the participating libraries.
- Library Information Web Access (LIWA): The UAE University Libraries Deanship has entered into the United Arab Emirates Higher Education Library Consortium, a cooperative resource-sharing project with the libraries at the Higher Colleges of Technology and Zayed University. LIWA is the first systematic interlibrary cooperative activity among three universities under the umbrella of the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. LIWA was born in 2007 after the shift of the partner libraries to Web-based information services. Interlibrary book lending is the current achievement of Library and Information Web Access with the aim to expand resource sharing and incorporate more e-services soon. With a single search, Liwa provides access to over 350,000 books and other library resources. Liwa can be accessed from anywhere — work, home, library — by visiting the Liwa website: <http://liwa.ac.ae>.
- Information Literacy Network (ILN) in the Gulf Region started as an informal group in 2005. The ILN is dedicated to provide leadership in information literacy, to facilitate the acquisition of life-long learning skills, to advocate and promote greater cooperation among libraries in an educational setting, to offer networking and professional development opportunities for librarians and library staff and encourage the exchange of ideas, information, and best practices.
- "Dubai Public library to go online" (DPLO) is the national level consortium, which is still in proposal state. Hence, the public libraries in the city are being transformed in to e-libraries; residents in Dubai will soon be able to access thousands of books, periodicals, magazines and newspapers online.

The authors noticed that the above described five consortiums are in infancy stage. They also observed that there is no active consortium approach/model to address to the needs of libraries attached to institutions of Higher Learning in UAE. Further, as mentioned earlier, the LIS professionals had varied understandings on concept of consortium. Thus, the authors felt a need for conducting a research study to understand the mindset of LIS professionals in UAE towards LIS consortia.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The authors noticed varied perceptions about consortium, networking and their functioning during initial discussions with fellow library professionals. A few said it is for journal subscriptions and others said it is for collective bargaining. Thus, authors decided to conduct an opinion survey with an overall objective to understand LIS professionals' perceptions about 'consortium', 'resource sharing' or 'networking'. The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To understand the perception of LIS Professionals towards library consortium;
- ii. To collect the opinion of librarians in developing the consortium in UAE;
- iii. To identify the thrust areas for resource sharing and networking; and
- iv. To suggest the areas that needs attention of LIS professionals.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the authors browsed DubaiFAQs website (<http://www.dubaifaqs.com/universities-dubai.php>) to identify institutions and respondents for the study. While browsing the website, the authors noticed 105 institutions offering courses at various levels like graduate, diploma, certificate, vocational, Islamic studies etc. As the study was intended to consider the institutions offering Undergraduate (UG) & Postgraduate (PG) level programmes, the authors filtered the list with this parameter and as a result they shortlisted 81 institutions in UAE, which are offering UG and PG level programmes in the disciplines such as Medicine, Engineering, Arts, Science, Management, and Humanities. Further, the authors browsed the websites of these 81 institutions for obtaining details (e-mail address) of LIS professionals working in these institutions. An effort was also made to contact some of the librarians to provide contact details of their colleagues. Finally, the authors' team collected 91 e-mail addresses of Library professionals working in these 81 institutions at different levels. As the study was intended to explore the perception of LIS Professionals community towards consortia of libraries in UAE, it was desirable to include all 91 LIS Professionals as target population. As the study was focused on academic libraries, the other types of libraries like public libraries and industrial libraries were excluded.

In order to elicit responses from respondents, the researching team designed a web-based survey instrument taking inputs from personal discussions with fellow professionals and existing consortia models. The online instrument was designed on GoogleDocs platform focusing on respondents' understanding/view points on concept of consortium, networking, functions and nature of resources that can be shared among member libraries. The web-link to the survey instrument was emailed to target population with a request for providing the necessary information for the study. The follow-up was done through the repeated emails and telephonic reminders to improve the rate of response.

Of 91 questionnaires distributed, the study received 71 responses resulting in 78.02% response rate. The response was indeed encouraging and motivating and they were exported to spreadsheets for analysis and interpretation. The records were verified for any duplication while preparing the master spreadsheet and this master sheet served as a primary database for data analysis and interpretation.

DATA ANALYSIS

Distribution of Respondents across Disciplines

As mentioned earlier, the study received 71 responses and these responses were examined across the disciplines to understand the correlation. The distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table No 1: Distribution of Respondents across Disciplines (n=71)

Discipline	No of Responses	Percentage (%)
Engineering/Technology	43	60.6
Management	5	7.0
University	5	7.0
Medical	3	4.2
Not Disclosed**	15**	21.1**
Total Responses	71	100

Note: Source: Spreadsheet of Responses

** Though the team had email addresses of target population, it was not possible to trace the affiliation of the respondents for want of name, institution, or email-ids in the web-based response sheet. Hence, they are treated as “not disclosed”, but it is included in the study as they were from targeted population considered for the study.

While 2/3rd (67.6%) of the responses are from engineering and management disciplines, 11.2% of them are from Universities and Medical libraries. It is to be noted that 21.1% of respondents remained anonymous by not disclosing their demographic details such as name, institution, e-mail address, type of institution etc. The study received more responses from technical institutes as compare to other disciplines. This could be due to one of the authors is affiliated to an engineering College library in Dubai and currently there are no consortia functioning in technical discipline in UAE.

Perception of LIS Professionals towards Library consortium in UAE

In view of varied viewpoints expressed by LIS professionals during personal discussions towards the concept of consortium, the authors included three statements in the questionnaire to garner their opinion. The description of the statement and responses received from the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table No 2: Need for Consortium in UAE (n=71)

Features/ Agreement	Responses						
	SD (1)	DA (2)	NO (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total	Mean score**
LIS Professionals feel that there is a need for Consortium in UAE	4 (5.6)	3 (4.2)	7 (9.9)	13 (18.3)	44 (62.0)	71 (100.0)	4.27
Consortium & Networking are same and explains the same concept	18 (25.4)	21 (29.6)	20 (28.1)	8 (11.3)	3 (4.2)	70 (100.0)	2.39
There is a notion that Consortium is meant only for Resource Sharing	28 (39.4)	16 (22.5)	10 (14.1)	8 (11.3)	9 (12.7)	71 (100.0)	2.35

Note: (a) SD- Strongly Disagree; DA- Disagree; NO- No Opinion; A- Agree; SA- Strongly Agree.

(b) Figures in Parentheses represent the percentage.

(c) Source: Data sheet and Frequency Dist table generated by SPSS package

** The mean score is on 5-point Likert scale

Need for library Consortium in UAE: The mean score of 4.27 on 5-point scale clearly indicates that a majority of respondents (80.3%) strongly felt that there is a need for establishing a library consortium in UAE. In other words, the respondents expressed that though there are five library consortia are functioning in UAE, they are in infancy and there is a need for a

functional consortium in the country. Only 9.8% of respondents felt that there is no need for any library consortium in UAE and another 9.9% are indecisive of the same.

Consortium or Networking: The literature highlights that the functions of consortium and networking revolves around the same objective. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they see consortium and networking as same concept or different. The responses clearly indicated that more than half of them (55 %) see both the concepts differently. The authors wanted to check what could be the differentiating issues on the topic and on enquiry with some of the respondents, it is noticed that they have perceived consortium as more of formal platform as compared to networking. They also have linked consortium more towards e-resources. While 15.5% of them agreed that consortium and networking are similar, 28.1% of them remained neutral about the issue. The neutral response indicates some confusion among segment of respondents in understanding consortium and networking.

Consortium for Resource Sharing: The respondents were asked to indicate whether they see the scope of consortium for resource sharing alone. The responses mentioned in the above table reveal that 61.9% of the respondents opine that consortium is not just limited to resource sharing. In the other words, they see consortium to include more activities beyond resource sharing. However, 24 % of them felt that its operation is limited to resource sharing only. The respondents' experience with the existing consortia could have been influenced their thinking on the issue.

Priorities in Perception of Functions, Operations or Scope of the Consortium in UAE

The researchers included some of the key features that encompass the activities of the consortia and requested the respondents' level of agreement with those features. The statements were framed to receive dichotomy (yes/no) answers. Arranging the statements on descending order of their mean scores will clearly indicate the order of perceived priorities of the features of consortia. The ranking of statements are indicated in Table 3.

Table No 3: Ranking of Features (n=71)

SI No	Features related Functions of Consortium	Responses	
		Mean score	Std Dev
1	Inter Library Lending	0.99	0.12
2	Developing common resources	0.99	0.12
3	Discounted subscription of Databases	0.97	0.17
4	Pooling or sharing of Journals	0.94	0.23
5	Management support	0.94	0.23
6	Collection development	0.93	0.26
7	Discounted subscription of journals	0.93	0.26
8	Development of Union catalog	0.87	0.33
9	Central Training staff in IT skills	0.85	0.36
10	Better discounts on purchase	0.85	0.36
11	Common Library membership	0.82	0.39
12	Institutional Repository	0.75	0.44
13	Common library software	0.73	0.45
14	Manpower training and exchange	0.66	0.48
15	Improved salary & status	0.24	0.43
16	Perception of Threat on library function	0.17	0.38

Overwhelming majority of respondents (mean score >0.9) perceived that consortium of libraries will be greatly benefited by the functions such as Inter Library Lending, collaborated development of resources, pooling of journals and economical subscriptions to journals and databases. They also expressed the confidence that management will support such activities for the benefit of academic community.

A Majority of respondents (mean score >0.8 & <0.9) felt that the consortium of libraries in UAE should aim at performing functions such as developing union catalog of resources, central place for manpower training and negotiations with vendors for better discounts. They also expressed that the consortium should be able to provide a platform for common library membership among member libraries.

Significant number of respondents (mean score > 0.6 and < 0.8) said that the consortium of libraries in UAE might benefit developing Institutional Repositories; Common library software for easy data migration, trained manpower and mechanism for staff exchange among member libraries.

However, the least perceived benefits (mean score <0.3) from consortium of libraries in UAE are Improved salary benefits or compensations and respondents didn't perceive any threat from consortium on the functioning of their library regular operations.

Factor Analysis

In order to arrive at meaningful interpretation and conclusion, the authors carried out factor analysis using SPSS V16.0 package. First KMO measure of sample adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were carried out to assess the relevance factor analysis. Based on KMO and Bartlett test results, the factor analysis generated six factors explaining 68.8% of total variance. The rotated matrix generated by 'varimax' method consolidated individual statements under six factors as per their factor loading (in descending order). The six factors are mentioned below.

1. Factor 1: Organizational Issues (variance explained 16.60%)
2. Factor 2: Resource sharing (v e 12.58%)
3. Factor 3: Perception of Better Discounts (v e 10.58%)
4. Factor 4: Cooperation from Management and Libraries (v e 10.40%)
5. Factor 5: Personal notions on possible impact (v e 9.88%)
6. Factor 6: Collection Development (v e 8.77%)

Factor 1: "The Organization related issues" emerged as most impacting factor towards an effective functioning of consortium. The individual variables consolidated under this factor are shown below:

Table No 4: Organizational Issues (Factor 1)

Statement	Factor Loading	Mean Score
Institutional Repository	0.805	0.75
Staff exchange & manpower	0.779	0.66
Staff Training in IT skills	0.713	0.85
Common Lib membership	0.625	0.82

An examination of individual variables revealed that, the respondents do agree that Institutional repository, Staff exchange, centralized staff training, and common library membership are important features of consortium. However, these features are directly impacted by institutional policy and support from management. Any small variation in the institute's policy or action might have great impact on consortium. All these issues are to be supported by management and they are beyond the control of any LIS professional.

Factor 2: The second important factor that influences consortium activities is "Resource Sharing", which explains 12.58% of total variance in the set. The specific variables grouped under this factor are shown below.

Table No 5: Resource Sharing (Factor 2)

Statement	Factor Loading	Mean Score
Pooling or sharing of Journals	0.814	0.94
Developing common resource	0.715	0.99
Common Library Software	0.539	0.73

A majority of respondents agreed that the sharing of resources such as journals and pooling of journals/e-resources, developing common resources are important for the functioning of the consortium. They also felt that a common library automation platform is important for consortium for ease of data migration and consolidation. Any difference of opinion or misunderstanding between member libraries or management might have significant impact on functioning of consortium.

Factor 3: "Perception of economy in Subscriptions Improved or Better Discounts" is emerged as third important factor that influenced the functioning of consortium explaining 10.58% of total variance. Like Panchatantra tales "Unity is Strength", respondents also reinforced the belief that the united approach through consortium will provide strength to LIS professionals for demanding better discounts on journal and database subscriptions. Any change in policy at publisher or management might affect this factor.

Table No 6: Perception of Better Discounts (Factor 3)

Statement	Factor Loading	Mean Score
Subscription of Databases at discounted rates	0.893	0.97
Subscription of journals at discounted rates	0.796	0.93

Factor 4: "Cooperation" from parent body and other libraries emerged as fourth important factor for smooth functioning of consortium explaining 10.4% variance in the total variance explained. Success of consortium depends on the level of cooperation and support extended by their parent organization and participating libraries. It is interesting to note that these two features are consistently rated as very important for the success of consortium.

Table No 7: Cooperation (Factor 4)

Statement	Factor Loading	Mean Score
Management Support	0.826	0.94
Inter Library Lending	0.796	0.99

Factor 5: "Personal notions on the impact of consortium" identified as fifth factor for consortium explaining 9.88 % of variance. Examination of individual features of this factor reveals that respondents opine that it may improve their bargaining power with publishers and vendors. At the same time they didn't perceive that the consortium will help to improve their salary or compensation. Further, the respondents didn't perceive consortium as a threat on their library functions.

Table No 8: Personal Notions (Factor 5)

Statement	Factor loading	Mean score
Bargaining power for better discount	0.782	0.85
Improved Salary	0.474	0.24
Threat for Library function	0.448	0.17

Factor 6: Collection Development is noticed as least impacted factor for consortium. Probably the centralized collection development and union catalog might have been considered as implicit actions of consortia. Hence this might have least impact on consortium.

Table No 9: Collection Development (Factor 6)

Statement	Factor loading	Mean score
Collection Development	0.884	0.93
Union Catalog	0.622	0.87

Respondents' status of membership with existing Library networks in UAE

As mentioned earlier, the authors could trace five library consortia such as UAEHLC, UAEHELIC, LIWA, ILN and DPLO in UAE. The authors noticed the said consortia are in their infancy stage. They were desirous to check whether these consortia have been catching the attention of LIS professionals in UAE. Hence, the respondents were asked to indicate their membership with any of the library existing consortia operating in UAE. Of 71 responses, only 17 respondents (23.94%) responded to this question indicating the name of consortia for which they have membership. Another 10 have indicated yes but not disclosed the name of any consortium. The authors could not proceed further in this regard as the respondents were anonymous. Others did not respond to this question. The response is given below for the purpose of information

Table No 10: Membership with Library Consortia in UAE

Library Consortium	No. of Membership
UAE Health Libraries Consortium (UAEHLC)	0
UAE Higher Education Libraries Consortium (UAEHELIC)	3
Library Information Web Access (LIWA)	8
Information Literacy Network (ILN)	6
Dubai Public Library Online(DPLO)**	----
Membership "Yes" but anonymous++	10

Note:** Public library network is excluded since the study intended to consider only academic libraries.

++ indicated "Yes" but did not mention the name of consortium. Respondents were anonymous for further query or clarification.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the responses received from LIS professionals regarding their viewpoints on Consortium of Libraries in UAE revealed some interesting facts. This study identified the areas that need more attention of LIS professionals towards the topic of research study. The major findings can be summarized as follows:

- It is observed that a majority of the respondents indicated that there is need for an effective library consortium in UAE. There are five library consortia functioning at Infancy stage, but there are no consortia for scientific and technical education.
- More than half of respondents (55 %) differentiated the terms consortium and Networking. It is noticed that they perceived consortium as more of formal platform as compared to networking. The neutral response from 28% of them indicated some confusion in understanding the scope of consortium and networking.
- About 62% of the respondents opined that consortium should not be just limited to resource sharing. In other words, they felt consortium to include more activities beyond resource

sharing. However, 1/4th of them did feel that the purpose of consortium is for resource sharing only.

- It is revealed from factor analysis that that i) Organizational issues matters (IR, Manpower, training and common membership), ii) willingness to share library resources, iii) scope for better price negotiations and iv) whole-hearted cooperation from management and other libraries are important factors in that order of importance for smooth functioning of a consortium.
- Personal notions (bargaining power, salary and threat for normal functioning) and collection development are also observed as possible factors that might influence the functions of consortium. The respondents opined that the consortium might improve their bargaining power with publishers and vendors. At the same time they didn't perceive that the consortium will help to improve their salary or compensation. Further, they didn't perceive any threat by consortium on their library functions.
- It is observed that combined development of collection and union catalogue seems to have less impact on consortium functions. These two activities might have seen as implicit actions associated with consortium. Alternatively, these activities might be viewed as institute specific activity. The institutes may have to comply with the regulations of government for collections development.
- From the response it is observed that LIWA and ILN are of growing interest among LIS professionals. UAEHLC has currently membership of three members and it may increase in near future and UAEHLC is yet to gain membership and momentum. The respondents who have indicated the name of consortia have mentioned one name only. Hence it is difficult to decide the multiple memberships with consortia.
- Few librarians working in Institutions which have good resources have expressed their fear that they would end up by lending more resources to other libraries rather than getting resources in return. Collection-rich and collection-poor attitude of LIS professionals do act as road block in the journey towards Library consortium.

CONCLUSION

As any single library cannot satisfy its users with its own resources, the need for consortium is being increasingly felt by LIS professionals in UAE. This study reinforces the Panchatantra tale "Unity is strength". Activities can be performed effectively and economically with united consortium approach. Inter Library Lending; collaborative development of resources; pooling of journals and economical subscriptions to journals and databases; union catalog of resources, central place for manpower training and centralized negotiations with vendors are very important functions of a consortium, The consortium should be able to provide a platform for common library membership among member libraries and management should support such activities for the benefit of academic community. The consortium movement might promote Institutional Repositories and Common library software, staff exchange and a mechanism to train manpower at central place. However, LIS professionals in UAE do not foresee that the consortium will fight for any improved salary benefits and they don't see any threat for their regular library operations.

It is observed that two Library networks (LIWA and ILN) are of growing interest among LIS professionals, whereas the other two (UAEHLC and UAEHLC) are yet to gain membership and momentum; it may increase in near future. Organizational Issues, resources for sharing, united and collaborative approach, constant support from management are the most important factors that have direct significant Impact on functioning of consortia in UAE. These factors appear to be true for other countries and need to be considered while working on the consortium. It is high time for the Government of UAE, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and other accrediting bodies to accelerate the library consortium movement, which finally benefits the whole academic fraternity in the country with enhanced resources and quality services. This study argues that the existing advanced ICT infrastructure in the UAE and other Gulf states could support a networked library consortium that would be an integrated part of the higher education computing environment.

Few professionals expressed that the consortium will be more effective in libraries of similar kind or homogeneous libraries. Libraries/Institutions, which are having good amount of

resources, are expressed that they would end up by just giving more resources to other participating libraries rather than getting any resources from others. Even though it is fact, this assumption of rich donor and poor acceptor is de-motivating them to become part of any consortium or resource sharing. The individual organizations also need to encourage their LIS professionals to take more initiatives in bringing up the consortium, resource sharing and networking to the existence. The ultimate beneficiaries are academic community, Research and Development and the nation as a whole.

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