

Towards Universal Access: Library Networks and Consortia in the Context of One Nation, One Subscription Policy

¹Ms. Asmita Patil, ²Dr. Amit S. Tankar

¹*Asst. Librarian, Sri Balaji University Pune, Maharashtra, India*

²*Librarian, Shri Dr. R G Rathod Arts & Science College, Murtizapur, Akola*

Abstract – In the digital era, escalating costs of e-resources and limited institutional budgets challenge the sustainability of academic libraries in India. Traditional methods of resource sharing, such as interlibrary loans and local cooperation, are insufficient for managing the growing volume of electronic content. To address this, library networks and consortia have emerged as key strategies for collaborative acquisition and sharing of scholarly resources. The Government of India's One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) policy, operational from January 2025, aims to provide seamless, cost-effective access to international scholarly journals and databases for higher education and research institutions nationwide. This study explores the role of library networks and consortia in implementing ONOS, focusing on their complementary functions such as authentication systems, union catalogues, inter-library loans, and training programs. The analysis highlights successful global models and the Indian context, emphasizing how consortia contribute to reducing costs, improving resource access, and fostering academic collaboration. Ultimately, ONOS represents a transformative step towards democratizing knowledge, enhancing research capabilities, and supporting national development by promoting equitable access to scholarly information.

Keywords: Library Networks; Library Resource Sharing; Library Consortia; One Nation One Subscription (ONOS)

INTRODUCTION

Today in the digital age, libraries have big challenges to satisfy their client to serve specific, authentic and fast information without ICT. Ever increasing cost for e-resources such as e-books, e-journals, databases at an unsustainable rate. It is difficult to afford to each university or institutes to subscribe and access to leading international resources. To meet the demand of the users at less cost, libraries are collaborating with

each other. Earlier, there were provisions to share their documents by using methods such as resource sharing, library co-operation & inter library loan. Using this methodology all libraries were sharing their library catalogues, storage facilities, collection development, human resources at local, national and regional levels. But today's world of information available in electronic form by expanding in high percentage day by day. And it is not easy to share e-content for the libraries with these old methods. Libraries was suffering with the challenges of increasing subscription costs and limited institutional budgets. Therefore, libraries were needed to replace it new methods and afterword library networks and consortia started establishing in India to resolve this problem. Initiatives take like INFLIBNET's e-ShodhSindhu (ESS), the National Knowledge Resources Consortium (NKRC) and DELNET have played important role in expanding access to scholarly literature, promoting resource sharing and strengthening academic infrastructure across the country.

LIBRARY NETWORKS

A library network is described as a group of libraries coming together with some agreement of understanding to help each other with a view to satisfying the information needs of their clientele. The term 'network' means in the information sense (Kent & Galvin, 1979). The Oxford English Dictionary states that a network is "an interconnected chain or system of things", The National commission on Libraries and Information Sciences (NCLIS), USA National Program (1975) defines a Network as "Two or more libraries or other organizations engaged in a common pattern of information exchange through communication for some functional purpose.

Library networks play a vital role in enabling effective resource sharing, leading to a significant transformation in the information landscape of India. Several library resource-sharing networks have been established across India at different stages of conceptualization, design, development, and implementation. These include metropolitan networks such as CALIBNET (Calcutta), DELNET (Delhi), BONET (Bombay), PUNENET (Pune), MALIBNET (Madras), and ADINET (Ahmedabad); national-level initiatives like ERNET (Educational and Research Institutions), INFLIBNET (Universities and Research Institutions), and DESINET (Defence Laboratories); as well as sectoral networks such as BTISNET (Biotechnology).

CONSORTIA

The Latin word consortium means "partnership, association, or society." It comes from the words consors, which means "partner," which is derived from con-, which means "together," and sors, which means "fate," which means "owner of means" or "comrade" (Singh and Rao, 2008). The plural form of "consortium," "consortia," is frequently used instead of the singular. Its meaning, which emphasizes the joining of disparate groups for a common goal, comes from the Latin word for "fellowship." The terms alliance, coalition, cooperation, partnership, and so forth are all interchangeable with the term "consortia." The Consortium is a complex entity. In a sense that is not widely recognized, it is "an association." Although some library associations may participate in consortium activities, a consortium is not the same as a library association (Scepaniski, J.M. (2002).

“A consortium refers to a “temporary cooperation of a number of powers, companies etc, for a common purpose. It is an association of similar types of organization /institution who are engaged for producing and servicing the common things/for providing services for a specific purpose of its users.”

A library consortium is a community (co-operative) of two or more information providers who have formally agreed to coordinate, cooperate or consolidate certain functions with a view to achieving common goals and benefits. Consortia may be set up at local, regional, national or international level; on a functional or conceptual basis; or on an individual basis.

The Concept of Library Consortia in Academic Libraries

The unprecedented explosion of information and its availability in various forms is presenting library staff with new challenges. As with most libraries in India, budgets and cuts are a constant worry for all libraries of any kind. Rising costs for e-books, databases and technologies do not match budgets that remain the same or are constantly decreasing. This creates a need to find more effective ways of working together and sharing. A library consortium is a group of libraries which have joined together to participate in a joint action or to pool their resources in order to achieve a common objective. A consortium enables each institution to pool resources without compromising the individualism of individual libraries. Consortia subscriptions for e-resources provide access to a larger number of e-resources at a substantially lower cost. For instance. IITs, IMI library group. Due to the increasing costs of publications, especially periodicals, and the shrinking space available in libraries, it is becoming difficult to source electronic resources. Resource sharing as a concept has developed into a concept for library associations. Publishers have also recognised this fact in order to improve their business and have agreed with libraries to form consortia for electronic publications and databases.

Academic libraries first established library consortia primarily to exchange printed materials. Academic libraries are now collaborating to make electronic resources accessible. in order to make the most long-term use of resource sharing and collection. Resources can be shared by a consortium without compromising the uniqueness of each participating library. This allows for electronic resource sharing at the local, regional, and national levels and gives users access to more resources than would be possible through a single library.

FEATURES OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA

- Each consortium member library can share its resources with other organizations and institutions, allowing its patrons to use the collections for academic research.
- Cooperative research and development results in cost effectiveness and improves service.

• Employee training and engagement with service quality. Reducing the cost of purchase consortia is a collaborative task. Consequently, end users have access to more resources than they could with just one library.

• In order to improve library services, a focus is placed on gaining access to new electronic resources, such as databases and services that are available online and through www.

Benefits of Library consortium:

- Improved library services
- Availability of various resources
- Improved provision of services
- Expense reduction
- Building professional connections

To oversee and implement change, Types of Consortia:

- Open Consortia: In this type of open-ended consortium, member libraries retain the freedom to join or exit at their discretion. Example: INDEST
- Closed Group Consortia: Such consortia consist of members of the same type, united by the common objective of pooling resources in defined areas. Examples: IIM, CSIR
- Centrally Funded Consortia: In this model, the consortium depends on central funding, and the parent organization shoulders the financial obligations for its functioning. Example: UGC-INFONET
- Shared-budget Model: In this model, members contribute funds proportionally, and the consortium functions under an MoU to ensure mutual understanding. Example: FORSA
- Publisher Initiatives: Several publishers extend substantial consortium discounts to participating libraries. Example: Emerald Full-Text Library from Emerald Publishing

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To encourage and facilitate the adoption of standards in library operations
- To explore databases on projects, specialists, and institutions for online information services
- To strengthen the effectiveness of housekeeping operations

- To make awareness about collaboration of regional, national and international networks to exchange information and documents
- To analyze the One Nation, One Subscription policy and its procedures for the membership
- To explore the complementary roles of library networks and consortia in ensuring effective implementation of ONOS

Role of Library Networks & Consortia to “One Nation One Subscription”:

While ONOS tackles the licensing issue on a large scale, its effectiveness relies on the functional abilities of current library networks and consortia. These systems offer the methods for delivery—including authentication systems, discovery services, union catalogues, training programs, and inter-library loan services—that guarantee resources are utilized efficiently within the institution. For example:

- e-ShodhSindhu provides discovery interfaces and training workshops to improve awareness and usage.
- DELNET enables last-mile access to documents not covered in licensed packages through inter-library loans.
- Regional networks enhance localized cooperation and strengthen infrastructure in state and metropolitan libraries.

Therefore, ONOS should be regarded not as a substitute but as a restructuring of India's knowledge ecosystem, in which national licensing exists alongside and relies on the effective operation of networks and consortia.

Lessons from Global Practices

Many countries (e.g., UK's NESLI, Canada's CNSLP, Turkey's TUBITAK-EKUAL) have implemented national site licensing models with success. These examples show that centralized licensing can expand access while reducing national expenditure. ONOS follows this proven global trend but adapts it to India's scale and diversity.

Prior to ONOS, access to subscription journals was obtained through individual subscriptions by various R&D and higher education institutions as well as through various library consortiums of government agencies, academic institutions, and R&D institutions. These were the top ten library consortiums.

Top Ten Library Consortiums



- E-Shodh Sindhu (ESS) Consortium under Department of Higher Education (DHE)
- National Knowledge Resources Consortium (NKRC) of the Department of Science & Technology (DST) & Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR)
- DERCON Consortium under Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- CERA Consortium under Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE)
- DRDO Consortium under Department of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D)
- Electronic Research in Medicine (ERMED) Consortium under Department of Health Research (DHR)
- Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology (MeitY)
- DeLCON Consortium for Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and North-Eastern Region Institutes
- Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) Consortium
- Department of Space (DoS) Consortium

In addition, many Higher Education Institutions used to subscribe to some of the journals of these publishers at the institution level.

In 2019, the Indian government proposed the "One Nation One Subscription" program for academic journals. The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, prepared "One Nation One Subscription," according to the report released by the Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy of the Government of India.

In response to the vision of making India Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat@2047, the Government of India approved One Nation One Subscription scheme to provide country-wide access to international high impact scholarly research articles and journal publications to students, faculty and researchers of all Higher Education Institutions managed by the central government and state governments and Research and Development Institutions of the central government. The ONOS is starting its operation from 1st January 2025. ONOS phase-I has been approved for the calendar years 2025, 2026 and 2027.

The initiative will open up the gold mine of knowledge available in top-quality journals to almost 1.8 million

students, faculty, researchers and scientists from all fields, including those in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, thus stimulating basic and interdisciplinary research across the country.

Access to journals is ensured through national subscriptions coordinated by INFLIBNET, an independent inter-university centre of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The Department of Higher Education, Government of India will have a single portal, ONOS (<https://onos.gov.in>), through which institutions can access the journal. The ANRF will regularly review the use of ONOS and the publications of Indian authors by these institutes.

The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) intends to acquire national licenses for e-journal/database subscriptions from most of the prominent journal publishers. A total of 30 major international journal publishers have been included in ONOS. All the journals published by these publishers will be accessible to the students, faculty members and researchers of the participating institutions. At the below given the details of publishers with having number of journals: -

| List of Publishers Serve for the ONOS | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Sr No | Publisher | Backfiles from the Year | No. of Journals |
| 1 | AAAS-Science | 1997 | 1 |
| 2 | ACM Digital Library | 1954 | 158 |
| 3 | American Chemical Society | 1996 | 90 |

| | | | |
|----|---|------|------|
| 4 | American Institute of Aeronautics & Astronautics (AIAA) | 1997 | 8 |
| 5 | American Institute of Physics | 1997 | 28 |
| 6 | American Mathematical Society | 1997 | 9 |
| 7 | American Physical Society - All | 1893 | 15 |
| 8 | American Society for Microbiology | 1995 | 16 |
| 9 | Annual Reviews | 1997 | 51 |
| 10 | ASCE Journals Online | 1995 | 36 |
| 11 | ASME Journals Online | 1997 | 38 |
| 12 | Bentham Science | 1995 | 118 |
| 13 | BMJ | 1995 | 36 |
| 14 | Cambridge University Press | 1997 | 442 |
| 15 | Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press | 1997 | 8 |
| 16 | Elsevier ScienceDirect | 1995 | 2389 |
| 17 | Emerald Publishing | 1995 | 311 |
| 18 | ICE Publishing | 1995 | 34 |
| 19 | IEEE | 1998 | 210 |
| 20 | IndinaJournals.com | 1995 | 252 |
| 21 | Institute of Physics | 1997 | 90 |
| 22 | Lippincott Williams & Wilkins (Wolters Kluwer) | 1997 | 305 |
| 23 | Oxford University Press | 1996 | 379 |
| 24 | Project Muse | 1995 | 751 |
| 25 | Sage Publishing | 1997 | 1097 |
| 26 | SPIE Digital Library | 1995 | 16 |
| 27 | Springer Nature | 1997 | 2404 |
| 28 | Taylor & Francis | 1997 | 2548 |
| 29 | Thieme | 1995 | 47 |
| 30 | Wiley | 1997 | 1332 |

How to Join ONOS?

All Government (Central as well as state) Higher Education Institutions and central government R & D institutions are eligible to participate in ONOS.

- i. The eligible Institutions are required to register at ONOS portal to get User ID and password. New registration will require institution name, AISHE code and contact details of institute nodal officer. The nodal officer shall be a regular, senior, whole-time employee of the institute. Registered member institutions can be viewed at <https://www.onos.gov.in/instituteList>
- ii. Institution AISHE Code is mandatory for registration. The institutions who do not have AISHE Code need to apply for AISHE code in the AISHE portal (<https://aishe.gov.in/>).
 - a. Institutions who have students getting UG / PG / doctoral / post-doctoral degree / diploma

need to apply as college / university / stand-alone institution in the AISHE portal.

- b. Institutions engaged in research & development activities and not having students need to apply under the R & D category in the AISHE portal. For the R & D institutions, a letter authorising them to join ONOS from their parent Ministry/ Department in the central government is necessary.

How to Access resources under ONOS?

The different types of access modules under ONOS based on the existing infrastructure of the participating institutions are as under:

- i. For Institutions who have their own static IP address for subscription to journal resources (example: University/Central Government Higher Education Institutions/Research Institutions,

etc.): For such institutions, access will be available through:

- Campus wide-Network: This means any computer/laptop/mobile device connected in Campus network will automatically get access to articles from all considered publishers. No separate individual user registration is required.
 - Off-campus Access through INFED: using user Id and password through Shibboleth based Institute Identity Provider (IDP) authenticated by INFED Access Management Federation setup at INLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar.
- ii. For Colleges & Institutions NOT having Static IP Address
- Centralized IDP setup at INFLIBNET using INFED is maintained by INFLIBNET Centre and institutional users managed by Librarian/nodal person of the Institute
 - Authorised users from member Institutions are required to get their User ID and password from their respective colleges.

ONOS Institutional & User Support Manuals – Registration, Administration, and e-Resource Access –

- Manual for Institution Registration - Institute-Registration-Manual.pdf
- Manual for Institute Administration Module for Colleges - Institute-Administration-Portal-Manual-for-Colleges.pdf
- Manual for Self-Registration of Users - User-Self-Registration-Manual.pdf
- Prescribed format of Authorization letter - AuthLetter.docx
- Template for importing user details in bulk for account creation - onos_bulkusers_template.xlsx
- Manual for access to e-Resources through ONOS login - Access-Resources-Manual.pdf
- Manual for access to ONOS e-resources by Institutional login directly from a publisher's website - Access-from-publisher-website-manual.pdf
- User Guides for access to ONOS e-resources - ONOS | India

CONCLUSION

The concept of One Nation, One Subscription represents a significant advancement in making knowledge accessible to everyone in India. Library

networks and consortia are essential in achieving this goal by combining resources, lowering expenses, and providing fair access to information among institutions. By using cooperative strategies, libraries can progress beyond conventional methods of gathering collections and prioritize smooth user access to worldwide academic materials.

By enhancing the sharing of resources, encouraging professional teamwork, and utilizing subscription models at the national level, India can close information gaps and support its academic and research sectors. In this changing environment, library consortia serve not just as service providers but also as strategic collaborators in attaining universal knowledge access, which enhances innovation, inclusivity, and national development.

REFERENCE

- [1] Rathinasabapathy, G. and Veeranjanyulu, (2022). From Library Consortia to “One Nation, One Subscription” Model: prospects and challenges. Conference: 6th I-LISS International Conference on Revitalizing the Libraries to the Android Society at: Warangal, Telengana, India. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364753314_From_Library_Consortia_to_One_Nation_One_Subscription_Model_Prospects_and_Challenges
- [2] Srivastava, J. P. & Verma, Vijay Kumar (2014). Library Consortia: Issues and Challenges with Special Reference to INDEST-AICTE Consortium. 9 th Convention PLANNER-2014 Dibrugarh University, Assam, September 25-27, 2014 © INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinaga. <https://ir.inflibnet.ac.in/server/api/core/bitstreams/d8ae35eb-b1b7-41c0-b2fa-65d9dc589a6b/content>
- [3] Wani, G. A. (2025). *Digital library initiatives: An overview of national and international scenario*. *IP Indian J Libr Sci Inf Technol*, 6(2), 66-72. <https://doi.org/10.18231/j.ijlsit.2021.015>
- [4] Horton, Valerie, & Greg Pronevitz, editors (2015). Library Consortia: Models for Collaboration and Sustainability. American Library Association. https://alastore.ala.org/sites/default/files/book_samples/hortonLC_sample.pdf

- [5] Parveen, Naushia (2018). Library Consortia: Meaning, Definition and Growth. Library and Information Science Academic Blog. LIS BD Network, 20 Aug. <http://www.lisbdnet.com/library-consortia-mdg/>
- [6] Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, Govt. of India (2024). One Nation One Subscription (ONOS): approval and scope. Principal Scientific Adviser ONOS official portal.
- [7] <https://liblicense.crl.edu/licensing-information/national-site-license-initiatives/>
- [8] <https://onos.gov.in>
- [9] <https://liferarian.com/librarian-role/library-consortium-gateway-to-development-733/>
- [10] <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2024/12/05/indias-one-nation-one-subscription-deal-enriches-publishers-and-benefits-few/>
- [11] <http://www.psa.gov.in/oneNationOneSubscription>
- [12] <http://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/lisp11/chapter/library-networks-and-consortia-in-india>