A Study on Library Consortium and Prospects of

Academic Libraries in Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

A library consortium is a group of two or more libraries that have agreed to collaborate with each other in order to achieve mutual objectives and fulfill definite related needs, frequently resource sharing. The aim of the library consortium is to accomplish what the members of the group cannot achieve individually, and its intension is sharing of resources, manpower, budget, services, etc. This study mainly aims to establish academic library consortium in collaboration of various academic libraries in Myanmar like academic libraries in other countries. The required data were collected through literature search. So, the necessary information was collected from various documentary sources, such as books, periodicals, and various online e-resources. This study shows the library consortium is very much a need one and it plays a vital role in collaboration of various academic libraries on the basis to achieve the remarkable improvements and development of the libraries. It is useful for librarians, giving the new knowledge and ideas about library consortium.

Key words: library consortium, resource sharing, academic library consortia, online e- resources

Introduction

No library, however big it may be, is able to satisfy all the needs of its users due to various constraints. In this situation, the concept of resource sharing developed. Initially the term library cooperation was used for resource sharing activity.The idea of library consortium is based on this activity. There were instance of several libraries coming together voluntarily for the mutual benefit of the respective users just like cooperatives. It was the earliest stage of library cooperation. In the second stage, the computerized network came to existence for sharing of resources and at that the library resources were mainly in traditional printed format until this period. With the advent of ICT and its application in library activities, new opportunities came up for greater cooperation among libraries. Nowadays along with the availability of information resources in digital and electronic format, better condition of resource sharing is created among libraries. In this regards, the term library consortium appears as a significant development among libraries.

The library consortium is the sharing of resources among the libraries based on a number of utility over their respected areas. The aim of the consortium is to accomplish what the members of the group cannot achieve individually, and its intention is sharing of

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resources, manpower, budget, services, etc. It is regarded as a valuable strategy to increase the capacity of academic libraries over a short term. There are a number of library consortia in various levels and in various types established in many countries. In Myanmar, there haven't been any library consortia among the libraries yet. But, due to the development of ICT and digital and electronic media in Myanmar academic libraries, the establishment of library consortium is taken into consideration among the librarians.

Objectives of the Study

This study mainly aims to establish academic library consortium successfully in collaboration of various academic libraries in Myanmar like academic libraries in other countries.

The objectives of the study are:

i. To share new knowledge and ideas about library consortium among Myanmar library professionals
ii. To identify why the library consortium should be established in Myanmar in collaboration of academic libraries
iii. To identify the benefits of library consortium
iv. To identify barriers and issues of library consortium
v. To share the knowledge about some popular academic library consortia established in other countries

Scope of the Study

This study covers the overview of the establishment of library consortium around the world and why library consortium is essential for the development of libraries.In addition, it presents initial effort of the establishment of Myanmar academic library consortium by the academic librarians in order to develop academic libraries in Myanmar.

Method of the Study

In this study, the required data were collected through literature survey. So, the necessary information was collected from various documentary sources, such as books, periodicals, and various online e-resources.

Meaning and Definitions of Library Consortium

The term 'consortium' derives from the Latin word 'partnership, association or society' and derives from consors 'partner', itself from con- 'together' and sors 'fate', meaning owner of means or comrade.[2]According to Oxford dictionary, 'consortium means temporary association of a number of countries, companies, banks, etc. for a common purpose.'[3]It literally means 'temporary cooperation of several powers or large interests to affect some common purpose.' In this way, a library consortium is can generally be defined as a collective activity of a group of libraries towards a common goal of sharing resources.

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[2]JyotiVerma, H. N. Malviya, Vijetacharya, "Consortium in Medical Library: SGPGIMS," in *ICT Applications in Academic Libraries,* edited by S. Thanuskodi (New Delhi: SSDN, 2013), 60. (hereafter cited as Verma)

[3]A S Hornby, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2000), 263.

A library consortium is an association of two or more libraries providing users with essential collections and services, and by pooling their resources to achieve this common goal resulting in real cost savings for the libraries.

A consortium could be expressed as a group of organizations who come together to fulfill a combined intention that beneficially requires co-operation and the sharing of resources and need to have a clear communal goal in order to ensure their achievement. A library consortium formation can be regional, state, national and inter institutional level. The way by which the users belong to different institutions or university, joined mutually and purchasing the costly electronic products and sharing its cost creating a common infrastructure is called 'library consortium.'

A library consortium is a community (a cooperative) of two or more information agencies which have formally agreed to coordinate, cooperate in, or consolidate certain functions to achieve mutual objectives. More specially, it is a group of libraries that agree to pool their resources by allowing the users of each institution some types of access to the resources of all other institutions, either through inter-library loan or borrowing privileges. In fact, library consortium is a community of value creating entities, generating value through an aggregation of library units within and across organizations. The value creation could be enhanced through resource sharing processes, products and service offerings of the participating library units in a consortium.

Need of Library Consortium

Nowadays, the yearly cost of academic libraries to uphold information access is grower faster than library budget in order to provide updated academic information sources and effective library services to the users. Academic libraries cannot totally rely on traditional printed resources due to the advent of ICT, development of e-resources and increasing information demands of users. In this situation, it is essential for academic libraries to find the ways to transform their values and policies. Thus, the consortium can accomplish greater values for transforming the libraries to be upgraded as a university hub.

The following are some of the factors to be taken into consideration why the library consortium is necessary to be set up among academic libraries.[4]

i.   The library consortium is very much needed for the traditional libraries to stick together with the modern libraries in order to provide more resources to their users at the affordable cost.

ii. In these days, the users are building up their expectations in order to get the required information in faster and immediate access through various e-resources such as online databases. The library consortium will be the best effective one in order to satisfy the needs of the users.

iii. Due to the current subscription policies of the academic libraries and pricing policies of the publishers, the libraries will face new challenges in acquiring e-resources from the publishers through online. Purchasing e-resources directly

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[4]M.K.G. Rajev, "Consortia and Prospects of Libraries in Academic Environment: An Outline." In *Library Services in the Knowledgfe Web,* edited byK.Veeranjaneyulu, RabindraK.Mahapatra, P.Visakhi (New Delhi: New India, 2012), 207. (hereafter cited as Rajev)

and individually from the international publishers will also be in high prices. The primary business of the library consortium is to joint purchasing of e-resources. In order to overcome the policy issues and reduce the cost, it is essential for the libraries to go for a library consortium. Through collaborative purchasing, the consortium significantly reduces the cost of e-resources and increase access to wider range of resources.

iv. The continuous price inflation in scientific information and the lack of sufficient funds availability has led to cancellations of scientific journals. It is very difficult to purchase all the necessary information resources because of this situation. Hence, the need of library consortium arises.

v. The technological developments are also in need of new supporting devices, such as hardware and software and the training and education is necessary for library professionals. So, librarians have to be very well trained to manage the environment. These result in the need of library consortium.

In this way, it can be said that library consortium is needed for libraries because of:[5]

(a) Information explosion
(b) Diversity of user needs
(c) Financial crunch
(d) Impossibility of self-sufficiency
(e) Time saving

Types of Library Consortium

Library Consortia function indifferent ways. Under a library consortium, libraries come together primarily to share a discounted rate on electronic journals and databases and on the other hand, the library consortia are tightly integrated organizations sharing a variety of resources which require a long term commitment and collaborative decision making at all levels.

Theoretically, consortia may be of following types depending on their characteristics.

There are two types of consortia, from the point of view of types of libraries forming the consortium.

i. *Consortia of multi-type libraries:* In this type of consortium, participating libraries are of different types, such as public, academic and special.

ii. *Consortia of same type of libraries:* The members of such a consortium are of same type, such as consortium of public libraries, consortium of academic libraries, etc.

Depending on the geographical region of coverage, the consortia may be of the following types:

i. *Local level consortia:* This type of library consortium consists of libraries situated in a particular city, town of district.

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[5]Verma, 62.

ii. *State level consortia:* In such a consortium, libraries of one particular state participate.

iii. *National level consortia:* Libraries belong to a country are its members.

iv. *Regional level consortia:* In such a consortium, libraries of a particular region participate.

v.   *International level consortia:* In this consortium, libraries belonging to different countries participate. This may be formed either by individual libraries, such as OCLC, or by bringing different national consortia under one umbrella. Such federation of consortia is known as Meta Consortia, such as International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC), which comprises of nearly 150 library consortia from around the world.

From the point of view of subject or area of coverage, there aretwo types of consortia:

i.   *Single discipline oriented consortia:* In such a consortium organizations dealing with same or similar disciplines join hand.

ii. *Multi-discipline oriented consortia:* Such a consortium deals with resources in multiple disciplines.

Further, from the point of view of basis of formation, there are two types of consortia:

i.   *Non-sponsored consortia:* Such a consortium is formed voluntarily by participating libraries by sharing the expenses.

ii. *Sponsored consortia:* This type of consortium is sponsored by a central organization and the major expenses are borne by it. Sometimes, the sponsoring body itself carries out the major activities of the consortium.

Obviously, the above categories are not mutually exclusive. Most of the existing consortia in other countries naturally fall in more than one category.

Consortia Models

According to the study conducted, it was found that a multiplicity of organizational models of consortia have appeared in India based on their objectives, participants, sources of funding, etc.

Open Consortia

This type of consortia is open ended and provides facility for the libraries to join and leave at any point of time. There is no fixed term for joining of leaving. In addition, the member numbers are not fixed. It is flexible. In this case, publishers define a minimum number of libraries for the consortium to take off, at a specific rate per product. This type of consortia are generally driven by a small homogeneous groups who have a need to cross-share the resources in a specific subject area.[6] INDEST Consortium run by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India is an example of this.

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[6]Verma, 62.

Closed Group Consortia

This type of model stays exclusive within a defined group. It emerges either by coalition, affiliation and collaboration among them. It is based on certain criteria and the essential members are uniformed. The needs are also common and the resources shared are in specific area. The formation and operation of the consortia guidelines and administration are easy and simple. CSIR Consortium (institutional affiliation) and IIM Consortium are examples of this model.

Shared-Budget Model

In this model, the participating member libraries have to take the lead and form the consortium. They have to share the funds which is controlled through the Memorandum of Understanding for better and strong consideration. IIM Consortium and Forsa Consortium are examples of this model. The operational aspects of the consortium especially the management of funds, etc. are individually handed.

Centrally Funded Model

In this model, survival of the consortium exclusively depends on the central funding agency.The strength of this model is that the financial responsibility of running the consortium is shouldered by the parent body. INDEST, UGC INFONET, CSIR Consortia, etc. are examples of this model.

Functions of a Library Consortium

The library consortia can be developed into platforms not only for sharing valuable resources in different libraries of the country but also for taking up several other activities for the mutual benefit of participating libraries.

A library consortium can undertake the following activities for promoting information resource sharing:[7]

i. Joint purchasing of e-resources
ii. Cooperative collection development among the member libraries.
iii. Cooperative processing of information resources acquired through the consortium.
iv. Compilation of bibliographical and/or full-text database of the holdings of the member libraries, both print and non-print.
v. Sharing of resources, both traditional and digital, of member libraries through network of document delivery service as the case can be.
vi. Digitization of valuable and rare collections of member libraries available in printed format and providing access to such materials to the members of all the libraries of the consortium.
vii. Supporting member libraries for setting up institutional repositories.
viii. Creation of virtual digital library covering all the e-information resources available in member libraries by networking of those libraries.

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[7]PurushothamTiwari, "Resource Sharing Strategies," in *International Encyclopedia of Library Automation: Library Development,* 2011, 126-127.

A library consortium may also share other resources in the following manner for their mutual benefit of the participating libraries:

   i. Sharing the storage facilities, thereby minimizing expenditure on space.
   ii. Sharing of human resources at local, regional, and national levels.
   iii. Pooling of expert manpower and promoting professional development.
   iv. Assist member libraries in creating technology infrastructure.
   v. Facilitating joint preservation and archiving activities for print and digital materials.
   vi. Initiating and supporting research projects of common interest.
   vii. Collectively promoting, marketing and publicizing the library services.

Key Benefits of the Library Consortium Approach

A library consortium has its own intrinsic benefits in order to provide the development of libraries by collaborative work. The followings are some key benefits of the library consortium according to the survey of the consortium experiences in other countries.[8]

   i. Possibility of huge and complete collection of materials
   ii. Communication construction can be developed among different libraries.
   iii. Resource sharing can be enhanced.
   iv. More time can be saved.
   v. Introducing more services can be done in a professional way.
   vi. Competitive professionalism can be developed among librarians.
   vii. Prompt and efficient document delivery system is possible.
   viii. Electronic Archives also can be developed in a perfect manner.
   ix. Cost of information can be reduced.
   x. Information can be accommodated within the budget.

Barriers and Issues of Library Consortia Initiatives

Although a library consortium has its own benefits, some barriers and issues can be identified in operating the consortium. Firstly, there is the ever present funding problem. Entering consortia require initial investment in licenses and information and communication technology. Secondly, libraries are not prepared to cash in the savings offered by not handling the print edition of the journals. Their work procedures are still centered around the physical document. Staffs are also not trained in handling electronic documents, etc. Therefore, many libraries are reluctant to enter the consortia agreements. Thirdly, there will often be investments to be made for hardware setup, mounting data, development of interfaces, administration of access, etc. Those problems are to be solved not by the single library, but in cooperation between the participating libraries. There are also some consortium issues which are:

   i. Lack of awareness among the libraries and/or library authorities about the ultimate benefits of consortia.
   ii. Resource identification by all the member libraries
   iii. Conservative mentality of the library authorities with regard to e-resources, especially online resources.

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[8]Rajev, 208-209.

    iv. Uneven development of libraries of different sectors and slow progress of library automation.

    v. Inability of many libraries in meeting the minimum commitment required to join a consortium due to financial and other infrastructural constraints.

    vi. Information Technology and communication Infrastructure

    vii. Budget allocation and Funding

    viii. Decision making and control

    ix. Fund transfer and audit problem

    x. Issues on cost and funds availability

    xi. Access related issues

    xii. Copyright and licensing issues

    xiii. Issues on archival systems

    xiv. Coordination among participating libraries

    xv. Availability of professional staff

    xvi. The character and opinion of individuals and institutions

    xvii. Need of adequate professional training in ICT for the librarians

Library Consortia in Other Countries

In this study, some library consortia in other countries were presented in order to know how different types of library consortia are working actively to collaborate among the libraries around the world.

INDEST Consortium (India)

The Indian National Digital Library in Engineering and Science and Technology (INDEST) Consortium was established by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the Government of India in 2001. It is the India's largest consortium to cater e-services to its member institutions. The ministry provides funds required for the subscription to electronic resources for 38 academic institutions, including the Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Technology, regional Engineering Colleges, Indian Institute of Management, about 60 centrally-funded/aided government institutions through the consortium. The INDEST consortium is the most ambitious initiative so far the area of engineering and technology disciplines. INDEST has now grown to 142 member institutions and subscribes over 4000e-journals.The primary objective of libraries is to organize and provide access to information, and it remains the same although the format and methods have changed drastically.[9]

International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)

The International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) is an informal, self-organized group of library consortia from around the world. It exists for strategic and practical discussion of issues of common interest among the consortia members. The ICOLC first met informally as the Consortium of Consortia (COC) in 1997. Over time, its name was adjusted to reflect its increasingly global character. All library consortia, anywhere in the world, may be part of the ICOLC. There are no membership fees or

[9]S.K. Chaudhary, "Academic Library Networks," in *Library Networking*(New Delhi:A.P.H.,2014), 208-209. (hereafter cited as Chaudhary)

barriers to participation. The ICOLC gathers its strength from sharing information and strategies about the benefits that its members bring to libraries and their users. ICOLC represents both formally organized and informal consortia. That is, consortial groups range from informal with no central office, a rotating leadership, and volunteer service; the most formal may be legally incorporated, have an organized office in a larger government agency or <u>NGO</u>, with large permanent staff. Consortia may adjust and change over time: a hallmark of cooperative work.

JULAC(HongKong)   The Joint University Libraries Advisory Committee (JULAC) is a local consortium of the eight academic tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) of the Hong Kong SAR Government. The committee was first set up in 1967 to discuss and co-ordinate the collaboration on resources sharing and services among the libraries of the eight institutions: City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Lingnan University, The Chinese of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Institute for Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and The University of Hong Kong.[10]

Like many other local consortia, JULAC has embarked on various resource sharing projects such as interlibrary-loan program; reciprocal access and borrowing programme by faculty members and students of the member libraries, co-operative Chinese cataloguing and name authority projects; and joint-licensing projects. Most of the projects have involved a selected subgroup because of their special area of interest, institution needs and other considerations.[11]

Virtually all of the jointly licensed materials have been purchased with each library's own funds. JULAC has several subgroups. One of these subgroups which focus on the cooperative purchase of digital materials is Collaborative Development Committee (CDC).This group has no operational funding nor administrative personnel. Collaborative initiatives and negotiations are soly made possible by the voluntary efforts of its members. The CDC centrally handles the contract and negotiation functions, but other functions like billing, payment, and resolving access problems with the providers are handled directly by each member library.[12]

JULAC's member libraries are committed to the development of a comprehensive, interconnected set of information resources and services benefiting student, staff, and faculty clienteles at each institution. That commitment serves as the basis for JULAC's goals, programs, and priorities. JULAC's collaborative programs take place within the larger context of a commitment to "deep collaboration" between the eight institutions of tertiary education in Hong Kong. JULAC is evolving into a collaborative library consortium.

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[10]Gayle Chan. Mrs. AndDr.Anthony W. Ferguson,*Digital Library Consortium in the 21*[st]*Century: The Hong Kong JULAC Case;* available from http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/julac/project/index.html; Internet; accessed 26 October 2015, 7-8. (hereafter cited as Chan)

[11] Ibid.

[12]Ibid., 8.

CALIS (China)

Like their counterparts in other countries, academic libraries in China are facing such thorny problems as shrinking budgets, growing patron demands, and rising costs for purchasing books and subscribing to periodicals. It has thus become increasingly difficult for a single library to serve its patrons to their satisfaction. Under these circumstances, the idea of resource sharing among academic libraries was born. In 1998, China Academic Library and information System (CALIS) has become the most important academic library consortium in China.

The CALIS is a nationwide academic library consortium, centrally funded by the Chinese government. It is organized ina tiered structure. It is intended to serve multiple resource-sharing functions among the participating libraries — including online searching, interlibrary loan, document delivery, and coordinated purchasing and cataloguing — by digitizing resources and developing an information service network. It currently consists of thirteen management or information centres and seventy member libraries.

Prospects of Academic Libraries in Myanmar

Around the world, 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 personified by the growth of library consortia. Information technology is now enabling a level of cooperation that is much broader and deeper than ever before. The most recent growth in collaboration arises from libraries working to do more than a single library do. This is accomplished through forming library consortia that share common interest based upon geography or similar organizational mission. Therefore, nowadays, different types of library consortia are working actively to develop the libraries.

In Myanmar, the idea of consortium is a new concept that requires proper guidelines and methodologies. All academic libraries are going individually to achieve their goals at each institution. Along with the political, social, and economic transformation, in the education sector, the role of academic libraries should be transformed in order to fulfill the educational mission. Academic libraries in Myanmar are facing some problems, such as shrinking budget, rising cost for purchasing books and periodicals, growing patron demands, etc. It has thus become difficult for a single library to serve its patrons to their satisfaction with highly qualified resources and better services. Under these circumstances, the idea of resource sharing becomes important among academic libraries. In this sense, library consortia provide an organizational form for libraries to share their resources.

Traditionally, the primary purpose of establishing a library consortium is to share physical resources such as books and periodicals among members. More recently, advances in computer, information and communication technologies have dramatically revolutionized the way in which information is acquired, stored, accessed, and transferred. Sharing electronic resources has rapidly become another important goal for library consortia.

In Myanmar, academic library consortia have not been set up among the institutions yet. So, according to the experiences of academic library consortia in other countries, academic librarians should make effort to form library consortia in Myanmar. The library consortium strives to meet the needs of its region with particular focus on the academics, students, researchers. The following are some of the objectives to set up academic library consortium[13]:

i. Promoting formal relations between members to foster collaboration and networking
ii. Support optional access to information for members through regional and national co-operation
iii. Promote collection building and resource sharing
iv. Provide support for the implementation and management of common library systems
v. Improve information literacy skills and to share training resources and expertise

At present, eight university libraries in Myanmar are providing highly qualified academic online e-resources to their patrons supported by OSF/EIFL through eLibrary Myanmar Project. Since 2013, EIFL has supported eLibrary Myanmar Project to University of Yangon, Universities' Central Library and University of Mandalay and since 2014, Yadanabon University, Dagon University and Yangon Institute of Economics. In 2015, it extended the project to East Yangon University and West Yangon University. In addition, the project provides EBSCO Discovery Service Training to faculty members, students and library staff. It is a great opportunity for the faculty members, students and researchers. Now this project extended to next two years. The user demands to online e-resources gradually increase. So, these university libraries should consider having a plan for purchasing online e-resources in the future. Myanmar academic libraries are not in a position to subscribe to all the required journals and databases mainly due to lack of management support and financial constraints. If the libraries consider purchasing e-resource individually, it will be costly. In order to facilitate resource sharing among the libraries at a much cheaper rate, the library consortium can support for collaborative purchasing and other collaborative activities.

Under this situation, EIFL creates consensus about the benefits that Myanmar university library consortium can bring to clients and librarians and share information about how to form a library consortium. It encourages and supports its partner university libraries to initiate the plan for establishing library consortium. At present, nine university libraries are initiating the plan for establishment of Myanmar Academic Library Consortium (MALC). These universities are University of Yangon, Universities Central Library, Universities of Mandalay, Yadanabon University, Dagon University, Yangon University of Economics, East Yangon University, West Yangon Universityand Yesin Agricultural University. These university libraries are currently collaborating to appear MALC under the Ministry of Education for the development of academic libraries in Myanmar.

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[13]Gwenda Thomas and Ina Fourie, "Academic Library Consortia in South Africa: Where We Come from and Where we are Heading," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship,*32 : 432.

Librarians hope that MALC will appear as nationwide academic library consortium by their effort and can collaborate various activities among the academic libraries like consortia in other countries.

Conclusion

Resource sharing consortia, created for the sole purpose of acquiring electronic forms of information, are prominent features of today's library landscape. Results of the study revealed that the academic library consortia play the crucial role in the development of academic libraries, particularly in the promotion of professional development and resource sharing. In order to achieve the goals of the perfect resource sharing, prompt document delivery systems, integrating collection and development process, access to the variety of reliable and enormous sources of electronic information, the best and foremost solution for the academic libraries is library consortia. Consortia conduct their business to advance research and learning, share risk, provide easy access to information, provide high-quality electronic resources, enable continuous professional development, strengthen library leadership as education and information providers, and to shape the future.

Library collaboration must be based upon a set of commonly held values, understandings, and principles before effective cooperation can be realized. Library collaboration signals the importance of the programs pursued by its participants. Library collaboration facilitates greater results than might be realized by any single library. The information personnel of the academic libraries are also called upon to equip themselves with the best tools, techniques, procedures and practices. The ways in which people communicate, and acquire and share knowledge, will inevitably have an impact on the library, its services, and its staff.[14]

The academic libraries have to be managed on the basis of constant introspection at the individual level and institutional level in this age of knowledge management. So, librarians have to be transformed their information management skills, techniques, practices and resources.[15]In this way, redefining role and responsibilities, positive involvement of information personnel and constant evaluation of goods and services will make the Myanmar academic libraries highly appropriate and resourceful in future.

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[14]Chaudary, 209.

[15]Ibid., 211.

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