
**RESOURCE SHARING IN THE DIGITAL ERA: PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES
IN PHILIPPINE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

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Abstract

Libraries have long been engaging in collaborative and resource sharing initiatives in order to provide the information needs of their patrons. The digital age and the perennial issue on inadequate funding have made this practice even more necessary. In the Philippines, several networks of libraries or consortia have sprung up with the primary purpose of promoting collaboration and cooperation. This is so because participating in a consortium offers the advantage of gaining access to more resources and services. This study examines the extent of resource-sharing practices of the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institution Library Committee (NOCEILC), a consortium with 19 institution-members from the five Philippine provinces. It employs survey and interview method to find out the different types of collaborative activities the member-libraries engage in and their level of satisfaction with these consortial endeavors. This paper also attempts to find out the challenges that confront the libraries in their resource sharing efforts as well as the potential solutions to these issues. The results of the study provide useful information on how NOCEI member libraries collaborate and share their resources, which generally mirrors the current collaborative resource sharing practices of the academic libraries in the Philippines.

Keywords: resource sharing, consortium, collaboration, academic libraries, Network of CALABARZON Educational Institution (NOCEI)

Introduction

Libraries have long been engaging in collaborative and resource sharing activities in order to provide the information needs of their patrons. Igwe (2010) aptly stated that “the need for resource sharing is as old as the history of librarianship” (p. 175). Resource sharing refers to:

...activities that result from an agreement, formal or informal, among a group of libraries (usually a consortium or network) to share collections, data, facilities, personnel, etc., for the benefit of their users and to reduce the expense of collection development (Reitz, 2014).

Getting libraries to share materials, human resources, bibliographic data, and full-text databases available in each of the cooperating libraries requires planning and conscious effort (Igwe, 2010). The ability to share resources is a way of enhancing financial flexibility, which then could extend resources to serve a wider community. The appreciation of the need for cooperation leads to the formation of library consortium. For this to happen, several libraries should “come together for the mutual benefit of the respective user in the form of library cooperation” (Islam, 2012, p. 2). Libraries traditionally work together “to leverage shrinking budgets, to learn from each other, to build better tools together, and most importantly, to serve their common users better by taking advantage of one another’s collections” (Borek, 2006, p. 456). A library consortium aims to fulfill the following objectives (Islam, 2012, p. 2):

- a. To facilitate collective acquisition and sharing of traditional and e-resources;
- b. To cooperate in processing of information resources;
- c. To access and download the required resources remotely by the users of the participating libraries;
- d. To help develop a country-wide acquisition policy to avoid unnecessary and wasteful duplication in purchase;
- e. To develop a more sophisticated search engine enabling simultaneous search of multiple databases;
- f. To establish an electronic journal center to serve as a permanent archive for electronic journals;
- g. To provide extensive facilities to use full text databases and electronic journals;
- h. To develop digital resources jointly and to provide access to such materials to the members of the consortium; and
- i. To establish reciprocal borrowing agreements among the participating libraries to share resources, etc.

Resource sharing typically involves cooperative acquisition, collaborative collection development, interlibrary loan/document delivery service and creation of union catalogs within a consortium. Members of library consortia have the benefit of being able to access greater number of materials than their individual collections. Resource sharing also allows timely access to materials that cannot be obtained through local resources. By sharing materials, libraries are relieved of the task of

carrying everything their patrons want or need. Spunk (1998) further stated that “the reduction of duplicate collections is seen as more economically efficient within library consortia” (p. 2). Studies show that resource sharing fosters good relationship and collaboration with other libraries that benefited the institution, users and librarians. Dipeolu (1994) opines that resource sharing is invaluable and encourages healthy comparisons that can lead to improvement in practices if approached in the right spirit and attitude.

In the Philippines, there are number of consortia established since 1970s with sharing of resources as the underlying objective (Yap, 2013). One of them is the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions, Inc. (NOCEI). Established in 2008 to promote cooperation and collaboration, NOCEI is composed of private and public educational institutions in the Philippine provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon where the acronym CALABARZON was derived from. The NOCEI Library Committee (NOCEILC) has adopted a resource sharing policy that states its commitment to make resource sharing an integral part of their library service. The policy stipulates that “every attempt should be made to make accessible any material to fulfill patron requests considering that he/she came from a member library.”

This study aims to examine the extent of the resource sharing practices and the effectiveness of the program the NOCEILC have set to achieve. Likewise, factors hindering resource sharing among member libraries were examined, including the perceived solutions to strengthen the program. The results of the study will provide a basis for making improvements on the current practice and in initiating new collaborative strategies on resource sharing. This will also serve as reference to inspire other libraries in Philippines to engage in resource sharing and seek more ways to improve the practice.

Methodology

The focus of the study is the resource sharing practices of the NOCEI member libraries. A survey questionnaire from the study conducted by Lawal, Bassey, and Ani (2008) was adopted with minor modifications. In order to examine the actual resource sharing practices, the survey contained a resource sharing inventory with a combination of structured and one open-ended question geared to determine the frequency of resource sharing, type of materials shared as well as the perceived benefits and deterrents to sharing resources among the member libraries. The survey questionnaire was sent through email to the heads of all member libraries who served as the respondents of this study. After subsequent email and phone inquiries, the final response rate was 89.47% (17 out of 19). Responses to the survey were tallied and analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple percentages. A follow-up interview with the Chair of the NOCEILC was also conducted in order to gain more insights on their resource sharing agenda. Their resource sharing policy was also reviewed to determine the method of resource sharing the member-libraries have agreed to embark on.

Results

Profile of the NOCEI Member Libraries

It was specified that NOCEILC aims to promote cooperation and collaboration among private and public libraries. Table 1 shows that majority of its members are private institutions which comprise 89.47% (17 schools) while 10.53% (two schools) are public. In terms of geographical distribution of members for the five provinces, most of its members are from Laguna and Batangas, both with seven member schools equivalent to 36.84% each and Cavite with four or 21.05%. Only one (5.26%) institution from Quezon has joined as of the date of the study while there is no member from Rizal province yet. As per their policy, the initiative to join the network should emanate from the highest authority, usually the president, of the institution.

Table 1

Geographical Distribution and Classification of NOCEI Member Libraries

Province	Public	Private	Total	Percentage	Name of Institutions	
Cavite	0	4	4	21.05	De La Salle University-Dasmariñas DLSU- Health and Sciences Institute Adventist International Institute of Advance Studies (AIAS)	San Sebastián College Recoletos de Cavite (SSCR-C)
Laguna	1	6	7	36.84	Colegio de San Juan de Letran-Laguna Colegio San Agustin- Biñan De La Salle Canlubang Lyceum of the Philippines University-Laguna	San Pablo Colleges University of Perpetual Help Biñan UP Los Baños

Table 1 (continued)

Province	Public	Private	Total	Percentage	Name of Institutions
Batangas	1	6	7	36.84	De La Salle Lipa First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities (FAITH) Lipa City Colleges Lyceum of the Philippine University Batangas State University St. Bridget College University of Batangas
Rizal	0	0	0	0.00	
Quezon	0	1	1	5.26	Calayan Educational Foundation Inc.
Total	2	17	19	100.00	
	10.53%	89.47%			

Resource Sharing Policy

When aiming at resource sharing policy or program implementation among educational institutions, it is important to understand that often the success of resource sharing is dependent upon inter-educational institutions' collaboration. Collaboration is a well-defined relationship entered by two organizations to achieve common goals (Parkinson, 2006). Hence, collaborative resource sharing represents commitment and a shift to enter into relationships with other institution to achieve shared vision, mission and objectives and response to mutual interest and obligations.

The NOCEILC has established its policy (revised in 2012), which enumerates four resource sharing modes with which the member libraries have agreed upon: 1) Admittance of Visiting Researchers; 2) E-Document Delivery Service; 3) Cooperative Acquisitions Program; and 4) Cooperative Indexing. Following are the brief description of each item.

Admittance of Visiting Researchers

The libraries agree to allow a maximum of five researchers (student, faculty, administrators and staff) from each member institution free access to their collection. Access to the library resources includes books and periodicals, theses and dissertations and online resource databases, subject to availability of materials.

E-Document Delivery Service

The member libraries agree to send scanned documents thru e-mail, subject to availability of material. The documents may include selected pages from journals and books and may accompany complete bibliographic entry, table of contents, abstract or preliminary pages.

Cooperative Acquisitions Program

The cooperative acquisition is only limited to purchase of eJournals and databases in order to cut the cost of subscription per institution.

Cooperative Indexing

All printed journals from member libraries will be indexed and will be made accessible through a union catalog. The work is divided among the member libraries which agree to submit index entries to on a regular basis. A working committee is tasked to oversee this ongoing project.

Extent of Resource Sharing

The responses that deal with the extent, perceived benefits and challenges to resources sharing were tabulated using the “frequencies” procedure. Based on the responses, all (100%) member libraries consider the resource sharing practices “desirable” and affirm their involvement in one or more resource sharing activities which is a positive indication of the applicability and usefulness of the program among its members.

Modes of Resource Sharing

Although the NOCEILC Resource Sharing Policy only stipulated four activities with which they intend to share their resources, the respondents were given seven potential resource sharing activities to choose from (see Figure 1). Results reveal that 100% of the libraries accept visiting users and are part of the Cooperative Indexing project. On the other hand, when it comes to participating in Seminars or Trainings and in Exchange of Publications, slightly more than half (58.82%) of the libraries are involved in these activities; 35.29% share materials through Donation/Gift; and 17.65% participates in Cooperative Acquisition. Meanwhile, all libraries have not yet done E-document Delivery Service. According to the NOCEILC Chair, this is because in actuality, this mode has not yet been offered by any institution and requires establishing a clear policy. Data revealed that “admittance of visiting researchers” is the most popular form of resource sharing mode among member libraries

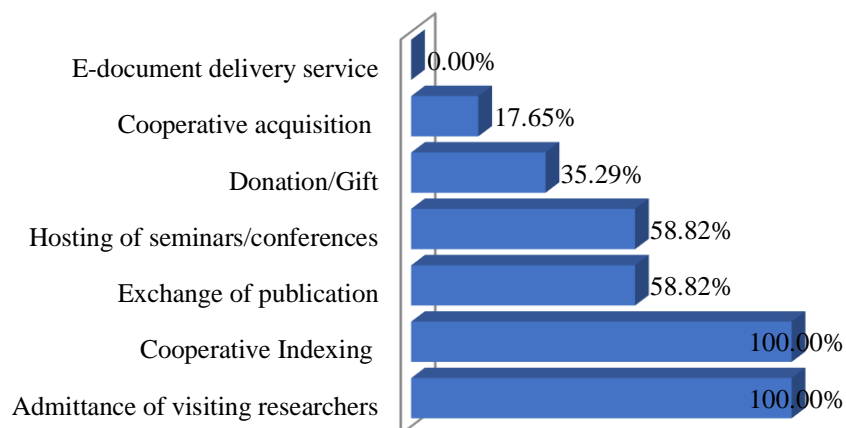


Figure 1. Modes of resource sharing.

Frequency of Resource Sharing Activity

The frequency of engaging in any of the resource sharing activity is shown in Figure 2. When the activity involved is “admittance of visiting users” the count is in terms of the number of visits and not the number of visitors. Results show that majority of the member libraries (10 or 58.82%) share resources “often,” indicating resources are shared, on the average, more than 3-4 times a month; 3 (17.64%) shared resources “very often” or five or more times a month; three (17.64%) shared resources “rarely” or 1-2 times; while one (5.88%) not at all. The visiting users’ schedule is seen as a contributing factor for the responses. Accessibility is also one of the concerns as in the case of that one institution as it is relatively far (2-4 hours away) from other libraries.

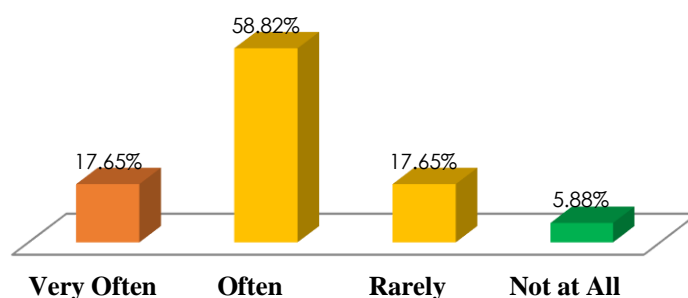


Figure 2. Resource sharing frequency.

Types of Information Resource Shared

Five formats of materials were identified and of these, “book” is the type most commonly shared by all libraries to other members followed by “thesis/dissertation” (88.24%). A significant

number also share “journal” (70.59%) while “eJournals/databases” are shared by 17.65% of the participating libraries. “Audiovisual” materials and “eBook” have yet to be utilized (see Figure 3).

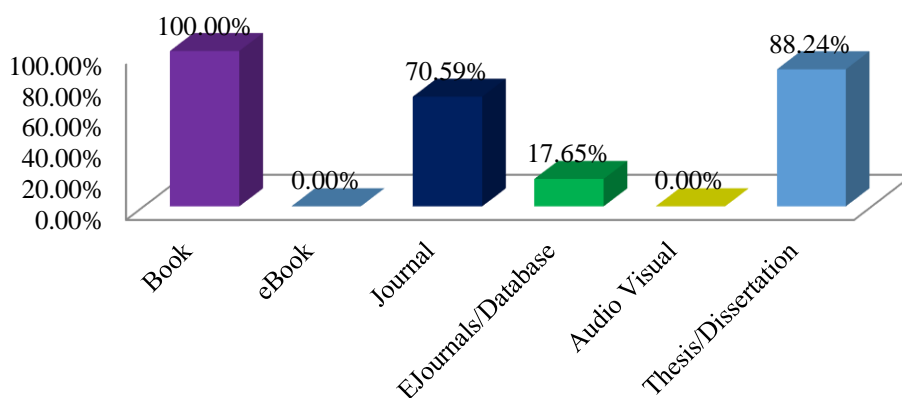


Figure 3. Type of information resource shared.

Satisfaction and Perceived Benefits

The respondents’ level of satisfaction on resource sharing is shown on Table 2. A large percentage (82.35%) expressed that they are “satisfied” on resource sharing activities and three (17.67%) responded as “very satisfied.”

Table 2

Resource Sharing Satisfaction

Level of Satisfaction	Percentage
Very Satisfied	17.65
Satisfied	82.35
Dissatisfied	0
Very Dissatisfied	0
Total	100

Library cooperation has proven to be an effective way of presenting smart solutions to common library problems/concerns through communities of practice (Fresnido & Yap, 2014). In an open-ended question asked on the respondents’ perception of resource sharing, all of them stated a positive view on resource sharing practices. After classifying the responses, three key benefits emerged as perceived by the respondents (see Figure 4): resource sharing 1) expands the library services (76.47%); 2) assists with budgetary constraints (23.53%); and 3) promotes cooperation and linkages (29.41%). Majority of the respondents agree that resource sharing is a great way to help libraries with limited resources. Aside

Garcia, J. P., & Peñafior, J. D. C. (2017). Resource sharing in the digital era: Perspectives and practices in Philippine academic libraries. *Journal of Philippine Librarianship*, 37, 32–44.

from expanding the services, sharing of resources also assists with budget constraints. Being able to borrow instead of buy solves the issue with finances which is a common concern for libraries. In addition, respondents consider resource sharing initiatives as a venue to strengthen cooperation and linkages among libraries.

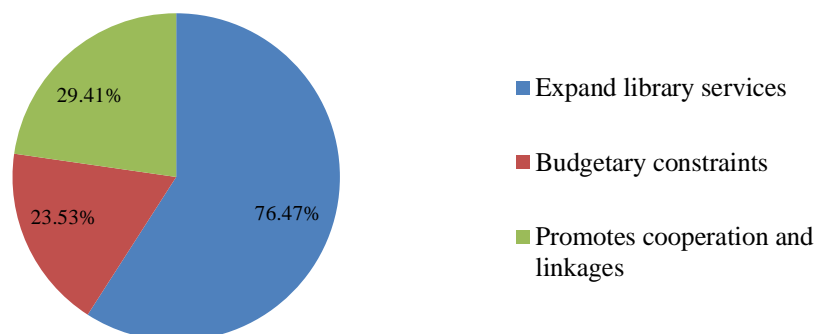


Figure 4. Perceptions on resource sharing.

Challenges to Efficient Resource Sharing

Table 3 shows the multiple factors hindering the efficient performance of resource sharing among NOCEI library members. Because the practice of resources sharing is still largely traditional, it is not surprising that the “fear of losing the materials” (64.70%) became a primary issue among the cooperating libraries. “Communication problems” (58.82%) which is related to providing, cascading and clarifying relevant information to members is also a concern. Inadequate collection that can be shared (52.94%) is also perceived as a major hindrance. Similar to other consortium, some libraries with less resource will naturally have less to “share” and even those libraries with more still have inadequate materials.

Other factors considered as barriers in resource sharing are: “lack of funds” (41.17%), “lack of relevant ICT facilities” (35.29%), “resource sharing policy.” non-provision or provision (29.41%), and other factors (11.76%) such as lack of participation/commitment of some member libraries to attend meetings of the library committee and distance between schools and conflict of schedules for visiting researchers.

Table 3

Issues with Resource Sharing

Rank	Issues	Percentage
1	Fear of losing the materials to the borrowing libraries	64.70
2	Communication problems (updates, meetings, etc.)	58.82
3	Inadequate collection	52.94
4	Lack of funds	41.17
5	Lack of relevant ICT facilities	35.29
6	Resource sharing policy	29.41
7	Others	11.76

Possible Ways to Improve Resource Sharing

Based from the survey, five possible solutions were identified and one “others” option were given to the respondents. As shown in Table 4, “increased awareness”, as identified by the majority of the respondents (94.12%), was to be the possible solution to overcome the issues, hence, improving the resource sharing program. Fifteen respondents (88.23%) asserted “cooperative resource sharing projects” as solution, 12 (70.59%) proposed increased funding for NOCEI library committee; 11 (64.70%) suggested the provision of relevant ICT facilities; and nine (52.94%) recommended the “revision of resource sharing policy.” Others (11.76%) advised alternative ways such as: commitment of library leaders and involvement of all committee members in the various projects could help resolve the issues and promote resource sharing. The provision of ICT facilities is specifically targeted to having the presence of online catalogs among member libraries. Sadly, some member libraries still do not have this service.

Table 4

Possible Solutions to Overcome Resource Sharing

Rank	Possible Solutions	Percentage
1	Increased awareness of the need for resource sharing among users	94.12
2	Cooperative resource sharing projects	88.23
3	Increased funding for NOCEI library committee	70.59
4	Provision of relevant ICT facilities	64.7
5	Revision of resource sharing policy	52.94
6	Others	11.76

Conclusions and Recommendations

The NOCEI Library Committee, like any other consortium, engages in collaborative resource sharing to pursue common interests such as to reduce costs of materials through cooperative acquisition, provide more resources, facilities and services, and share experience and expertise of librarians through seminars and trainings. This study has presented the extent of the existing resource sharing practices of its members. The significant number of member libraries involved in one or more forms of resource sharing activities and the high frequency of resource sharing activity is a positive indication that they find this practice an essential part of providing library services to their patrons.

Findings also show that libraries chiefly share print materials such as books, journals and theses and dissertations but limited to in-house use only. And while the respondents regarded resource sharing a “desirable” activity, the level of satisfaction among the respondents, which falls on the “average” level, means that there is still much room for improvement. The fear of losing items to borrowing institutions, communication issues and inadequate collection are the major issues that needed attention. The optimistic view of members however, will be useful in order to find creative ways to expand the scope and level of their resource sharing services. On the other hand, the digital era has clearly made an impact on the collaborative practices of the member libraries. The types of materials they share among each other have now expanded to electronic and online formats. This is indicated also by the participation of some member libraries in cooperative acquisition primarily to acquire online databases.

There are several ways by NOCEI members can improve their resource sharing practices. Engaging in reciprocal borrowing or interlibrary loan (ILL), a practice fundamental to resource sharing, will be beneficial, especially to those with less resources. There is a need though to establish guidelines and policies that the member libraries should agree on, in order to successfully implement such service. In addition, heightened participation in collective acquisition and development of e-resources is also something that NOCEI member libraries could improve on. Given the limited financial resources, participation in this type of activity will increase the buying power of libraries. Also, with this, libraries will be able to augment their collection without spending as much as they would if they will purchase the resources on their own. It is important to ensure though that relevant technologies or IT infrastructure is first and foremost available and in place.

This digital milieu provides both opportunities and challenges for libraries. On one side is the advantage of having easy access to more resources, while on the flip side is the concern for budget and reliable technologies, among others. Thus, now, more than ever, library consortia will need to intensely work together to find and implement workable answers to the problems brought about by this digital era. Undoubtedly, when their effort is concentrated and focused on a singular goal of making more resources accessible to their patrons, creative solutions will be worked out. In the Philippines, while it is apparent that the resource practices still heavily lean on the traditional side, it is evident that the spirit of collaboration and cooperation is still very much present among the libraries—doing what they can with what they have and sharing what they can despite the observable inadequacies.

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