The term resource applies to a thing, person or action to which one resorts to in times of need and sharing indicates allotting, apportioning or contributing something that is owned, to benefit others. Resource sharing, therefore, refers to reciprocity, implying a partnership where each member has something useful to contribute to others and which each is willing and able to make available when needed.

Resource sharing is defined as a mode of operation whereby library functions are shared in common by a number of libraries. The goals are to provide a positive effect:

- On the library users in terms of access to more materials or services, and/or
- On the library budget in terms of providing service as less cost, increased service at the same cost or much more service at a less cost than if undertaken individually.

These goals are to be realized without affecting the aim/mission of the participating libraries, although their modes of operation may have to be adjusted. The chief reason for libraries to resort to resource sharing is inflation and reductions in library budgets.

Resource sharing is an empty concept, but for the approach permitting resource sharing to work is that which entails having resources to share having a willingness to share them, and having a plan for accomplishing resource sharing.

Resource sharing process involves several aspects to facilitate sharing. One fundamental aspect is to understand the basic resources that a library has to share, i.e., and the materials. Before considering what is to be shared it is important to consider what cannot be shared. For example, a document owned by a library that is needed frequently by users of that library is not or cannot be considered for sharing as it will not be available for its users when required.

Resource sharing refers to a joint use of resources available on a system or a network by users or peripherals. In the language of information management, when we talk about resource sharing we simply mean collective use of information of all
types by various end users from a central coordinating unit or from within a network component at a reduced cost with easy accessibility.

**OBJECTIVES OF RESOURCE SHARING**

The following objectives should be achieved by participating institutions when engaging in resources sharing:

- To improve services
- To enable libraries to take on new services/projects
- To avoid duplication
- To develop awareness of what others are doing
- To know where help can be found
- To meet organizational or national objectives, and
- To improve professional/personal skills

**BENEFITS OF RESOURCE SHARING**

The following are the most important benefits of resource sharing to participating institutions:

- Improves access to materials
- Enables co-operating institutions to stretch limited resources
- Allow greater staff specialization
- Improve services to users
- Avoids unnecessary duplication
- Reduces the number of places which will need to go for services
- Improves working relationship between cooperating libraries, and
• Assists staff to keep up to date

It has to be added that resource sharing does not reduce the library's current costs. It may even increase the cost, but on the whole it will enable the library to provide improved services at a cost much lower than otherwise would be incurred.

USER STUDIES

Resource sharing is user oriented rather than material oriented. It is an important element in national planning of library and information services to meet the needs for information, education, and culture of the whole community. In order to plan a better service, there is need to have reliable information on the size, characteristics and needs of the user population. This can be done through undertaking user studies. It is also necessary to develop user education programmes to prepare users for participation in the library system.

RATIONALE FOR RESOURCE SHARING

As already indicated, the basic function of a library is to provide users with access to information which they require. It is however, not possible for any library to have all the material its users need due to:

• Information explosion
• Cost of needed materials
• Advances in modern technologies
• Wide disparity between resources available to individuals
• Increased users needs
• Inadequate budgetary resources
• Shortage of information
• Lack of relevant information
ASPECTS OF INFORMATION RESOURCE SHARING

The most obvious form of resource sharing is library materials. This is done through ways such as:

- Improvement of collection through co-operative collection development
- Exchange of materials
- Inter-library lending
- Inter-institute document delivery
- Creation and production of guides such as union lists of periodicals, union catalogues, and bibliographic utilities
- Storage of materials
- Cataloguing and classification
- Photocopy services
- Abstracting and indexing services
- Staff training and utilization
- Binding
- Conservation and preservation of materials

BARRIERS TO CO-OPERATION

There are several barriers to co-operative activities. They can be divided into eight broad categories:

- Desire for local self-sufficiency
- Size and status of libraries
- Technological sufficiency
- Psychological reasons
• Experience/lack of experience in resource sharing
• Traditional/historical reasons
• Legal, political and administrative reasons
• Physical and geographical reasons

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Librarians attempting to participate in resource sharing must indicate their willingness to co-operate, must provide information on available resources, should aim to establish an effective communication system, and must possess adequate bibliographic tools. They must answer the following questions:

1. Standardization of who is doing what?
2. For what purpose?
3. By when?

If these conditions are fulfilled, then the process of resource sharing will be successful.

PLANNING OF RESOURCE SHARING

When resource sharing is agreed upon by participating institutions, then the following aspects must be planned:

• Identify and locate major collections, sources and materials
• Collate, publish and distribute collective information for all participating bodies
• Workout the basis for sharing, reference services, lending services, copying services, access to materials, delivery services, and lists of holdings
• Establish means of sharing ideas, development and problems in the form of a newsletter
• Plan for new developments in the knowledge of what others are doing
WHAT TO AVOID

The following points give an indication of what should be avoided when engaging in resource sharing:

- Do not think of the co-operative as a supplementary and something it is possible to do without
- Planners must not forget to spend time working out operational details.
- The system will not work without causing major operational changes in the member institutions
- Do not think of the system as something for nothing for the library
- Do not have the co-operative funding and operation handled by one or more member libraries, but by an independent body

CONCLUSION

Attempts to implement resource sharing in various countries has been made since early 1960s, but nearly 40 years later there are very few formalized systems. Although at several places it is referred to as library networking. Informal cooperation does exist on what is known as unwritten agreements in areas of inter-library lending, exchange of materials, exchange of ideas. Problems still exist that hinder development of formalized co-operation. These are:

- Lack of information on available resources
- Unwillingness to co-operate
- Lack of effective machinery that can bring librarian together
- Distances and communication
- Lack of comprehensive National Information Policy
• Copyright restrictions
• Lack of co-coordinating authority, and
• Inadequate resources

In order to overcome the above problems, the most important one is the lack of a comprehensive National Information Policy. Our first step should thus be formulation of such a policy. This policy would cover all aspects of information generation, acquisition, organization, storage, dissemination and utilization. It should also cover manpower development, users, information services, application of information technology and funding.

Secondly, a coordinating body should be established to work out the modalities of operations and set up standards.

Thirdly, production of literature guides such as union catalogues, union list of periodicals, directories, bibliographies, etc should be undertaken. Use of information technology in this area will greatly improve on information availability and accessibility.

In conclusion it is only hoped that in meeting users information needs to the full extent possible lies with acceptance, implementation of a resource sharing programme, and the time to do that is now.