Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture – An Effective Tool for the Agriculture Researchers: A Case Study

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Abstract. The present paper highlights the CeRA (Consortium for e-resources in Agriculture) which is an ambitious initiative from IARI (Indian Agriculture Research Institute) aiming to provide scholarly information in the broad spectrum of Agricultural Sciences to foster academic quality research amongst its institutes and other Agricultural Universities. Group of more than 280 students who opted the course Library and Information Services PGS-501 (Post Graduate Studies-Course 501) were interviewed with short structured questionnaire and analyses was done on the effective tool for the Agricultural Researchers on the CeRA. It is a case study, the outcome and findings are very positive and effective. The subject disciplines covered under CeRA are broad to cover. There by meet the academic and research needs of faculty, research scholars and students across these disciplines.

Keywords: CeRA, Consortium, e-resources, Research, National Agricultural Innovation Project, Indian Agricultural Research Institute.

1 Introduction

As a part of the initiative in creating user awareness programme for UASD on CeRA awareness training was organised in the University Library of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad on November 8, 2010. The programme had an overwhelming response from faculty members of various disciplines. More than 200 post graduate students, and research scholars attended and benefited by the programme. “Information is a powerful tool for the development of society”. It is a valuable commodity required for the planning, directing, controlling, decision-making, motivating, forecasting, research and development activities to ensure productive and gainful operation [2].

Across all civilizations oral communication has been an integral part of people in interaction. With the advancement of science and technology, the process of communication has expanded over the years to cover print and other modes like computer, mobile phone and associated gadgets. India is predominantly an agrarian country, and the growth of agriculture is reflected in the good yields of different crops that depend on various factors-natural and man-made. Agricultural research,
the backbone of agricultural growth in the country, demands timely dissemination of knowledge being generated and updated across the globe from time to time. Research and Development institutions have been procuring print versions of journals and literature in aid of science and technology.

With the rapid growth of internet facilities and advancement of web technology, almost all reputed international journals are available online and can easily be accessed by researchers over the network. Since Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) is having network connectivity across institutes and state agricultural universities, selected journals are available over the network for the use of scientific community. Accordingly, the (NAIP) National Agricultural Innovation Project has funded for establishing the Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Delhi in November 2007. Duration of the project is five years, from 2007-08 to 2011-12. Total cost of the project is Rs. 938.542 lakhs, to facilitate accessibility of scientific journals to all researchers/teachers in the National Agricultural research system by providing access to information specially through online journals which is crucial for having excellence in research.

In India there are many similar consortia such as UGC-INFONET (University Grants Commission- Information Network), Ahmadabad, INDEST (Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Science and Technology), Delhi. With resource crunch and escalation of prices of e-resource it is very difficult to start any consortium in India. Despite the constraints, the consortiums mentioned above are doing very well. 

UASD’s CeRA can be accessed via the World Wide Web directly linked to the end users’ through UASD’s website at www.uasd.edu. Commercial search engines can also guide to access CeRA in the campus. Now Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity) connectivity facilitates to access CeRA, even in the hostels, canteens and departments. UASD is a member of the NAIP and Networked Digital Library of CeRA consortium, which is at the forefront of the digital library movement. The CeRA usage is aimed at improving post graduate education by ensuring that students learn about publication issues and about using digital libraries. At the same time, the e-journal full text is helping to develop an important digital library that ultimately will include millions of full-text or even hyper thermal documents. Researchers can search and browse more than 2000 CeRA Collection, as well as the full text or abstract or pdf or html format, through on-line 24X7 availability. It enhances increased level of scientific activity/output.

1.1 Objectives of CeRA

- To expand the existing R & D information resource base of ICAR Institutions/Universities, etc., comparable to leading institutions/organizations of the world.
- To nucleate e-access culture among scientists/teachers in ICAR Institutes /Agricultural Universities.