

ICOLC 2004 CONFERENCE – 6TH EUROPEAN MEETING

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SOUTH AFRICAN ACADEMIC LIBRARY CONSORTIA – CREATING VALUE TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

This presentation focuses on the South African academic library consortia which, representing approximately 36 tertiary institutions in 1990s, were the pioneers in leading the establishment of consortia. The purpose of this country report is to outline the three phases characterising their growth and development over the past decade and to share a glimpse of the strategic direction of our academic library consortia for the next 3-5 years. This paper is not intended to be an account of operations and activities within the individual consortia.

The presentation will cover:

- Part 1: Context setting
- Part 2: The South African higher education landscape
- Part 3: A decade of academic library consortia in South Africa
 - Phase 1: Establishment and development – the power of connecting
 - Phase 2: Consolidation & growth – creating value in the mind of the member
 - Phase 3: Strategic leadership – creating value together
- Part 4: Challenges & conclusion

PART 1: CONTEXT SETTING

Before I tell you about our consortia, I thought that it might be useful to share something about South Africa and its people. South Africa is:

- One of 53 countries on the African continent and is found at the most southern tip of the continent bounded by the Atlantic and Indian Oceans – with a coastline of some 3000 km.
- It has an area of 1 221 037 square km – it is as large as Germany, France and Italy put together
- Its head of state is President Thabo M Mbeki
- Our first democratically elected President (1994-1999), now former President, world statesman, Nobel Peace Prize Winner and our most famous citizen, is Nelson “Madiba” Mandela
- Our national flag symbolises our history and diversity. We are often referred to as “The rainbow Nation” which is a description attributed to the Nobel Peace Prize Winner – Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It captures the extraordinary diversity of our people, creeds, language and landscapes that characterise our country. It is also an expression of hope and promise for South Africa.

- Linked to this – is the “Proudly South African” Logo which depicts things that are South African and reflects the spirit of our country – we love and use it proudly!!
- South Africa has 11 official languages where English is the most commonly spoken
- The total GDP is approximately Euros 120 billion (R975 billion)
- The GDP per capita is approximately Euros 2 700–00 (R21 865)
- The GDP growth is 2.2%
- Exports – gold, minerals, diamonds, metals and metal products ie raw materials
- Imports – machinery, transport equipment, manufactured goods, chemicals and oil ie processed goods. The reason why we are categorised as a developing nation.

It is a remarkable country and story, given the turmoil of its past and the dark isolationist years resulting from apartheid policies. In April 1994, South Africa held its first free and fair elections and passed into law, one of the youngest and most progressive constitutions in the world. In April this year, South Africa celebrated its first decade of democracy which has been characterised by many remarkable achievements as our country reclaimed its place in international and regional organisations.

PART 2: THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

The higher education sector and academic libraries did not escape the historical baggage of apartheid and separate development. The Extension of University Education Act, 1959, barred black students from the historically white institutions. The Act promoted the establishment of segregated universities and the following were established: Universities of Durban–Westville, Western Cape, Zululand and the North. This racial divide due to apartheid led to duplication of services, collections and efforts. At the time of the first democratic elections, the sector, comprising 21 Universities and 15 technikons, reflected the past social inequalities of race, gender and geographic location resulting in a broad characterisation of “historically disadvantaged institutions” (HDIs) and “historically advantaged institutions” (HAIs).

The government took the initiative in the late 1990s to restructure the higher education landscape in its National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). It aims by the year 2005, through mergers and incorporations, to reduce the existing 36 institutions down to 23, thereby removing historical divides as well as barriers to access higher education, improve voluntary cooperation between institutions, and reduce high costs associated with duplication.

In South Africa, the higher education institutions were the champions behind the establishment and management of regional consortia. The five higher education consortia are:

- Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA) – Eastern Cape Province
- Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (esATI) - KZN Province

- Foundation of the Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis (FOTIM) – incorporates the provinces of Gauteng, North West and Limpopo
- Free State Higher & Further Education Education Trust (FSHFEEET) – Free State Province
- Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) – Western and Northern Cape Province

PART 3: A DECADE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY CONSORTIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

If one considers that the first library consortium in South Africa was established in 1992 then, within the global playing field, our consortia are still in their infancy. However, a retrospective glance at what has been achieved over the past ten years would reveal how the academic library sector quickly discovered the benefit of working together to address common issues and that the consortia are characterised by three broad phases of development:

- Establishment of consortia – the power of connecting
- Consolidation and growth - creating value in the mind of the member
- Strategic leadership - creating value together

3.1 Establishment of consortia – the power of connecting

It is significant that, in parallel with the political, social and economic transformation in South Africa, similar forces were transforming the country's library and information services sector with the establishment of the first library consortium in 1992. The drivers of change in the mid-1990s were pressure from government for the South African higher education sector institutions to co-operate and become more cost-effective and stream-lined. Grant makers, like the Andrew W Mellon Foundation indicated that it would only consider proposals to fund learning institution projects, especially library systems, but set down conditions that it would work with consortia rather than individual libraries. These imperatives called for initiatives based on co-operation and collaboration – it was a time of great change, altered mindsets and departure from the familiar operations models.

Phase One of consortia development in South Africa was initiated by the Western Cape taking the lead to set up CALICO and address the information literacy needs of the region. The rest of the academic and research sector in South Africa quickly discovered, and entrenched, the power of connecting collective resources, expertise and skills in collaborative initiatives. Within a window of six years, five academic library consortia were up and running successfully. The academic library consortia are:

- Cape Library Co-operative (CALICO) - 1992
- Gauteng and Environs Library Consortium (GAELIC) - 1996
- Free State Library and Information Consortium (FRELICO) –1996/7
- Eastern Seaboard Association of Libraries (esAL) -1997
- South Eastern Alliance of Library Systems (SEALS) - 1998

Library consortia in South Africa are characterised by different organisational and governance structures depending on the Governing Boards and consortia objectives in the various

regions. In each case, the legal entity is the higher education consortium and the library consortium is a committee of the institutional parent body ie. the library consortia have no legal status.

Whilst the autonomy of each academic library consortium is recognised and respected, they share a common purpose in terms of their primary function and services, namely to:

- promote formal relations between its members to foster co-operation and networking
- support optimal access to information for its members through regional and national co-operation
- promote collection building and resource sharing
- provide support for the implementation and management of a common library system
- improve information literacy skills and shares training resources and expertise.

3.1.1 Functions and services

The initial years of the academic consortia focused on the traditional functions of consortia:

Primarily, in each region the work and effort focused on:

- purchasing a common library system
 - centralised and distributed server models were implemented
- resource sharing
 - interlending and document services
 - a range of regional policies with regard to access and borrowing rights for staff and students between member institutions – from no limits to selected access
 - staff expertise
- joint purchasing of information resources and licensing agreements managed at regional level
 - consortia pricing introduced
 - buy-in development
- staff development

3.1.2 Achievements : 1992-1998

- Regional consortia established across the country
- Donor funding for common library system- promoted best practice
- Young organizations that made good progress with international sponsorship and partnerships
- Improved interlending and document delivery services eg van service among member institutions in CALICO

- Skills development programmes for staff in member libraries
- Committed leadership & staff in member libraries – internal goodwill and credibility
- Volunteer based (expertise and low cost) & collegiality of members
- Stimulated the need for e-communications eg e-mail, listservs & websites
- The joint purchasing of e-resources reduced the duplication of non-core materials
- The credibility and support provided by the parent educational institutions consortia.

3.2 Consolidation and growth - creating value in the mind of the member

Phase 2 covers the period 1999-2003 in which further achievements were accomplished as the consortia consolidated their roles and, in some cases, increased their member libraries. A national coalition was formed to guide and direct consortia development and a national site licensing initiative came to fruition.

It was, however, a period characterised by economic challenges as well as relentless and rapid transformation. In the late 1990s, the international money markets placed South Africa's currency under enormous pressure as the Rand weakened against the key currencies US \$/GBP/Euro. The impact on imports and exports was catastrophic and the buying power of libraries was slashed by 47% in a matter of weeks and remained at those levels for 24-36 months. Simultaneously, the government restructured the provincial boundaries of the country resulting in an increase from 4 to 9 provinces – the cost to support this initiative was enormous. And finally, the Minister of Education released the government's "size and shape strategy" for higher education in its National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) that required, over a two year period 2004-2005, a reduction of the current 36 institutions to 21 by a process of mergers and incorporations. The impact of the "size and shape strategy" on library consortia resulted in a radically altered landscape:

Gaelic	from 16 to 9 members	(15 sites) (Univ of Namibia: Library is a member)
CALICO	from 5 to 4 members	(5 sites)
FRELICO	2 members	(3 sites) (one member is a research organisation)
SEALS	from 7 to 4 members	(7 sites)
esAL	from 7 to 4 members	(4 sites)

3.2.1 Achievements: 1999-2003

Regional level

During this period the regional academic consortia not only consolidated their traditional functions but they added a variety of new services. The broad achievements across the regional academic included:

- Facilitating use and support of a common library system
- Resource sharing within and among the regions eg ARIEL system extended

- Improved access to information especially e-resources – includes the application of resource discovery tools like MAP and MetaLib in some of the consortia; portal technology applications
- Reduction in duplication of non-core materials
- Project management for initiatives across members libraries eg PC Labs, various pilot projects, digitization projects
- Incubator for services that migrated to the national level eg site licensing, e-reference services
- Co-ordination of information literacy skills and specialist training programmes for staff of the member institutions
- Facilitating and brokering role eg during the merger process
- Consultancy services by experts and specialists available
- Fund development initiatives in the consortia
- Building and extending collaborative relationships and partnerships on a regional, national and international level eg agreements instituted to benchmark service levels, inter-consortial projects and COSALC participation. At the international level, members are active in the library system user groups, conferences and consortia bodies such as eIFL and ICOLC and workshop presentations on the African continent.
- Improved communications infrastructure (Website, Listserv, Newsletter) and awareness of consortia
- Effective and efficient management of the organization through office infrastructures in 4 of the 5 consortia.

National level:

In this climate of rapid and relentless transformation, three important developments occurred at the national level in the consortia arena that had followed the lead from international models:

- A national coalition was formed in 1999 to guide and direct consortia development known as the Coalition of South African Library Consortia (COSALC). Its achievements include:
 - drafting of a *National Policy on Electronic Information Development and Access*
 - engagement at international level with bodies such as ICOLC, eIFL and IFLA which raised South Africa's profile and contributions to the international debate and programme agendas
 - The development of a national site licensing function called the South African Site Licensing Initiative (SASLI) came to fruition during 2000. It is currently a project within COSALC.

- The South African Site Licensing Initiative (SASLI) initiative grew out of the regional site licensing activities in response to a recognised need that all the consortia could benefit from the services and expertise of a centralised office and coordinated site licensing activities. It was formally established in 2001 with the financial assistance of a three year grant from the Open Society Initiative. Within three years, the SASLI function has established itself as an integral service to consortia by creating “value in the mind of the member”. The power of the consortia together with collaboration translated into:
 - substantial savings (in 2003 SA consortia achieved savings of R25 million – Euros 3 million)
 - library staff time reduced on negotiations, trials, payments etc
 - technical expertise and guidance provided by the SASLI project co-ordinator.
 - Information literacy skills development & training for member institutions
 - Research into alternative access models eg OAI, institutional repositories, scholarly publishing models.

- A tertiary education network called TENET was established in 2002, with funding from Andrew W Mellon and the Atalantic Philanthropies, as an agency that provides the backbone for internet access and negotiates with the national telecommunications authority, TELKOM, for provision of cost-effective bandwidth to higher education and research institutions. The result has been improved connectivity and access to information for all member institutions of the library consortia.

In spite of the achievements outlined above, the “winds of change” continued to blow across the consortia landscape during 2003. The intensity of the changes and the associated financial implications triggered questions from all sides. The role and costs of consortia has not escaped the scrutiny of university and library management – both the traditional functions (resource sharing, systems maintenance, staff development) and the “return on investment” paid in consortia membership fee models are being challenged for both regional and national consortia.

Certain phases are acquiring a familiar ring as library and university management alike probe with questions about developing increased levels of sustainability, less dependence on allocations/subsidies from the parent consortia, the need to provide innovative services, enhancing collaboration in relation to library and information services for the student learner, the researcher and lecturer and, not least, providing value-for-money that is visible to both the member libraries and their parent institutions. These mounting pressures constitute new demands requiring each consortium to revisit its business strategies.

3.3 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP – CREATING VALUE TOGETHER

The South African academic library consortia find themselves at a crossroad precipitated by the dramatic changes in the higher education sector. One way is to take the “low-road”, where they will be relegated to important support, but background, roles. Alternatively, they must grasp the “high-road” opportunities where they define the space and position they want to occupy in the next 3-5 years. By taking a strategic leadership role in the academic library sector, the consortia will remain a powerful vehicle for librarians to continue “creating value together”.

3.3.1 Consortia questionnaire (Appendix 1)

The final part of this presentation summarises a debate, based on a short questionnaire among academic consortia representatives, that set out to collectively explore our current status and desired future directions of the consortium organisations. The questionnaire was circulated among ourselves (5 consortia and the coalition) and contained four sections to guide the debate:

Section 1: Current profile of each consortium

- Description of the consortium
- 3 key services
- key sources of funding
- 3 key financial issues for each consortium and possible solutions
- identify sets of 3 weaknesses, 3 strengths, 3 opportunities
- how sustainable is each consortium for the next 1-3 years
- is new direction is needed in each consortium
- for each consortium identify sets of similar and unique features

Section 2: South African consortia: a retrospective glance at achievements to date

This section looked at:

- regional achievements and challenges in each consortium
- achievements and challenges of South African consortia at national and international level.

Section 3: Strategic direction: regional and national

- Identify environmental factors unique to a region
- Identify possible environmental developments in each region
- Identify the likely needs of the member base in each consortium
- Identify the likely external developments in each consortium
- Does the consortium have a strategic and/or business plans
- What is the main direction of work for next 1-3 years (3 key goals)
- What will be the consortium's main priority for next 1-3 years
- What will be different as a result of the strategic goals

- Explain the broad business strategy and how the goals will be reached

Section 4: Strategic questions to consider

- Should regional consortia focus on traditional functions
- How innovative should consortia be
- How can consortia “Create value” in the mind of the member and parent institutions
- How satisfactory are participation levels of member library directors and staff in the consortia
- What level of sustainability can be supported
- Are multi-library type consortia a model to consider

3.3.2 What did we find out (in broad terms)

Environmental drivers

- global initiatives are promoting information as a critical factor in development, sustainability and growth
- transformation and restructuring of the higher education landscape
- implementation of a new funding formula for higher education institutions
- demands to promote access to higher education and to achieve cost-effectiveness is putting pressure on thinly stretched resources
- government imperative for support of the national R&D strategy
- national imperative by the Department of Education for the academic institutions to co-operate and collaborate to enable effective and efficient support to research activity
- demands of e-research environment for a broader model of access, open access, scholarly communication & empowerment of individual researcher/group
- open access initiatives will increase use and access to publicly funded research information across open platforms

What is changing in the member institutions

- new funding formula is addressing disparities between the institutions
- the volunteer base is stretched
- participation by the wider membership in consortia programmes is hampered by mergers
- mergers are creating tension between institutions and consortial priorities
- increasing costs of participation in consortial activities with limited returns
- remote library sites geographical distances are a challenge to participation
- consortia programmes and activities in current format are a lesser priority

What is changing in the consortia:

- the traditional roles (resource sharing and collaboration for mutual benefit) are no longer sufficient to justify consortium
- Business plans supported by regular strategic planning need to become a priority –clear goals will provide direction so that specifics are achieved.
- The national strategies should be integrated with regional plans and regional issues should be fed into national agendas.
- The national strategy for South Africa is access to networked information – needs to be developed that it ensures that all researchers in all disciplines across SA have access to electronic information. This means that the regional consortia and national coalition have a critical role to play in determining:
 - collaboration in research library provision in South Africa and beyond
 - patterns and trends in researchers' use of libraries and information sources
 - awareness of OAI and scholarly publishing
 - collaboration on support for researchers
- consortium management expected to apply business and best practice principles
- standards and benchmarking will become the order of the day
- need for increased self-sufficiency and sustainability requires a more innovative and entrepreneurial approach to management
- library budgets are static/diminishing
- strong commitment to build distributed and hybrid research libraries and to optimise access to shared resources
- recognition that consortia cannot focus on IT and the common library system only ie strong IT focus at the expense of other areas
- pressure for affordability to belong to and participate in a consortium
- pressure to demonstrate value to members ie return on investment.
- increased inter-consortial collaboration
- shared interests of academic research with national institutions and institutions with national collections (multi-type library consortia emerging)

PART 4: CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

The teleconference clearly indicated that South African academic library consortia should be taking "the high road" for the future which will require that they identify steps to take them to new levels of service delivery, member participation/involvement and strategic development. This will require them to:

- provide collective strategic leadership in the academic library sector
- provide strong leadership to find research-centred solutions to common problems (encourage innovation)
- provide seedbeds/incubator for innovative projects and services
- motivate members to improve support for researchers

- assist to promote continuous improvement in member libraries
- facilitate strategic alliances and collaborative partnerships

A new focus needs to be brought to each consortium's activities/programme agenda, its development priorities, way in which it operates and how it is organised on behalf of its members. This requires a clear statement of mission and purpose along with defined deliverables and benefits. Consortia will need to back up their strategic planning with a transparent business plan approach to all the consortial activities which should then be co-ordinated to avoid duplication of effort, costs and funds.

Finally, what opportunities should the consortia be grabbing:

- Benchmarking library and information services
- Project management for initiatives across members libraries
- Joint financial planning and fund raising initiatives
- Surfacing needs of member libraries
- Facilitating and brokering role services
- Training services
- Promote and support member structures
- Facilitate use and maintain common library system
- Research new developments in the library and information field

In conclusion, we need to remember that "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future". Today in South Africa, we are proud of what we have achieved and learned through participation in consortia as well as our plans for the future.

References:

SA 2002-03: South Africa at a glance. Editors Inc. Johannesburg. 2003. Pages 2-3, 29

Sekabembe, Beatrice. Library consortia in The standing conference of African national and university libraries in the eastern, central and southern Africa region (SCANUL-ECS). A report of the case study done on behalf of the International Network for the availability of Scientific Publication (INASP). INASP. 2002. 50p.

GAELIC Strategic and Business plans 2005-2007. (internal documents)

Consortia Questionnaire used as basis for teleconference 19 September 2004 (internal document)

South African academic library consortia

Section 1: current profile of your consortium

Issue	Comments
Brief description of consortium	
Identify 3-4 key functions/services/activities	
Key sources of funding	
Identify 3 key financial issues for your consortium	
Solutions for the financial issues	
Identify 3 weaknesses	
Identify 3 strengths	
Identify 3 opportunities	
How sustainable is your consortium for the next 1-3 years	
Do you think a new direction is needed in the consortium	
What are similar features of our consortia	
What is unique about your consortium	

Section 2: A retrospective glance at achievements to date of SA consortia

Over past decade of organised consortial activity we established a platform to create value together – how and what did we achieve and what have been our challenges

	Achievements	Challenges	What did not succeed	Comments
Regionally le in your consortium				
Nationally				
Internationally				

Section 3: Strategic direction of SA Consortia

In 2004, we are heading into the second decade of consortia activity in South Africa – looking down the road, what do think in terms of:

Future trends	Comments
Identify environmental factors unique to your region	
Identify future development of the environment for your consortium	
likely needs of the member library base in your consortium	
likely external developments for your consortium	

Strategic direction for next three years	Comments
Does the consortium have a strategic and/or business plans	
What is the main direction of the work planned for next 1-3 years (3 key goals)	
What will be the consortium's main priority	
what will be different as a result of your strategic goals	
Broadly explain the business strategy	
How will the goals be reached	

Section 4: Questions we should consider

- should consortia focus on traditional functions
- how innovative should consortia be
- how can consortia create “value” (qualitatively and quantitatively) in the mind of the member and parent institutions
- how satisfactory are participation levels of member library directors and staff in the consortia
- have traditional functions migrated to other levels
- how will the quest for sustainability withstand similar demands
- what level of sustainability can be supported/is realistic
- what programmes can consortia facilitate to improve services and support to research output, learner throughput and retention of learners in the academic institution
- Are multi-library type consortia a model to consider

Section 5: Last thoughts

What 3-5 initiatives should our South African consortia be grabbing at to:

- create value in the mind of the member library
- create value together
- make a difference in the academic & research sector of South Africa.