

## **Procurement of Periodicals in the University Libraries of Kerala**

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### **Abstract**

The study was conducted in the University Libraries of five Universities spread over Kerala, providing higher education in Science, Social Science and Humanities. Cochin University, one among the five universities selected under the study, deals with Technology in addition to the conventional branches. The paper attempts to make a comparative study of the acquisition process of journals and databases among the five University Libraries. The author has collected data through a personal visit to all the five libraries with the help of a structured interview with all the University Librarians and the staff working in the periodicals section. Purchase of Newspapers and magazines is excluded from the study and importance is given to the subscription of Journals and Databases, as they are the significant information sources of higher education. Aspects such as the mode of selection of journals and databases, mode of purchase, current budget allocation, its apportion to different departments, how the fund is released as advance to the University Librarian's account, its utilization and settlement etc. are mainly dealt with in the paper.

**Keywords:** University Library; Serials acquisition; Journals and Database Subscription

### **1. Introduction**

Subscription to periodicals is done in almost all libraries; no matter whether it is a Public Library, Academic Library or Special Library. We know there are different types of periodical publications. The difference may be in the periodicity of publication which range from dailies to annual or in the content of the publication, ranging from widely read newspapers to low read Academic Journals. While the subscription to periodicals is limited to newspapers and popular and career development magazines in local or public libraries, an academic or special library subscribes to Academic Journals and Databases along with newspapers and popular magazines. Also the budget allocation for the

subscription to periodicals is minimum for the local or public libraries whereas the academic and special libraries have higher allocations. This is because, the users of such libraries are more academic oriented and subscription to Academic Journals and Databases is more important. If the allocation to local or public libraries is limited to only few thousands rupees, the same is lakhs to crores in the case of Academic and Special Libraries. However in the Indian context, since studies up to graduation or even post-graduation is limited to text books, the amount allocated and spent for academic journals is too low in College libraries. This is because neither the college teachers nor the academicians who are designing the curriculum for college classes give any importance to journals. This may be due to, either the over affection of these people to the conventional teaching tools - books (in books itself text books are given more importance), or their ignorance in the role played by journals over higher education.

### **1.1 Need of the study**

- Even though there are many professional librarians working in different academic libraries of Kerala only few of them are aware of periodicals subscription procedures.
- There are procedural differences in each University Library.
- The problems faced by each University library are different.
- Not much study has been done in this area, especially in Kerala
- It is only through a comparative study that the positive and negative aspects of each library can be identified.
- It is only through a comparative study that the scope of setting up of a new State consortia, can be found out, especially in the light of E-ShodhSindhu (ESS) slowly moving out of its basic function as a resource sharing body(1) at the National level.

### **1.2 Limitations of the Study**

- Only five of the Universities in the state of Kerala are taken for the study
- A comparative study of the different journals and databases subscribed in each library with its subscription rate is not done.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The author has visited all the five libraries in person and conducted a structured interview with all the University Librarians (In Charge) and the staff working in the periodicals section.

### **1.4 The University Libraries under the study - A Brief Introduction**

All the five University Libraries under study belong to the state of Kerala in South India, and were established between the years 1942 - 1998. All the libraries except Cochin University Library cater to information related to Science, Social Sciences and Humanities while Cochin University Library, in addition to the three branches cater to information related to Technology also. All Universities have several teaching and research departments located in and away from the University Library.

#### **1.4.1 Kerala University Library (KUL)**

The Kerala University Library (KUL), the Central Library of the University of Kerala, established in 1942, is the oldest and biggest (in the sense of total number of books housed) university library in Kerala (2). It is situated at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala. However most of the Departments are established at Kariavattom, a campus of the University situated about 20 km away from the city. In order to cater to the immediate needs of the academic community in the campus, another library is set up called Kariavattom Campus Library.

#### **1.4.2 C.H. Muhammad Koya Library (CHMKL)**

Calicut University Library, the Central Library of the University of Calicut was established in 1971 and later renamed after C.H.Mohammed Koya, the former Minister for Education, Government of Kerala.(3) It is situated at the main campus of the University at Thenhippalam. Teaching and research departments of Calicut University are situated in different places of Kozhikode but most of them are in and around the main campus, where the library is situated.

#### **1.4.3 Cochin University Library (COUL)**

The Cochin University Library located centrally in the campus of the University, was established in 1975 as a central agency for meeting the information requirements of the academic community of Cochin University of Science and Technology (4). Major Departments are situated in and around the University Library. But there are University departments set up in different parts of Cochin. The Pulincunnu campus is situated in the adjacent district Alappuzha.

#### **1.4.4 Mahatma Gandhi University Library (MGUL)**

Established in 1989 and situated in the main campus of the University at Priyadarshini Hills, Athirampuzha, Kottayam, (5) this library acts as the common facility for fulfilling the information needs of the academic community of Mahatma Gandhi University. Like CHMKL and COUL, most of the teaching and research departments are situated in and around the University Campus.

#### **1.4.5 Kannur University Library (KAUL)**

It is the Central Library of Kannur University which started functioning at Kannur town in 1998. It was opened to the academic community in 1999. (6). The library is situated adjacent to the administrative block but all teaching and research departments of the University are situated away from the library campus. This is the youngest University among the five Universities under the study.

### **2. Periodical Resources Subscribed**

In all the five University Libraries, Periodicals section is the sole section that deals with the subscription of periodicals resources. In all the five libraries subscribed periodical resources include Newspapers, Magazines (both popular and subject magazine), academic journals and databases.

The major users of the University libraries are the Post Graduate and MPhil. Students, Research Scholars (doing doctoral and post-doctoral work) and Faculty/Teachers of the respective Universities. However most of the Universities provide Graduate membership to the public. In addition to this, KUL and COUL have Institutional membership.

### **3. Selection Procedure of Periodicals**

#### **3.1 Selection of Journals and Databases**

As per the procedures followed in Calicut University Library (CHMKL) and KAUL, no recommendation or approval from any higher bodies is necessary for the renewal of existing journals. However they insist for the recommendation of the concerned Head of the Department (HoD) for the subscription of new journals and databases. In KUL, any of its members can suggest journals to be subscribed in the library, having subscription rate upto Rupees One lakh. However the journals suggested should be those included in the UGC approved list. Journals having subscription rate above Rupees One lakh have to be recommended by the concerned HoD. Databases are also subscribed according to their recommendation. MGUL and COUL need recommendation from the

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concerned HoD. Also, after getting the recommendation, it has to be approved by the concerned committee, be it Book Purchase Committee (BPC), Book Selection Committee (BSC) or Library Advisory Committee (LAC).

### 3.2 Role of BPC/BSC/LAC in subscription

As the name indicates, Book Purchase Committee or Book Selection Committee has an important role in the procedure of book purchase. However in MGUL and COUL the role played by BPC/BSC in the subscription of periodicals is as important as that of books. In COUL even separate BSC is held for periodicals purchase. In KAUL and CHMKL, the Committee has no important role in periodicals subscription. The name of the body, its structure and role played in periodical subscription is given in the table.

**Table 1: Committees in various University Libraries and the role played**

PARAMETERS	KUL	MGUL	COUL	CHMKL	KAUL
Name of the Committee	Library Advisory Committee	Book Purchase Committee	Book Selection Committee	Book Purchase Committee	Library Advisory Committee
Role of the Committee in Periodicals purchase	Journals/Database s having subscription rate above Rupees One lakh to be placed before LAC for getting approval	Approves the periodicals recommended by various HoDs	Approves the periodicals recommended by various HoDs	No role	No role
Role in the allocation of funds to each department	No Role	Approves the percentage as per which the total fund for journals subscription is to be allotted for each of the various Departments.	Divides the total fund allocated to various Depts	No role	No role
No. of times the Committee is convened each year	At least 1/yr	At least 1/yr	2/yr. 1 for book purchase and the other for journal purchase	At least 1/yr	At least 1/yr

### 4. Mode of Purchase

Periodicals can either be subscribed indirectly through an agent or local vendor (indirect purchase) or directly from the publishers themselves (Direct Purchase).

While all the 5 University Libraries except KUL subscribes journals and databases directly (as far as possible) from the publisher (direct subscription) KUL adopts both methods - Direct method is adopted for Indian journals whereas most of the foreign journals are subscribed through Indian agents. However some foreign journals/databases which are not available through Indian agents are subscribed directly from the publisher.

## 5. Budget Allocation

COUL and KUL have single Head of Accounts for the subscription of both books and periodicals. However different Heads of Accounts are maintained for books and journals in the other three libraries. MGUL has even separate Heads of Accounts for Journals – Print and electronic and Databases.

All the Universities have separate allocation for their department libraries for the purchase of books and journals. While Departments in Cochin University and Kerala University make use of this fund for the subscription of Indian Journals, the fund is almost fully used for books by the departments of other three Universities. COUL subscribes foreign journals for their departments using the Library's allocation.

Kariavattom Campus Library of KUL has separate budget allocation for the subscription of periodicals. Usually their print journal subscription is limited to Indian Journals but there is occasional purchase of Full Text and other databases. For example IEEE and Science Direct are subscribed from the Campus Library for this year.

### 5.1 Plan and Non-Plan Fund

While MGUL, COUL and KAUL get the fund for periodicals subscription from their Plan Fund, CHMKL gets the same from Non-plan fund and KUL from both Plan and Non-Plan Fund.

### 5.2 Arguments and Justification put forth for higher allocation of funds for periodicals subscription

All the five University Libraries under study, put forth almost the same arguments/justifications at the time of budget discussions with the University authorities, for claiming higher allocation of funds for periodicals subscription each year, as well as when submitting the proposal for getting the advance amount. The major points raised are the following-

- Number of journals and databases recommended/ approved for subscription is increasing each year than the previous year
- Hike in the subscription rate each year, especially for foreign journals/Databases.
- Devaluation of the Indian rupee
- The additional burden that falls on Universities due the withdrawal of financial assistance for the subscription of e-journals and databases under the E-Shodh Sindhu consortium.

### 5.3 General outlook of the current allocation to various University Libraries

All the five libraries get their own fund allocation every financial year for the subscription of periodical resources. Comparing the budget allocation of the different universities for the year 2017-18, it is seen that COUL had a very high allocation (more than Rs. 3.9 crores) whereas KAUL had the least (Rs.10 lakhs). The same was Rs.65 lakhs and Rs.32 lakhs for MGUL and CHMKL respectively. KUL got a reasonable share as allocation from both plan and non-plan funds, but it is divided between the Main library and the Campus Library. The allocation to University library alone is Rs.104 lakhs

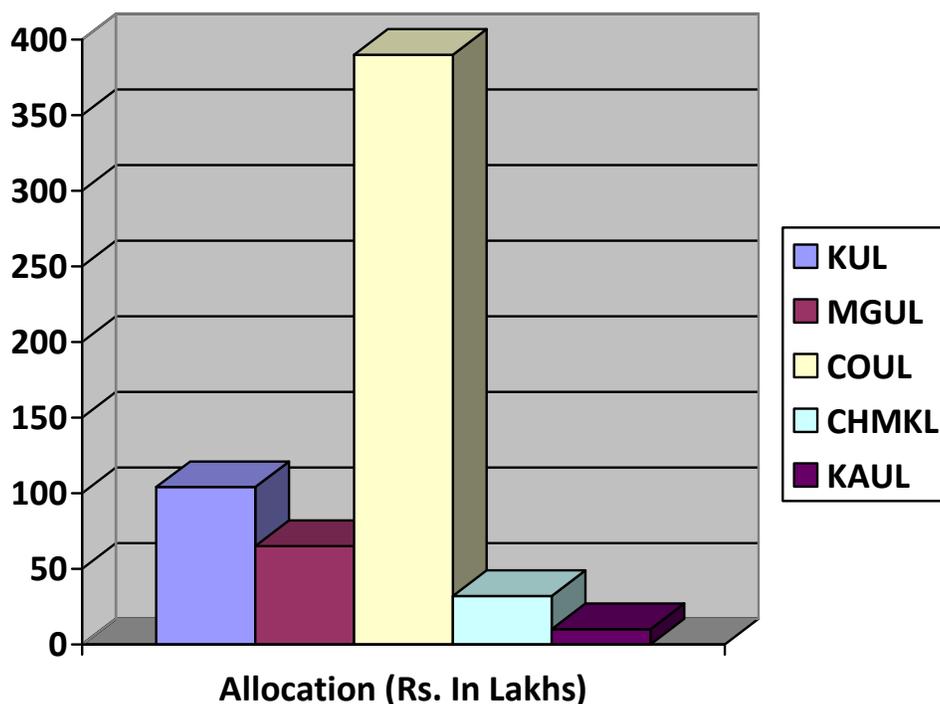


Figure 1: Budget allocation to various libraries 2017-18

Allocation to KUL Includes both plan and non plan fund. Campus Library not included

#### 6. Inclusion of Departments/Centres

Each University has its own teaching and research departments. So the aim of the allocation is to satisfy the educational and research needs of the students, research scholars and the academic community coming under its purview. Thus the fund has to be logically divided so as to cater to the needs of all the community. While CHMKL divides its allocation among the statutory departments, MGUL extends its allocation to its Inter University Centres also but not to the self-financing departments. COUL has no such discrimination to self-financing departments but Centres are kept apart. KAUL has no specific rules for the inclusion or exclusion of departments, be it statutory, self-financing or centres. KUL also has a general outlook that their departments can fill the gap of resources left by the University library using their own allocation.

#### 7. Apportioning of Funds among Selected Departments/Centres

Once the list of Departments (statutory/self-financing) / Centres to be included as the beneficiary of the budget allocation, is decided, how much fund has to be kept apart for each department/centre is the question. No such division/ apportioning of funds are made in any of the five libraries except COUL and MGUL. While MGUL follows a percentage system, approved by the BPC, for apportioning the fund for journals subscription to each Departments/Centres, COUL provides lump sum amount to each department. But the lion share of the total allocation is kept apart for the subscription of online information resources beneficial to all departments.

## **8. Proposal to the University for Releasing the Fund**

In contrast to the purchase of books, journals and databases subscription require advance payment. So all the five Universities, except Kerala University provides advance amount for the same. Most of the subscription to both journals and databases are done for the calendar year (Jan-Dec) but at the same time the fund for the subscription in all the five Universities are released for the Financial Year. So the payment of subscription for the year 2018 is made from the fund for the financial year 2017-18. For obtaining the advance amount from the University, proposal has to be submitted to the University by the middle of the Calendar year. The proposal includes a covering letter showing all details such as the amount received as advance payment during the previous financial year, details of its utilisation and refund to the University as unspent amount. While COUL, CHMKL and KAUL need to submit the file to the University regarding the settlement of the previous advance prior to the new request, it is not compulsory for MGUL. In addition to this, COUL and KAUL needs to attach a list showing the advance price details for each journals/databases to be subscribed for the coming calendar year with the proposal.

The Advance amount is sanctioned in the personal name of the University Librarian in MGUL and KAUL. A Bank check in the name of "University Librarian" is issued in COUL and CHMKL. However KUL is not taking such advance from the University. They process the invoices in batches and draw that much money from the budget allocation. For example, suppose invoices from 10 publishers are received and the total invoice amount for the 10 invoices is Rs.50,000. All these invoices are processed at a time as a batch, i.e., a single contingent bill for an amount of Rs. 50000, is prepared by the Library Office, for the 10 invoices. The bill is sent to the University where it is processed and the amount is transferred to the University Librarian's account. After getting this amount, payment to each and every publisher is made by either taking DD or making NEFT.

## **9. Sanctioning Authority**

The authority which sanctions the advance payment is different in different Universities. While it is the University Syndicate which sanctions the advance payment in MGUL, CHMKL and KAUL, it is the Vice Chancellor who sanctions the same in COUL by exercising their special powers. The time gap in between the submission of the proposal and its sanctioning from the University depends on this. If it is the Vice Chancellor who sanctions the advance, the administrative file work is very less and the payment is sanctioned within a short time. Eventhough it is the Syndicate which sanctions the advance payment in KAUL, under exigency conditions, the Vice Chancellor exercises his special power to release the fund on time. Thereby the advance amount is received within two months after the proposal is given. COUL and CHMKL receive it within three months even though the fund released by the latter is the University Syndicate. But in MGUL, it is a time taking procedure, whereby the amount is released usually only after 4-6 months after the proposal is submitted. In certain years, it has caused spilling over of the fund to the next financial year. For example 2018 subscription is made from 2018-2019 budget allocation and not from 2017-18.

## **10. Mode of Release of the Fund**

The advance amount sanctioned by the University is credited to the savings or current account of the University Librarian maintained with the local branch. While MGUL has a separate account for periodicals and database subscription, other University Libraries credit the amount to the lone account maintained by the University Librarian for all library activities such as crediting caution deposit and fine etc.

## **11. Refund of Accrued Interest**

In MGUL, as it maintains a separate bank account for periodicals purchase alone, the interest accrued in the account has to be remitted to the University on a regular basis. Normally this is done as and when the subsequent advance payment is received from the University, or else the account will have

zero balance if the interest is also remitted to the University at the time of refunding the unspent amount of the previous advance. Certain banks will charge fine, if the account is kept zero balance.

## **12. Subscription Procedures**

Getting a proforma invoice from the publisher is the first step in the subscription process. Even though subscription rates of many journals are available through their home page in their websites, all the University Libraries insist on getting the invoice, as it is the exclusive document issued to the library. Discounts and special rates are also noted in the proforma which is not available through the home page. Also proforma is an important document to be submitted at the time of settlement of advance amount with the University.

Payments are made to each publisher as per the directions provided in the proforma invoice. Most payments were made through Bank Demand Draft/ Foreign Demand Draft (Check) in the early days, but now many prefer electronic transfer of fund. However Debit/Credit card payment is not practiced. Also direct payment by the University Librarian himself through Internet banking is not practiced so far. While all libraries except CHMKL adopt both DD and electronic transfer for payment in Indian currency, KUL and COUL stick on to wire transfer for payment in foreign currency. As in Indian currency, MGUL practices both methods in foreign currency also. However KAUL does not follow bank wire transfer. CHMKL still sticks on to the conventional draft (Check) system for both Indian and Foreign payment.

### **12.1 Payment in Indian Currency Vs Payment in Foreign Currency**

All the five University Libraries prefer to pay the subscription rate in Indian currency. This is because it is easy to perform, risk free, and even economical. Economical in the sense, Banks do not charge commission for issuing DD or making NEFT/RTGS for Indian transactions as each University has a branch of a leading bank in their campus. This is a goodwill gesture shown by the bank as the branch is fully dependent upon the University for its Business.

### **12.2 Transfer of payment to the Publisher.**

All the University libraries follow the same procedure for sending the DDs/FDDs to the concerned publisher. The original DD/FDD is enclosed with a covering letter to the publisher and a copy of the invoice. The same is then sent as registered mail or air mail as the case may be. KAUL also encloses a Printed Receipt so that the publisher can either put his signature or stamp "Received" seal and send it back as a token for receipt of the payment. For electronic transfer, the UTR (Unique Transaction Reference) number obtained from the bank during the transaction is sent to the publisher. For bank transfer made in the case of foreign payment, the TT (telegraphic transfer) details received from the bank at the time of making the payment is sent to the concerned publisher as email attachment.

## **13. Settlement/Regularization of Advance Payment**

The advance payment taken for the subscription of journals and databases has to be settled periodically. COUL, CHMKL and KAUL use the term 'settlement' instead of 'regularization'. According to the Kerala Financial Code, the documents necessary (such as invoice and receipts) for the settlement of the advance payment should be submitted within 3 months after the allocation of the advance payment, otherwise it will attract 18% penal interest (7). Also it is mandatory to provide the stock certificate of each and every item purchased with the advance amount released. Even though this is the general rule framed by the Government, this cannot be practiced in the case of periodicals subscription. Here the fund released is not kept by the concerned authority in his/her hand, but transferred to the bank account maintained in the name of the University Librarian. Hence there is no chance of manipulation and at the same time the interest accrued in this account can be remitted to the Government/University periodically causing no loss. Unlike other purchases, periodicals subscription cannot be completed within two or three months. Also for preparing the stock certificate, all the issues have to be received. Suppose if the subscription is made for all

periodicals for the calendar year January-December at least six months grace period has to be given so as to get the last issue to be published and received at the library. This shows that, in normal procedure, settlement cannot be done as pointed out by the Government rule.

To overcome this problem, CHMKL and MGUL have made some efforts with the university authorities so as to make modifications in the Order sanctioning the advance payment. While CHMKL is allowed 10 months' time after the receipt of the advance amount, for settlement work, Mahatma Gandhi University has modified their order in such a way that this has to be done within three months after the subscription work is completed.

### 13.1 Stock Certificate

All Universities insist in providing the Stock Certificate of journals and databases subscribed, along with the proposal for settlement of advance taken. It has to be shown either in the original invoice or receipt. For print journals, a certificate such as *"Certified that we have received all issues of the journals in good condition and their stock is entered in the Kardex/Register"* and for databases and electronic journals the certificate is modified as *"Certified that all the electronic journals subscribed/the contents of the databases were accessible through internet without any interruption for the subscription period"*, is given as Stock certificate.

### 13.2 Stock Certificate Vs Settlement

As the Universities cannot waive the Government's Rule regarding Stock purchase, the Stock certificate is mandatory for the settlement of the Advance. It is seen that MGUL takes more than a year for submitting the proposal and necessary documents for settlement. CHMKL and KAUL provides the same within a short period after the completion of the subscription work and COUL takes some more time but within 1 year from the date of getting the advance. This is because they provide the current status of stock (as at the time of submitting the proposal) only and not the final status, as in the case of MGUL. In KUL stock certificate of the previous year is given while invoices for the current are taken for processing. They have no settlement work to undertake as no advance payment is taken from the University. However in few cases where advance amount is sanctioned, settlement work is done within a short period after the completion of the subscription. Here also they provide the stock certificate, but for the previous year and up to the date of processing the invoice.

### 13.3 Procedure of Settlement

As large sum is taken from the University as advance payment, settlement of the same is also a huge responsibility for the Periodicals Section, and more so with the University Librarian as the advance is sanctioned in his/her personal name. Although there is difference in the type of documents attached, all universities share the following common documents-

- Pay-in-slip from the Bank/University Chalan showing the refund of unspent balance amount back to the University account.
- Invoice and receipts received from the publisher with stock certificate.
- Debit advice received from the bank to show the conversion rate as on the date of taking the foreign DD or effecting the wire transfer.
- Detailed statement showing each and every payment made in Indian as well as foreign currency

The above documents are submitted to the University with a detailed covering letter.

In addition to the above documents, MGUL provides Bank pay-in-slip showing the refund of accrued interest as they have a separate account for journals and database subscription. The additional documents attached by COUL are recommendation list received from various department HoDs, department wise allocation and expenditure statement and priority list by which the subscription is made.

## 14. Types of Journals Subscribed

### 14.1 Print; Print+Online Journals

With the introduction of modern technology, publishing industry is also on the move to modernisation. However there is a slow transformation of the medium of publishing from print to electronic with regard to Indian Journals. Still most of the Indian journals are published in Print format. But foreign journals are available in print or print+online and online alone versions. However almost all libraries prefer the print version. Journals in both Print and Online journals formats are not subscribed by any library unless otherwise it is not available in print alone format. Publishers like Sage International provide the online access to journals “free of cost” with their print versions.

### 14.2 Online Journals

Under the study, the term Online Journal is used for individual journals which are subscribed as online version only. However collection of journals such as those published by American Chemical Society is grouped under Full Text Databases. No library except COUL subscribes online journals. At present COUL subscribes to about 60 online journals.

### 14.3 Databases

All libraries except CHMKL subscribe databases. COUL spends major share of their allocation to subscribe databases rather than individual journals. Even though it is due to the “ESS syndrome” effect, KUL also has spent huge amount for database in 2018. While MGUL has separate allocation for databases, KAUL finds separate allocation for Databases from outside the usual Head of Account “Journals/E-collection”.

For convenience, this study has grouped databases into two.

**14.3.1. Full text databases (FTD)** which include full text collections provided by the publisher themselves having no embargo period. This is because while having a statistics on how many journals subscribed by a University in e-journals format they can just add the FTD with the online journals mentioned above.

**Table 2: Full Text Databases (Collections) Subscribed (2018 Subscription)**

DATABASES	KERALA	MG	CUSAT	CALICUT	KANNUR
NATURE.COM	N	Y	Y	No Subscription	N
ACS	Access through ESS				Y
IEEE	Y (ASPP+POP)	Y (ASPP)	Y (IEL Growth Plan)		N
WILEY	N	N	Y		N
INDIANJOURNALS .COM	Y (4 modules)	Y (4 modules)	N		N
SCIENCE DIRECT	Y	N	Y		N

In addition to this COUL subscribes ASCE journals; ASME; ACM Digital Library; ASTM; Emerald; Institute of Physics Collection and Royal Society of Chemistry as FTD

**14.3.2. Other Bibliographical and Non-bibliographical databases:** All other databases such as legal, statistical, doctoral, bibliographical....etc. including full text databases bundled not by the publisher but other agencies having embargo period are included here.

**Table 3: Other Databases Subscribed (2018 Subscription)**

DATABASES	KUL	MGUL	COUL	CHMKL	KAUL
SCOPUS	N	N	Y	No Subscription	N
J-STORE	Access through ESS				Y
EBSCO	Y(ASC)@	Y (ASP)#	Y (Business collection)		Y (ASP)
SCIFINDER	Y	N	Y		N
PQ (ProQuest) ABI/INFORM	Y	N	N		N
LISA*	Y	N	N		N
MANUPATRA	Y	Y	Y		N
WESTLAW INDIA	N	N	N		N
INDIASTAT.COM	Y	Y	Y		N
CMIE PROWESS	N	N	Y		N
EPWRF INDIA TIME SERIES	N	N	Y		Y
CRISIL Research	N	N	Y		N
J-Gate +	Y	N	N		N
APA PsycTESTS	N	N	Y		N

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#### 14.4 Online Journal Archives (OJAs)

Almost all International Publishers provide their online journals upto the year 1996 as separate Archival collections, called Online Journal Archives. Universities prefer to purchase these collections when one time special fund either from State Government or some other funding agencies are received for the purchase of Electronic journals. KAUL and CHMKL have not purchased any OJAs so far. OJAs procured by other libraries are given below

**Table 4: OJAs purchased by MGUL, COUL and KUL**

##### 14.4.1 MGUL

Sl. No	Publisher and product	Titles covered
1	Sage Publishers	23
2	Cambridge University Press	15
3	Wiley Publishers	40
4	Springer - Chemistry and Materials Science	107
5	Springer- Social Sciences, Humanities and Law	134

#### 14.4.2 COUL

Sl. No	Publisher and product
1	Science Direct (Engineering Collection)
2	Springer (7 collections)
3	Cambridge University Press
4	Taylor and Francis (Business, Management & Economics Online Journal Archive
5	Wiley Publishers

#### 14.4.3 KUL

Springer (Behavioural collection)

### 15. Automation of Periodicals Subscription

All the five libraries have automated their library operations using Koha except KAUL where SOUL (designed by INFLIBNET – an Inter-University Centre of University Grants Commission, India) is used. However none of these libraries have automated their periodicals subscription procedure. The application of the software is limited to stock entry of journals and the OPAC. For maintaining the accounts of journals subscription either registers alone (KUL and KAUL) or register with soft copy prepared in Excel or Calc software is used (MGUL; CHMKL and COUL)

### 16. Role of Library Office in Periodicals Subscription

All Libraries have an Administrative office with an Administrative Officer and other clerical staff to assist the University Librarian in keeping the liaison with the University. Normally all the papers signed by the University Librarian are despatched through the Library Office. As far as periodicals subscription is concerned, all University Libraries except MGUL rely highly on their respective library offices for works such as getting the advance payment from the University, taking Demand Drafts both foreign and Indian or making NEFT/RTGS and bank transfer; sending the DD/FDD to the concerned publisher and even settling the advance taken from the University. All these activities in MGUL are done by the professional staff of the Periodicals Section themselves and the role of the Library office is limited to despatching the correspondence and preparing bills for getting the advance payment. All files/documents related to the subscription and maintenance of periodicals is kept in the Section itself.

### 17. Finding/Suggestions

#### 17.1 University Librarian

Subscription to journals and databases is complex and at the same time a real challenge to the University Librarians, as it is their personal liability to settle the huge amount taken as advance. Settlement proposal given by the library is strictly scrutinised by the University Finance/audit/accounts staff. They are not library professionals but clerical staff who are more familiar with the store purchase rules of the Government which do not match with periodicals subscription. So several doubts leading to many audit objections raised by them have also to be cleared by the library staff. Subscription in foreign currency adds to the problem, such as, the foreign draft sent to the publisher may not reach the destination or the publisher may demand for more amount than the invoice amount, to meet the Bank charges at the publishers' end when the payment is made through bank transfer. Non-receipt of journal issues especially of foreign journals is another head-ache. The University Librarian also very often has to fight with the University administrators for getting adequate funds for periodicals subscription every year. All these issues show that there

should be a strong University Librarian for building a good collection of periodical resources for a University Library. However the post of University Librarian is vacant in all the five libraries for the past several years. It is true that the present Librarians who are in-charge of these libraries are doing their best to maintain a good periodicals collection; even then, appointing a full time University Librarian will definitely bring its own changes to the library.

### **17.2 Splitting of budget allocation**

Kerala University has a three tier library system - University Library, Campus Library and Department Libraries. All these libraries have their own budget allocation for periodicals subscription. This may lead to the subscription of same journals at different libraries and thus wastage of money. This can be avoided by pooling all the allocation to the University Library's account and having a centralised subscription procedure. This system can be followed in all the other Universities also where two tier systems (University Library and Department Library) is followed. Subscription to electronic journals and databases has to be encouraged so that the resources can be accessed at all the points.

### **17.3 Journal/database selection procedure**

Journal selection procedure is more systematic in MGUL and COUL as subject journals and databases are first recommended by the concerned HoDs and then approved by the BPC/LAC. But the drawback is that only teachers and students get an opportunity to suggest a journal to be included in the recommendation list. If other members of the library are interested in any journal he/she has to approach the concerned HoD to get the journal recommended. On the other hand the Kerala University has a more liberal policy wherein any member of the library can recommend a journal of subscription rate below one lakh but included in the UGC approved list. This is a very democratic decision but there is no system to check the reputation of the public who has made the recommendation.

### **17.4 Apportion of budget allocation to each and every department**

MGUL follows a percentage system approved by the BPC, to ensure a fair allocation to all departments and centres. As per this system each Departments/Centres gets a particular percentage of the total budget. Normally science departments are given a better percentage than Social Science and Humanities Departments, considering the higher cost of science journals and databases. A fair percentage is also allocated to the University library. This is for the subscription of general magazines, journals and databases related to Library and Information Science and above all to work as a "Cushion". This means if the expenditure of a department spills over its fixed allocated amount for a year, the excess amount will be met from the Library's allocation. The percentage allocated to each department usually remains unchanged until and unless a Department or Centre is removed or added. Then the percentage to each department is revised so as to accommodate/delete the new one.

### **17.5 Getting advance payment from the University**

As and when the library submits a proposal for the advance amount, the university has to release the fund without any delay. Delay in receiving the advance leads to delay in payment of subscription to the publishers, thereby leading to non availability of journal issues. Many publishers of databases are ready to renew the subscription at the same subscription rate as that of the previous year. But for the same they need to get the payment for renewal on or before the last date of expiry of the previous subscription. So the authority to sanction the advance amount, if bestowed on the Vice Chancellor, will be very helpful to reduce the time lag for getting the advance

### **17.6 Good Offices Committee rate (GoC)/Bank Rate**

It is seen that University Libraries prefer to make payment in Indian currency even for foreign journals and databases, as far as possible, to reduce complex procedures and to avoid the high bank

commission for foreign payments. Some publishers/Vendors provide the invoice both in foreign as well as its equivalent Indian currency. But very often, the publishers/vendors insist on the GOC exchange rate - which is always higher than the bank rate - for the conversion of the foreign currency to Indian, leading to great loss to the University. University Libraries never yield to this, on the other hand, should strongly demand bank exchange rate. This is because unlike book purchase where GoC is applied and the payment is delayed by months after receiving the book in the library, the payment for journals/databases is made in advance and the journals/services are received only after the payment.

#### **17.7 Separate Account for periodicals subscription**

Having a separate account for the subscription of journals and databases in the name of University Librarian as in MGUL, is advisable so that the complexity of accounting can be reduced.

#### **17.8 Budget Head**

Almost all libraries have a single Head of Account for the subscription of both journals and databases. But in MGUL separate heads are provided for each. The major problem with this different allocation is that there will not be flexibility in using the funds. Unspent amount in the Head of Account for Databases cannot be used for Journals subscription or vice versa. Also this will lead to additional work to section. All works related to the preparation of proposal, account keeping and finally settlement as done in journal subscription has to be repeated here also. So having a single budget head for the subscription of both journals and databases is advisable.

#### **17.9 Budget Allocation to different University Libraries**

When the cost of journals and databases, especially foreign, is compared with the budget allocation of each of the 5 University Libraries, only COUL is getting a fare amount as budget allocation. They are also getting a hike of 15% each year. Certainly it can be argued that COUL caters to information in Technology also, in addition to the conventional branches of Science, Social Sciences and Humanities. However the budget allocation to other University Libraries is insufficient. For example CHMKL which is the second oldest University Library in Kerala, was allotted merely Rs.32 lakhs (2017-18) for the subscription of journals and databases.

#### **17.10 Maintenance of accounts**

As University library is the common facility for the whole academic community of the university, the fund allocated by the University has to be distributed very carefully. The fund allocated for a particular subject; the journals and databases subscribed for them; subscription amount for each and every journal and database; the current balance; additional amount used for them.. etc are questions that can be raised by the students, faculty or even the public. So the Periodicals section has to be alert and cautious in maintaining the accounts of such funds. As the subscription related work is not automated, use of spreadsheets for recording the accounts is a good solution for the same. This method can be followed in all the libraries.

#### **17.11 Subscription to Print journals**

The number of journals subscribed by different libraries is not taken into account for the study. Mere counting of journals subscribed by different libraries is meaningless. For example while KAUL spends about Rs. 7.1 lakhs to subscribe to about 190 journals in the year 2018, MGUL spent Rs. 43.62 lakhs for the subscription of 230 journals in 2017. So the average expenditure over one journal in KAUL is Rs.4158 and about Rs.18,965 in MGUL. This shows that MGUL is subscribing more foreign journals than KAUL. Both CHMKL and KUL subscribe Foreign Journals but not as much as MGUL. COUL subscribes Foreign Journals for their different Departments.

### **17.12 Subscription to Online Journals/Databases**

COUL spends the lion share of their budget allocation for subscribing ejournals and databases. They get full support from their top officials especially Vice-Chancellor for switching over to electronic medium. In this regard, COUL has to be taken as a role model and all other libraries should follow this system. There are some Head of Departments, especially from Social Sciences and Humanities departments who still prefer print journals. They have to be made aware of the relative importance of online journals and databases over the print one.

### **17.13 Utilization of One time fund**

University Libraries are compelled to find additional funds for filling up the gap left by ESS. One time funds released by State/Central Governments and other funding agencies, occasionally, can be effectively utilised to subscribe those journals and databases which have been discontinued through ESS, rather than procuring OJA as they did earlier. Even before the policy change of ESS, KUL is doing this for multiyear (long term) subscription. They had purchased many databases such as EBSCO (ASC), J-Gate and IndianJournals.com under this scheme for 3-5 years.

### **17.14 Need for building up a consortium**

The study shows that many libraries are subscribing the same databases, either full text; bibliographic or non-bibliographic databases. For example KUL and COUL are subscribing the full text journal database Science Direct by Elsevier. The ESS negotiated rate for the same (10 collection) for 2018 subscription is above Rs.1 crore. Similarly COUL and MGUL subscribe to Nature.com. All libraries except CHMKL subscribe to any one of the different versions of EBSCO (the indexing and abstracting database with partial full text coverage). If the Universities come together to form a consortium, the duplication of resources as well as the money spent for them can be saved. The saved money can then be used for the subscription of other electronic resources. Till the year 2017, ESS provided access to many databases and electronic journals free of cost for these libraries. Now ESS is slowly withdrawing themselves out of this burden, leaving many University Libraries to find additional funds for themselves so as to fill the gap. Developing a consortium of atleast of the five libraries under study or all the universities of Kerala is the need of the hour and will definitely be very beneficial and economical.

### **17.15 File System**

The systematic file system followed in MGUL seems advisable to all other libraries as it provides more transparency. Also it provides a historical record of the work done by the section in the previous years. This is helpful to the staff of the section, as well as to those who are new to the section. All the libraries practice file system but not as systematically as in MGUL. Another advantage of MGUL is that, as noted earlier, almost all the work related to the subscription of periodicals are done by the professional staff themselves and the files are kept within the section itself.

## **18. Conclusion**

Subscription to Journals and databases is a costly business as well as a complicated process and is done only in University and Special Libraries. At the same time only few librarians who are engaged with this work are aware of the procedures behind this. This may be the reason why there are only few published literature regarding the acquisition of periodicals. To many, even to librarians, collection development means acquisition of books. Books should be there in a library, but equal or more importance has to be given to journals and databases in University libraries. Journals are the carriers of new information and hence very essential for research. However mere subscription to hundreds of journals and databases is not advisable. Selection of journals and databases to be subscribed is a very important process. It has to be done by the concerned scholars and academics, so

as to suit the research needs of students and teachers. The fund allocated to most of the libraries for journals subscription is comparatively very poor and therefore even the single paise spent in this regard should be worthwhile. The University authorities should be more considerate in allotting more funds and sanctioning the same without any delay. They have to encourage subscription to online journals and databases instead of print journals. At the same time, the library staff should be more vigilant to identify more qualitative Indian journals, published in all subjects, available either in print or online form, and place them before the selection authorities so as to subscribe them in the library. The reason why 'more qualitative Indian journals' is stressed, is because, it is seen that there are many good Indian journals published in all subjects but which are not visible to many of the Academics; the reason for this being that such journals are published in print only format. Now-a-days, scholars and academics rarely go for conventional literature search, as a result, journals having no online version will remain hidden unless and until they are searched manually. Hence one of the major services that the library can provide to its users is by subscribing good quality Indian journals to provide the best literature at low cost.

The study also shows the disparity between the budget allocations of different university libraries though the academic community addressed by these libraries are somewhat the same. This shows the urgent need of setting up of a library consortium. The policy change of ESS increases its urgency. Consortium can provide better resources with the minimum expenditure. At present there is difference in the acquisition policies and processes among the five libraries. Building up of a consortium will reduce the procedures and cost to the minimum. The state Government who is a major funding agency to these state universities, should take the lead role in setting up of the consortium.

#### **19. Acknowledgement**

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#### **20. Notes and References**

1. Email sent to different participating libraries informing the free accessibility to atleast some databases (both full text online journal collections as well as other databases) would be stopped from January 1, 2018, and the financial burden for subscribing the same has to be taken by the libraries themselves. However ESS will negotiate with the publisher for getting subscription rate.
2. <http://www.kulib.in/> (accessed on 23.06.2018)
3. <http://library.uoc.ac.in/?q=node/482> (accessed on 23.06.2018)
4. <http://library.cusat.ac.in/ul/index.php/about-us> (accessed on 23.06.2018)
5. <http://library.mgu.ac.in/index.php/about-us/> (accessed on 23.06.2018)
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7. Government of Kerala. Finance Department G.O (P)No. 419/1 I/Fin. Dated, Thiruvananthapuram. 04/10/2011. [http://www.finance.kerala.gov.in/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_details&gid=3275&Itemid=34](http://www.finance.kerala.gov.in/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=3275&Itemid=34) (accessed on 23.06.2018)