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EFFECTIVENESS OF LIBRARY CONSORTIUM AND THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY MEMBERS OF THE NETWORK OF CALABARZON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION (NOCEI)

Objective. Library consortia are established to address financial and resource limitations of individual libraries by promoting collaboration and cooperation. In the Philippines, the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions (NOCEI) library consortium serves this purpose by enhancing access to resources and services among its members. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium, identified challenges encountered by member institutions, and examined differences in effectiveness and challenges when grouped according to institutional profiles. **Methods.** Using a descriptive research design, thirty-eight (38) member institutions participated through a survey questionnaire. **Results.** Results revealed that half of the respondents were from Batangas, most had been members for six years or more, and they regularly participated in consortium activities. The NOCEI library consortium was rated highly effective with an average weighted mean of 3.39. The challenges encountered by NOCEI members were generally rated as "agree", indicating that respondents acknowledged the presence of these issues. The most common challenge identified was the lack of coordination and communication among libraries. Statistical tests showed no significant differences in effectiveness and challenges when grouped by location, duration of membership, or frequency of participation. **Conclusions.** The findings suggest that while NOCEI is successful in providing wide access to information, strengthening communication and coordination mechanisms is essential for improving its overall impact.

Keywords: library consortium; NOCEI; effectiveness; challenges; collaboration

Introduction

Consortia are associations formed by organizations seeking to achieve common goals through shared resources and collaboration (Pereira & Franco, 2020). In the library context, consortium membership is often viewed as a strategic response to financial and resource limitations. By pooling resources, libraries enhance their services and expand access to information that would otherwise be beyond their reach (Cabonero & Diaron, 2019). Interlibrary loan, joint collections, and shared services are integral practices of resource sharing, which not only address day-to-day operational challenges but also improve the overall quality of library services (Sadiq, Shahzad, & Bhatii, 2021).

In the Philippines, numerous academic library consortia have been established to promote cooperation, shared access to information resources, and collective professional development among higher education institutions. Fresnido and Mijares (2017) identified several active consortia in the country, including the Academic Libraries Book Acquisition Systems Association, Inc. (ALBASA), Aurora Boulevard Consortium Libraries, Inc. (ABC), Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines National Capital Region Library Committee (CEAP NCR Lib Comm), CICM Library Group, Consortium of Benedictine Colleges of Metro Manila (CBCMM), Consortium of Engineering Libraries (CELPh), De La Salle Philippines Library Commission (DLSP Library Commission), Inter-University Consortium (IUC), Mendiola Consortium (MC), Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions (NOCEI Library Committee), Quezon City Library Consortium (QCLC), and the South Manila Educational Consortium (SMEC). These examples highlight the diverse forms of collaboration that enable libraries to maximize limited resources, improve information access, and strengthen institutional capacities nationwide.

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Participation in such networks provides libraries with opportunities to access a wider range of resources and services (Garcia & Peñaflor, 2017). One significant consortium is the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions (NOCEI), founded in 2008 to strengthen collaboration among private and public educational institutions in the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon.

While NOCEI has been recognized for facilitating resource sharing and cooperation (Garcia & Peñaflor, 2017; Fresnido & Mijares, 2017), limited research has been conducted to evaluate its effectiveness as a library consortium. This creates a gap in understanding the extent to which it benefits member institutions, as well as the challenges that may hinder its impact.

This study seeks to address this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium and identifying challenges experienced by its member institutions. Specifically, it aims to: (1) describe the profile of NOCEI member institutions; (2) determine the level of effectiveness of the consortium; (3) identify the challenges encountered by members; and (4) examine whether significant differences exist in effectiveness and challenges when grouped according to institutional profile. By doing so, the study contributes to the field of library and information science by providing evidence-based insights and recommendations that may inform best practices for strengthening library consortia in the Philippines and beyond.

Literature Review. Related studies and library literature were reviewed to provide the researcher with the background of the investigation. Based on this information, the researcher formed insights that were very helpful in conducting this study.

Fresnido and Yap (2014) conducted a study on various library consortia in the Philippines, examining their aims and objectives and the extent to which these are reflected in their actual activities. Their research also analyzed the experiences and status of selected academic library consortia, including how their activities fulfill their stated objectives, the benefits derived by member institutions, the challenges encountered, and the factors contributing to the success or failure of their collaborations. Their findings underscore the importance of clear objectives, consistent communication, and equitable participation among member libraries to ensure the sustainability of library consortia in the Philippines.

Library consortia, according to research by Sanda (2016), Moreland and Kammer (2020), Lavoie (2022), Pereira and Franco (2020), and Konnur (2019), are groups of libraries that share resources depending on various utilities within their particular locations. These resources could include personnel, technological facilities, mechanical support, and document collections from cooperating libraries. Such partnerships are formalized through cooperative agreements or consortium arrangements. Collaborating together allows school and public libraries to better serve their clients and ensure that their resources and services are utilized to the greatest extent possible – something they could not accomplish independently. Sustainable library cooperation requires clear management guidelines and policies that govern collaboration among participating institutions.

According to Barretto and Dessai (2021), Babatunde, Babalola, and Adhassan (2020), Ukaegbu and Okwu (2023), Jahnavi and Muthu (2021), and Kasim, Abba, Jibril, Isah, and Babadoko (2023), the benefits of resource sharing include enriching the library's knowledge base, reducing costs, satisfying users' information needs, providing convenience for researchers, keeping users abreast of recent developments in their field, enabling access through union catalogs, saving library space, providing supplementary resources, and helping staff specialize in new technologies.

However, despite the recognized advantages of resource sharing, several challenges persist. Kasim et al. (2023), Ponera (2017), Sadiq, Shahzad and Bhatii (2021), Ukaegbu and Okwu (2023), and Nche Che (2022) identified issues such as lack of funding, inadequate ICT facilities,

insufficient skilled manpower, unstable power supply, and the absence of formal agreements or legislation to guide cooperation. Leadership problems, lack of structured library development policies, professional competition, and resistance to change also hinder the effectiveness of consortia.

Statement of the problem. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the library consortium and the challenges encountered by members of the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions, Inc. (NOCEI). Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the member institution of NOCEI library consortium in terms of;
   1.1. Location
   1.2. Duration of being a NOCEI member
   1.3. Frequency of participating in library consortium
2. What is the level of effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium?
3. What are the challenges encountered by members of NOCEI library consortium?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of effectiveness of NOCEI library consortium when member institutions were grouped according to profile variables?
5. Is there a significant difference in the challenges encountered by NOCEI library consortium members when they were grouped according to profile variables?
6. What action plan can be advised based on the study's findings to improve the effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium and address identified challenges?

Statement of hypothesis. Based on the problems, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the level of effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium when member institutions were grouped according to profile variables**.**

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the challenges encountered by NOCEI library consortium members when they were grouped according to profile variables.

These hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA) at a 0.05 level of significance to determine whether significant differences exist among the variables.

Methods

Research design. This study employs a descriptive-correlational research design. A descriptive-correlational research design investigates the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables in a particular population (Cristobal & Cruz- Cristobal, 2013). According to McBurney and White (2009), descriptive-correlational research design presents static depictions of situations while establishing relationships between distinct variables. Descriptive correlational design is a research method used to understand relationships between variables without manipulating them. In this design, researchers aim to describe patterns of behavior or characteristics within a sample and determine whether there is a correlation between two or more variables.

This study aimed to test the significant difference in the level of effectiveness of NOCEI library consortium, challenges encountered by the NOCEI members when grouped according to the profile variables. The study utilized the said method using a survey technique.

Sources of data. The primary sources of data are the responses from the NOCEI library consortium members. Only the empirical data gathered from the respondents was subjected to statistical treatment and analysis.

Population of the study. The population of the study is composed of 42 NOCEI members from private institutions in the Philippine provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and

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Quezon. Using the Raosoft calculator, the sample size was 38 members, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% level of significance. Stratified random sampling was used in this study.

Instrumentation and validation. The instruments used in this study were a modified questionnaire based on the information taken from several concepts and research literature. The questionnaire was divided into three (3) parts. The first part focused on the members of NOCEI, the second was the level of effectiveness of the library consortium, and the third was the challenges encountered by the members of NOCEI.

A panel of librarianship, research, and statistics experts assessed the content and construct validity of the survey instrument. The survey instrument was shown to the adviser for modification. Further, content validity was determined using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. For effectiveness, 0.927 (excellent internal consistency) and 0.869 (good internal consistency) for challenges indicators.

Evaluation and scoring. To measure the level of effectiveness of the library consortium, the following scales were used:

Scale	Numerical Range	Categorical Response	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.25 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
3	2.50 - 3.24	Agree	High
2	1.75 - 2.49	Disagree	Low
1	1.00 - 1.74	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

For the challenges encountered by the members of NOCEI in the library consortium, the following measures were used:

Scale	Numerical Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.25 - 4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.50 - 3.24	Agree
2	1.75 - 2.49	Disagree
1	1.00 - 1.74	Strongly Disagree

Data gathering procedure. The researcher secured a letter of approval from the NOCEI administrators to administer the questionnaire for the study. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents using Google Forms, requesting them to answer the questionnaire and ensuring the confidentiality of their answers. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the members of NOCEI online. The accomplished questionnaires were immediately retrieved by the researcher. All gathered data were tabulated and encoded using the Excel program.

Statistical treatment of data. The following statistical tools were used in this study:
1. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the profile of NOCEI library consortium members in terms of location, duration of membership, and frequency of participation in the library consortium.

2. Weighted Mean was to describe the a) level of effectiveness of library consortium and b) challenges encountered by NOCEI library consortium members.
3. A T-test was used to determine the difference in the a) level of effectiveness of the library consortium and b) challenges encountered by NOCEI library consortium members when grouped according to schools' duration of membership.
4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the difference in the a) level of effectiveness of the library consortium and b) challenges encountered by NOCEI library consortium members according to location and frequency of participation in the library consortium.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Profile of NOCEI member institutions of library consortium

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Location		
Cavite	3	7.9
Laguna	13	34.2
Batangas	19	50.0
Quezon	3	7.9
Duration of Membership		
5 years and less	5	13.2
6 years and more	33	86.8
Frequency of Participation in Library Consortium		
Regularly	20	52.6
Occasionally	14	36.8
Rarely	3	7.9
Never	1	2.6
N=38		

Table 1 shows that most NOCEI members are in Batangas, with 19 members, equivalent to 50 percent, Laguna with 13 or 34.2 percent, and Cavite and Quezon with only 3 members or 7.9 percent. In terms of membership duration, most NOCEI library consortium members are 6 years and more, with 33 or 86.8 percent, while 5 years and less members are 5 or 13.2 percent. Regarding the frequency of participation in the NOCEI library consortium, 20 or 52.6 percent of members regularly participated, 14 or 36.8 percent occasionally participated, 3 or 7.9 percent rarely participated, and only 1 member never participated. Results show that half of the respondents were from the province of Batangas and majority of them have been a member for 6 years and more and they regularly participate in the NOCEI library consortium.

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Table 2

Level of effectiveness of NOCEI library consortium

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Wider access to information resources	3.58	Very High	1
2. Increase in library users	3.50	Very High	2.5
3. Cost savings for member institutions	3.50	Very High	2.5
4. Interlibrary loan services	3.32	Very High	7.5
5. Training and professional development opportunities	3.39	Very High	5.5
6. Visibility of research output	3.32	Very High	7.5
7. Access to electronic resources	3.29	Very High	9
8. Alignment with institutional goals and priorities	3.39	Very High	5.5
9. Facilities information exchange	3.45	Very High	4
10. Feedback and continuous improvement	3.21	High	10
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.39**	**Very High**	

As presented in Table 2, indicator 1 "Wider access to information resources" was ranked 1 with a weighted mean of 3.58, verbally interpreted as "very high". Indicator 2 "Increase in library users" and indicator 3 "Cost savings for member institutions" both were ranked 2.5 with a weighted mean of 3.50, verbally interpreted as "very high". Indicator 9 "Facilities information exchange" was ranked 4 with a weighted mean of 3.45, verbally interpreted as "very high". Indicator 5 "Training and professional development opportunities" and indicator 8 "Alignment with institutional goals and priorities" both were ranked 5.5 with a weighted mean of 3.39, verbally interpreted as "very high".

Moreover, indicator 4 "Interlibrary loan services" and indicator 6 "Visibility of research output" both were ranked 7.5 with a weighted mean of 3.32, verbally interpreted as "very high". Indicator 7 "Access to electronic resources" was ranked 9 with a weighted mean of 3.29, verbally interpreted as "very high". Indicator 10 "Feedback and continuous improvement" was ranked 10 with a weighted mean of 3.21, verbally interpreted as "high"

To sum up, the average weighted mean of 3.39 indicates that the level of effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium is very high. This implies that the NOCEI library consortium has a high level of effectiveness to the member institutions.

Table 3

Challenges encountered by NOCEI member institutions

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Lack of coordination and communication among libraries	3.66	Strongly Agree	1
2. Inadequate collection	2.84	Agree	8
3. Lack of financial support	3.34	Strongly Agree	2

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4. Unavailability of staff	3.16	Agree	4
5. Informal agreement or weak legislation	2.82	Agree	9
6. Irregular subscription to e-databases	3.03	Agree	7
7. Inadequate ICT facilities	3.05	Agree	5.5
8. Unsupported by the organization	2.39	Disagree	10
9. Required to perform within expectation	3.05	Agree	5.5
10. Expectations of member libraries	3.21	Agree	3
Average Weighted Mean	**3.06**	**Agree**	

As shown in table 3, the challenges encountered by the NOCEI library consortium were verbally interpreted as "agree" with an average weighted mean of 3.06. This was evident in their strong agreement in the following: Indicator 1 "Lack of coordination and communication among libraries" was ranked 1 with a weighted mean of 3.66, verbally interpreted as "strongly agree". indicator 3 "Lack of financial support" was ranked 2 with a weighted mean of 3.34, verbally interpreted as "strongly agree". Indicator 10 "Expectations of member libraries" was ranked 3 with a weighted mean of 3.21, verbally interpreted as "agree". Indicator 4 "unavailability of staff" was ranked 4 with a weighted mean of 3.16, verbally interpreted as "agree". Indicator 7 "Inadequate ICT facilities" and indicator 9 "Required to perform within expectation" both were ranked 5.5 with a weighted mean of 3.05, verbally interpreted as "agree".

Moreover, indicator 6 "Irregular subscription to e-databases" was ranked 7 with a weighted mean of 3.03, verbally interpreted as "agree". Indicator 2 "Inadequate collection" was ranked 8 with a weighted mean of 2.84, verbally interpreted as "agree". Indicator 5 "Informal agreement or weak legislation" was ranked 9 with a weighted mean of 2.82, verbally interpreted as "agree". Indicator 10 "Unsupported by the organization" was ranked 10 with a weighted mean of 2.39, verbally interpreted as "disagree".

Table 4

Difference in the level of effectiveness of NOCEI library consortium when the member institutions were grouped according to profile variables

Profile Variables		Mean	Inferential Statistics	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Location	Cavite	3.37	F=1.644	.197	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Laguna	3.56				
	Batangas	3.24				
	Quezon	3.67				
Duration of Membership	5 years and less	3.28	t=-.596	.574	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	6 years and more	3.40				
Frequency of participation in library consortium	Regularly	3.48	F=2.318	.093	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Occasionally	3.43				
	Rarely	2.80				
	Never	3.00				

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For the difference in the level of effectiveness of NOCEI library consortium, when the members were grouped according to their location (F=1.644), duration of membership (t=-.596) and frequency of participation in library consortium (F=2.318), no significant differences were found as shown by the p-values of .197, .574 and .093, respectively, which were all lower than the test of significance at .05, suggesting that there is not enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis (Table 4). This means that there is no significant difference in the level of effectiveness of the NOCEI library consortium with regards to the member school location, duration of membership and frequency of participation.

Table 5

Difference in the challenges encountered by NOCEI members

Profile Variables		Mean	Inferential Statistics	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Location	Cavite	3.60	F=2.607	.068	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Laguna	3.12				
	Batangas	2.96				
	Quezon	2.83				
Duration of Membership	5 years and less	3.20	t=.779	.470	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	6 years and more	3.03				
Frequency of participation in library consortium	Regularly	2.96	F=2.426	.082	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Occasionally	3.14				
	Rarely	2.97				
	Never	4.00				

For the difference in the challenges encountered by NOCEI library consortium members when grouped according to their location (F=2.607), duration of membership (t=.779) and frequency of participation in library consortium (F=2.426), no significant differences were found as shown by the p-values of .068, .470 and .082, respectively, which were all lower than the test of significance at .05, suggesting that there is not enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis (Table 5). This means that there is no significant difference in the challenges encountered by the NOCEI library consortium with regards to the member school location, duration of membership and frequency of participation.

This contradicts to the findings of the study of (Garcia & Peñaflor, 2017) stated that other factors considered as barriers is lack of participation/commitment of some member libraries to attend meetings of the library committee and distance between schools and conflict of schedules for visiting researchers. This means that location can be a hindrance to the effectiveness of library consortium.

The findings revealed that the NOCEI Library Consortium is generally perceived as very effective by its member institutions, particularly in providing wider access to information resources, generating cost savings, and increasing the number of library users. These results support the claim of Cabonero and Diaron (2019) that consortia enhance library resources and services through collaboration and shared access, enabling member libraries to overcome financial

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and collection limitations that they could not address individually. Their findings highlight the strategic value of cooperation in optimizing resource utilization and expanding access to information, particularly among institutions with limited budgets. This idea is especially relevant to the NOCEI library consortium, whose member schools similarly rely on collective resource sharing to strengthen their service delivery and academic support. The high effectiveness ratings confirm that NOCEI has successfully achieved its objective of promoting cooperation and resource sharing among its members. For instance, Pereira and Franco (2020) noted that international consortia promote collective bargaining power, access to electronic resources, and the development of shared digital infrastructures.

However, areas such as feedback and continuous improvement were the lowest rated, suggesting a gap in the consortium's mechanisms for evaluation and responsive action. This aligns with Sadiq, Shahzad and Bhatii (2021), who emphasized that effective resource sharing requires not only access to materials but also continuous monitoring and improvement to meet evolving user needs. The limited feedback loop may hinder the consortium's ability to innovate and sustain long-term relevance.

The challenges encountered by NOCEI members were also consistent with findings in previous studies on library collaboration. Lack of coordination and communication was the most pressing issue, echoing Pereira and Franco's (2020) observation that associations must overcome organizational and communication barriers to maximize their benefits. Similarly, the challenge of financial constraints reflects Garcia and Penaflor's (2017) assertion that Philippine consortia often struggle with sustaining subscriptions to electronic resources due to funding limitations.

Interestingly, no significant differences were found in the perceptions of effectiveness or challenges when grouped according to institutional location, membership duration, or frequency of participation. This suggests that both benefits and challenges of consortium membership are shared uniformly across institutions, regardless of size or experience. The results imply that systemic factors, rather than individual institutional contexts, shape the consortium's effectiveness.

These findings highlight the importance of strengthening communication channels among member libraries and establishing more robust systems of feedback and assessment. Addressing these concerns could improve the sustainability and responsiveness of NOCEI. Furthermore, the study underscores the value of investing in continuous professional development and ICT infrastructure to mitigate existing challenges.

Implications. The study contributes to the understanding of how library consortia operate within the Philippine context and provides insights applicable to developing and emerging library networks worldwide. It suggests that effective collaboration can substantially improve access to resources while reducing costs for participating institutions. The findings highlight that challenges such as limited funding, uneven participation, and coordination gaps are not unique to local settings but are shared concerns among library networks globally. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of sustained institutional commitment, policy support, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure the long-term viability of consortia in both developing and developed countries. By documenting NOCEI's experience, the research adds to the global discourse on cooperative strategies that foster equitable access to information and promote the sustainable management of knowledge resources.

Limitations. The study was limited to NOCEI members within the CALABARZON region, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other consortia in the Philippines. The use of self-reported data may also introduce response bias. Future studies could employ mixed methods, including interviews and case studies, to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of consortium participation.

Conclusions

This study examined the effectiveness of the Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions (NOCEI) Library Consortium and the challenges encountered by its member institutions. The findings revealed that the consortium is perceived as very effective, particularly in enhancing access to information resources, reducing costs, and expanding services to users. However, challenges such as lack of coordination and communication, as well as limited feedback mechanisms, remain significant concerns.

Statistical analysis showed that there were no significant differences in perceptions of effectiveness or challenges when respondents were grouped according to location, duration of membership, or frequency of participation. This indicates that both benefits and challenges are experienced uniformly across institutions, regardless of their profile.

Overall, the study concludes that NOCEI has successfully fulfilled its mission of promoting collaboration and resource sharing among member libraries. However, its long-term sustainability and responsiveness will depend on addressing organizational and communication gaps, as well as investing in professional development and systematic feedback processes.

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Ефективність бібліотечного консорціуму та виклики, з якими зустрічаються члени мережі освітніх закладів Калабарзон (NOCEI)

Мета. Бібліотечні консорціуми створюються з метою подолання фінансових та ресурсних обмежень окремих бібліотек шляхом сприяння співпраці та взаємодії. На Філіппінах бібліотечний консорціум мережі навчальних закладів Калабарзона (NOCEI) служить цій меті, покращуючи доступ до ресурсів та послуг серед своїх користувачів. У цьому дослідженні оцінювалася ефективність бібліотечного консорціуму NOCEI, визначалися виклики, з якими стикаються установи, та аналізувалися відмінності в ефективності та викликах залежно від профілю організації. **Методика.** Використовуючи описовий метод дослідження, 38 установ взяли участь в опитуванні за допомогою анкети. **Результати.** Результати показали, що половина респондентів з Батангаса, більшість із них були членами NOCEI протягом шести років або більше й регулярно брали участь у діяльності консорціуму. Консорціум бібліотек NOCEI був оцінений як високоефективний із середнім зваженим балом 3,39. Проблемам, з якими стикалися члени NOCEI, в цілому була дана характеристика «погоджуюсь», що свідчить про те, що респонденти визнали наявність цих проблем. Найпоширенішою проблемою була визнана відсутність координації та комунікації між бібліотеками. Статистичні тести не виявили істотних відмінностей в ефективності та проблемах під час групування за місцем розташування, тривалістю членства або частотою участі. **Висновки.** Результати дослідження свідчать, що, хоча NOCEI успішно забезпечує широкий доступ до інформації, для підвищення його загального впливу необхідно посилити механізми комунікації та координації.

Ключові слова: бібліотечний консорціум; NOCEI; ефективність; виклики; співпраця