

LIBRARY AUTOMATION: A EMERGING CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT: - *Library automation is having various factors that directly or indirectly affect the progress of library automation such as management issues, resources available in libraries, skill of staff, availability of software, geographic location. Areas in which automation has taken place and why? Concludes that things are changing for the as library automation in libraries is now being regarded as a need. Properly computerized library will help its users with quick and prompt services. Library automation refers to the mechanization of library housekeeping operations, predominantly by computerization. Objectives of this study to develop and updated database of books and other Resources. It is found that this automation projects will serve as a model for any library. Being an open source if the Library wanted to go for automation for their library, housekeeping operations can make use of this software.*

KEY WORDS – Library Automation, Library Software, resources, Open source software, library management.

INTRODUCTION

Library is a fast growing organism. The ancient methods of maintaining it are no longer dynamic and efficient. A number of seminars were organized on the library automation. We graduated from simple library operations to specialized functions including networking and connectivity. Now the talk about digital libraries, e-Learning and e-journals. The state of library automation in our university libraries is more or less the same. Libraries like big libraries which are highly automated and also totally manual libraries which are really restricting the speed of

academic and research in the country. A properly computerized library will help its users with quick and prompt services. Library automation refers to mechanization of library housekeeping operations predominantly by computerization. The most commonly known housekeeping operations are acquisition control, serials control, cataloguing, and classification and circulation control. Library automation or Integrated Library System (ILS) is an enterprise resource planning systems for a library, used to tracks items owned, order made, bills paid etc. Automation is the name gives to an automation system of working.

1. Aim and objectives for automation

- To develop and updated database of Books and other Resources
- To implement automated system
- To carry out the charging and discharging functions of the circulation section more Effectively.
- To provide various search options to know the availability of books in the Library.
- To generate the list of books due by a particular member and also the overdue charges.

2. Response of the Management:

Response of Management has played major role in library automation in Libraries. The management here includes both the university management and the librarian as a secretary whose task is to carry out the decisions taken by the executive bodies of the university. If the Librarian had the initiative then he was able to convince the authorities about this emergent need. In some of the cases, the initiative also came from top and the Librarian was forced (or bypassed) to do it. But the best blend was when the initiative of both the Librarian and University Authorities was synergized. If there was no initiative on both the ends, than there was no progress.

3. Attitude and awareness of the Users and Staff

Library may be as smart as its readers. If the readers are smart and well aware they may

force the authorities to work towards library automation. If the readers are knowledgeable about the development being taking place in the information technology, they have influenced the use of computers in library to a great extent. This is truer about faculty as they are the people who participate in the decision making process. The good examples are the libraries and other higher educational institutions.

4. Resources available

The resources include both financial as well as human resources. In most of the universities, the librarians are given funds only for books and journals. Some libraries do not want to or are not allowed the funds received for books and journals to be used for any other purpose, even though the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines permit. Before distributing funds to libraries, there should have been a survey of the requirement and certain guidelines laid down. Besides this there are no other financial resources available with the university libraries. Another very serious problem, may be more serious than the financial one, is the lack of trained manpower. Many of our library science schools have not based their curricula on the automation requirement of the university libraries. Some of them are even teaching today what was designed thirty or forty years back although that has become totally outdated. Not many library schools produce a candidate who can

straight away go the Automation Department of a University Library and can independently work without any further training. The bifurcation of the library science schools from libraries are perhaps the one of the main important reasons for that. As a result our profession became the only profession where practice went far ahead of the teaching. In the country people are talking about digital libraries and web-OPACs and we are teaching fundamental of computers in our library schools. This is the only profession where getting a professional degree does not require any professional training. Can you imagine a doctor without hospital training or an engineer without training in Industry?

5. Availability of suitable software for automation

Availability of suitable software has also played an important role. Though there is a number of software available for library management but most of them are non standard and the most of the software has been developed without the help of a qualified librarian. As a result, there was a stream of non-standard software. Some of this software have been developed by big corporations like CMC but have not been proved very successful. The librarian is confused as he is not in a position to decide what to select.

6. Library staff & Skill Level

The level of skill of library staff also played a very important role. In our country there are no standard for level of subordinate staff to be recruited in libraries. Their educational and professional qualifications vary from state to state. In some of the cases the library assistants are recruited with 12th pass and a six months certificate in library science while in Central institutions like Central Universities it is minimum graduation and degree in library science. The institutions having better staff went far ahead (though there are exceptions to that). The better qualified staff was better oriented towards progressive thinking which could move the things fast. This point emphasizes the requirement of a uniform qualification policy for the recruitment of staff in academic institutions.

7. Geographical Location

Geographical location of an institution also played a very important role. The institutions near to a metro city were benefited by the availability of the resources. They are having a better approach to hardware and software market and also the manpower for data entry. They were having approach to better training facilities. Hyderabad is a good example which can be cited.

8. Library automation in libraries present status

The real boost in library automation came from the establishment of the INFLIBNET Centre. Before Inlibnet scattered efforts were being made in academic libraries especially in the institutions of special. INFLIBNET proved a real catalyst. Inlibnet started with scratch. At that time there was no financial assistance available to the University Libraries for automation for the first time it was established that automation was the need of hour. The finances were allocated for the first time. The standards were established about the data capturing. The format was finalized and the Karvan started. As one estimate at present about 120 university libraries have been using computers in their activities. Some of the University libraries are even establishing digital libraries not only of already available digital resources but are digitizing their own literature. About 50 university libraries have their web pages.

9. Computer are being used for Library automation

a) Online Public Access Catalogue (OPACs)

The problem being faced by the users in locating the document was the first to be targeted in the library automation. As a result the work first started in this direction. It was in contrast of the special libraries where the work first started on providing information services like CD-ROM search. Even today

this area of automation has more activity than any other area. It has now graduated to Web-OPAC (web based online public access catalogues) where university libraries have made their databases available on their websites. This has eliminated the need of installation of search software on the user's terminal. One potential which remains unutilized is the use of search data for research purpose as the search history can provide very useful tools for the librarians to formulate their collection development plans.

b) Circulation

Circulation is one of the main activities of a university library or any library per say. In university libraries, however, the number of books issued and returned is more than in special libraries. Therefore, the next area which was taken up was the circulation. Use of barcodes had made the life very simple due to added accuracy and speed. Besides speeding up the issue/return, printing reports, sending reminders also become very easy. Circulation data also provides a very important insight into the book use pattern. Librarians should try to use this data for research and development purpose.

c) Acquisition

Use of computers in acquisition remains a low priority area. Not many libraries are using computers in acquisition. One reason may be the continuously reducing budget for purchase

of books. But this area needs to be strengthened. Computerization at the stage can help not only in order processing but also can be a very effective tool in budget control. You can allocate funds to different departments based on a set formula, can send department heads about non availability of funds, can control over ordering and also utilize the data entered at this stage for technical processing and OPAC.

d) Intranet

Making the information available on intranet is also growing popularity as it eliminates the need of installing the software on the users' terminals. Users can access the catalogue through intranet or they can find the status of the books issued to them through web access. CD-ROM resources and other digital resources can be accessed on intranet. The beauty is that one need not be conversant with the software as the web links are available through the web page. Growing installation of campus wide networks is also playing a positive role in this direction.

e) Internet

Use of Internet for academic purposes is also increasing day by day. More and more libraries are putting their resources on Internet. Internet is the medium both to access and disseminate information. Internet has emerged as a very big virtual library which has information on practically every subject

and in every media may it be text, audio or video. Libraries should use this facility to the best of their capability. They should provide links to similar type of libraries through web pages. One very good use can be designing of e-gates where user can have access to the electronic resources through a common user interface.

f) Digital Libraries:

Digital library has recently become the buzzword for librarians. In the last year most of the seminars and the conferences had 'digital libraries' as their theme. Digital libraries can be of two types i.e. digital libraries of the digital text available in the market such as e-journals, CD-ROM databases, e-books, software etc. or it can be developed from the printed text available in the library. If a library takes a decision to develop a digital library of its collection specially theses, dissertations and old journals, it can solve the problem of space and preservation both. But the decision about creating such decision is taken to be very carefully as it will prove a very costly venture both in terms of money and manpower.

g) PROSPECTS

Having talked about the problems and areas of applications let us talk about future prospects. I can definitely say that the things are changing for the good. Now University authorities are realizing that there is no way to

escape library automation. They are finding various ways to finance their library automation projects. Librarians are also realizing that they cannot remain indifferent to the change; otherwise they will be labeled outdated. One area of concern is the library science graduates being produced by our library schools. It is surprising that UGC is giving responsibility of refresher courses of library science to the library science school and not to the libraries who are established themselves as advanced libraries and uses the technology far ahead than the library science schools. Existing staff is getting rid of the fear of computerization. They are coming forward to learn and make themselves suitable to face the challenges of the new millennium. Standardization is increasing and the better software is available.

10. Suggestions

- Need to computerize all the remaining libraries in future for providing better and efficient services to readers.
- Computerized systems are dynamic rather than static. It is important in planning for computerization, that hardware and software be selected which is sufficiently flexible to meet both the present and future needs. The hardware chosen must have the capacity to handle growth of the system for at least three to five years. The software chosen must also be flexible enough to accommodate additions and/ or

changes to the

- Librarian should conduct a survey of different automated libraries to exchange experiences before selecting software for their library. Choice of the library software must be carefully considered with emphasis on the ability to meet particular library needs.
- Librarian should evaluate each module before selection of library software, through receiving a demo of the software. Vendors should be scrutinized before selection and should be made to sign an agreement on the regular servicing and maintenance of the software purchased from them. There is the need for training and retraining of librarians in the use of information technology.
- Information literacy is also essential for all librarians who will be living and working in the 21st century. Computer training should be provided and made mandatory for all the library staff. This mode of training programme will help the staff to practice and assimilate more. At the same time, it will also allow them to look after day -to-day work. IT based LIS education at B.L.I.SC & M.L.I.SC.
- User education should be provided to make the user aware of the library collection as well as the services. User should also be given training so that he can handle the computerized system

independently. Systematic utilization and categorization of this budget according to the needs of the library is also very important.

- Librarians should convince administrators at the higher level, in the importance of the use of computers, to develop a level of awareness at the administrators' level sufficient to encourage them to use the computer in libraries and to convince officials that automation will improve the effectiveness of information services and access to information which they need for decision making.

11. Summary and Conclusion

In this research work, a sincere attempt has been made towards finding out ways and means for automating activities in the Library. After the investigation, the researcher has found that Software is more suitable for the library Automation. This project had the basic objective of designing a bibliographic database for the School of Chemistry library, with which the automation of circulation routines is carried out. From this point of view it may be concluded that is a useful package for the creation of a database and for information retrieval. This set of Manuals for the automation of circulation section is tested with the database created from the collection of department library. A sample database for a few thousand works and a database of the users/borrowers are created. With that test

sample the Manuals for each function of the circulation section is tested with the available computer system. It is an integrated software system with all the required models for small to very large libraries. It is found that this automation projects will serve as a model for any library. Being an open source, any Library wanted to go for automation for their library housekeeping operations can make use of this software.

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