Library Automation

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Abstract: - *This article presents an overview of library automation and the changing scenario of library management. The impact of ICT has changed the library operation and its functionality in to a fast to faster mode. Clients need not go shelf to shelf to find out a document. They just get their documents sitting in front of a desktop. Automation has reduced the man power. This article will discuss about the concept of automation, its requirement and various components helps to automate library. Some software package which are available for automation purposes are listed.*

Keywords: Automation, Cataloging, Library software, OPAC

INTRODUCTION:

The main aim of any library is to provide access to proper information, to the right users in as short time as possible. In an environment of information explosion, due to growing demands of the users and shrinking of financial resources, the library is not able to obtain all the reading materials in demand. The only way to overcome these problems is resource sharing through networking.

Library automation refers to use of computers in library work including services. Computers were engaged in library service in USA in 1950s in a very modest way. Dr H P Luhn had organized computerized indexes in 1950s. Computers entered and found some place in American libraries during this decade. However, their use and application was very limited and restricted due to the high cost of hardware and non-availability of application software packages. During 1960s the cost of hardware came down and appreciable attempts were made towards developing library application packages. This led to increased use of computers in libraries and printing industries. In April 1960 the American Chemical Society published its 'chemical titles'

through computers. In this decade, one of the most significant developments in this direction was seen in MARC I.

In the year 1963 W K Gilbert prepared a report on computerization of Library of Congress. On the basis of this report the MARC I project was initiated in 1966, and the work of bringing out the Library of Congress catalogue in Machine-readable catalogue (MARC) form was started and completed. There was a heartening welcome of the tape containing the catalogue. MEDLARS and INTREX projects are similar examples of producing machine-readable catalogues. Now-a-days computers have become almost essential components of library work in developing countries. The Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta was the first in India to install a computer system in 1955, and to develop an indigenous computer in 1964.

In India computers were used in library work for the first time possibly by INSDOC by bringing out the 'Roster of Indian scientific and technical translators' with the help of computers. INSDOC brought out the first union catalogue with the help of computers under the title 'Regional union catalogue of scientific serials, Bombay Poona' in 1973. In 1978 INSDOC initiated SDI service as a NISSAT project with Chemical Abstracts and INSPEC databases, with the use of CAN/SDI software of IIT, Madras. In the 1970s many libraries ventured into preparing computerized databases. Through the initiative and financial support of NISSAT many library networks were initiated and are operative. Notable of these networks are CALIBNET (Calcutta Library Network), DELNET (Delhi Libraries Network), INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network), PUNENET (Pune Library Network) etc. Some other notable networks are NICNET, INDONET, SERNET, ERNET etc.

Nowadays, many institutions such as DRTC, DESIDOC, etc are engaged in imparting training for computer applications in library work through regular, sponsored, and part time courses. The price of computer hardware and software has come down considerably. Owing to these factors computers have became popular with Indian libraries.

DEFINITIONS OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

Many authors use the term 'library automation' to mean the use of computers as an aid for library activities. Markuson says that "Library automation in its broadest sense can be taken to mean the employment of machines for library processes. In general, it means the application of computers and related data processing equipment in libraries".

According to Salmon, "library automation is the use of automatic and semiautomatic data processing machines to perform such traditional library activities as acquisition, cataloguing and circulation. Although these activities are not necessarily performed in traditional ways, the activities themselves are those traditionally associated with libraries. Library automation may thus be distinguished from related fields such as

information retrieval, automatic indexing and abstracting and automatic textual analysis".

NEED FOR LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

The modern age is called the age of science and technology. The library started from paperless mode and is going towards the paperless functioning in future. The tremendous growth in the different fields of knowledge has created a great difficulty to have access to the desired literature with manually operated devices.

The traditional concept of librarianship has changed due to the changing needs of the modern society and constant development in the field of science and technology. Today, every job performed in the library needs automation for prompt result or action. According to Prof. AlakaBuragohain (2001), the work and culture of librarianship has radically changed in the present day environment of information revolution.

An information revolution has taken place as information is made globally accessible due to advancements achieved in the field of information technology. Computer and communication systems make specific information globally retrievable for any purpose with the help of software packages and online networking system; library and information centres have been de-institutionalized.

ESSENTIALS FOR LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

The essential things for the automation of a library are

- A good collection
- Finances
- Suitable computer hardware
- User friendly computer software
- Staff training
- User training

Problems of Library Automation

- Lack of motivation towards latest information technology.
- Lack of organization effort towards library.
- Lack of fund.
- Lack of trained personnel.
- Lack of proper/standard technology.
- Ignorance of senior library staff about the technology.
- Lack of suitable library management software packages.
- Selection of appropriate software packages.

INDIAN SOFTWARE PACKAGES:

There are a number of indigenous library packages developed by professionals or computer experts for in-house use for library automation functions. Some agencies have developed library softwares on a commercial basis for general application in libraries. A select list of commercially available software packages in India are given below.

1) SANJAY
2) SLIM
3) LIBSYS
4) Maitrayee
5) Wylisys
6) DELMS
7) DLMS

8) ARCHIVES

9) LIBMAN

10) LIBRA

11) LIBRARIAN

12) LIBRIS

13) MEMLIB

14) Kruger Library Manager

15) Trishna

16) Ulysis

17) SOUL

18) PALMS (Prasad Automated Library Management Systems) and CLMS (Computerized Library Management System)

19) ODYSSEY

20) TLMS (Total Library Management Software)

21) BookShelf Plus

22) ThirdEye Library Management

23) GeoCreate Library Assistant

24) Library Management Software (LMS)

25) Software Development At Institutional Level

More recently national and regional organizations like DESIDOC, DELNET have shown interest in assisting the libraries by sharing their expertise by way of involving themselves directly or indirectly in the development of a software and distributing it at an affordable price. SAN JAY, MAITRAYEE, DEL WINDOWS are the examples of die library software which have the support of DESIDOC, NISSAT and DELNET respectively. The small libraries in particular will greatly be benefited by this gesture, as the software by these organizations is developed by experts in the field and available at relatively low prices. DELWINDOWS on the other hand helps in the creation of the bibliographic databases strictly according the USMARC format. It provides a powerful but simple query system for retrieving the information.

CONCLUSION:

Each library software has its own strengths and weaknesses. So before selecting the software, library should access the software to see whether it suits their working environment. Before purchasing software it is always a good idea to scan through the literature about that software, to have an interaction with other libraries which are using that software, to request the supplier to provide a detailed demonstration of the software and to make a comprehensive pre-installation evaluation of that software. The evaluation process should start with a detailed look at the problems software has to tackle and proceed through a technical evaluation of the packages, testing and negotiation over maintenance and service.

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