

LIBRARY AUTOMATION: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

There are several reasons for automating the library activities especially computerizing library activities. On account of Information & knowledge explosion it has become essential for librarians to provide a master key to this repository of knowledge in the service, the librarian started mechanizing activities of libraries and research institution through various gadget. The main of Library is to provide access to proper information explosion, due to growing demands of the user and shrinking of financial resources, library cannot able to maintain all the reading materials on demand the only way to overcome from these problem is sharing resources through consortia, and Internet. This Paper discussed about the term automation and Library – automation. Tries to describe the various issues/challenges in these day's related with library automation, which are directly or indirectly affect the library automation work/process in any institute. The Paper briefly describes some point/remedies for proper implementation of library automation in library housekeeping and service sector.

KEY WORDS: Library Automation, Issues, Challenges & Remedies, Computerization.

INTRODUCTION

The library plays a critical role in our society it is an important component of any educational institution, which is hub of the teaching, and learning activities where students, researchers and teachers can explore the vast resources of information. In the age of information communication technology, computers are being used for day-to-day housekeeping activity of the library which saves the time of the end users, and library professional also and at the same time avoid duplication of work and make the library service smooth and effective. In the age of ICT library scenario has been drastically changed in terms of collection, organization and services.

Simultaneously, user's demands and attitudes have changed in its kinds. Also the information seeking behavior of user has dynamically changed. They want relevant, authentic information very quickly within a single place at their hand .This concept has posed challenges for library professionals for quick delivery of library services and information. This development in library field has brought the idea of Library Automation.

LIBRARY AUTOMATION: *WHAT IT IS*

Library Automation means the use of computers to perform the different routines, repetitive and clerical jobs involved in the functions and services of the libraries. Library automation is the general term for information and communication technologies (ICT) that are used to replace manual systems in the library. The biggest benefit of automation is that it saves labor, however, it is also used to save energy and materials and to improve quality, accuracy and precision”.

On the basis of the definitions of automation the following may be considered to be its essential characteristics:-

- Recording keeping activities of library can be done effectively in automated environment.
- Issue, return and renewal of books can be performed quickly and searching of documents through Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) which is a powerful tool of library automation.
- It will be cost effectiveness.
- Maintain bibliographical records of all the materials, in a computerized form.
- Reduce the repetition in the technical processes of housekeeping operations.
- Provide access to information at a faster rate.
- Share the resources through library networking and implement new IT processes to provide high quality information.

WHAT CAN BE AUTOMATED

All routine works and services of the library can be automated through library automation. Besides in some automation software packages there are provisions for article indexing, abstracting etc. Basically these followings works of library are automated:-

- ✓ Online public access catalogue
- ✓ Circulation
- ✓ Acquisition
- ✓ Serial control
- ✓ Intranet
- ✓ Internet
- ✓ Digital Libraries

STEPS IN LIBRARY AUTOMATION

- ✓ Identifying the library functions which could be computerized
- ✓ Analyze these functions in details from the view point of
 - Operation involved
 - Type and size of records
 - Storage media required
 - Various outputs required
- ✓ Estimations of the volume of information to be handled and the rate of growth
- ✓ Cost factors
 - For manual system
 - For automated system

AUTOMATION: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES

Libraries are notorious for collecting and storing information in society. An endless supply of information is continuously generated in these institutions and anyone can readily access it

regardless of time and space, thanks to the rapid advancement of computer technology in contemporary society. But the successful process of library automation has many issues and challenges are: need a proper planning, sound budget, lack of awareness of standard format, skilled or trained manpower etc.

There are some problems raised in library automation as bellows:

LACK OF PROPER PLANNING: Planning of library automation will involve proper feasibility study of the project to avoid waste of time, money, energy and to ensure the success of the project. In spite of its inherent benefits, library automation is a capital-intensive venture. The adoption of any automation system in the library should be based on a wide range feasibility study, which will determine the adequacy of the programme.

A proper planning for library automation must include following points:-

- ✓ Objective of library
- ✓ Library finance and budget
- ✓ System analysis
- ✓ Identification of main area of library automation
- ✓ Sources of data/Standard format Z39.50, MARC, RDF etc.
- ✓ Hardware requirement
- ✓ Software for library automation : commercial or open source software
- ✓ Skilled professionals
- ✓ Maintenance and development
- ✓ Services via automation

LACK OF FUND/ECONOMICAL RESOURCES:The major obstacle for any innovations in developing countries is the lack of resources. The initial cost of establishing a computer system is beyond the reach of most organizations and institutions. Library and information processing is done either with spare computer capacity made available by the institution itself, or with

computer time hired from another institution. The cost of hiring computer time and storage space is very high and often cannot be justified at the management level by cost-benefit analysis.

The library automation committee must keep in the mind expenditure for library automation and also for further maintenance and development cost for a successful automation process. A year wise development plan for library automation and service must add in the library automation plan.

LACK OF RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY:Most of the library encountered that the library automation work affected due to problem of un sufficient awareness of current technology like hardware, software issues.

The library defined clearly the goal and objective of the library automation and computerization which is to provide wide access to digitized library collections, using computer based skills to dispense library services to the end-users. Library management decides on application software that could support integrated library management system. The application software to select must be assessed to determine its scope and capacity that will be suitable to achieve library goal. Technical experts should assess the suitability of the package based on following:

- ✓ Producer/vendor reputation and reliability base on the performance of previous installations
- ✓ Software functional flexibility and expandability
- ✓ Indexing and searching capabilities
- ✓ Interactivity of input and output interfaces
- ✓ System security provisions
- ✓ Good system documentation and manuals
- ✓ Cost
- ✓ Scope of customer training
- ✓ Possibility of system upgrading
- ✓ Compliance with the Internet

LACK OF COMPETENT AND WILLING MANPOWER: Automation of library is also hampered owing to skilled librarians and their willingness to implement the integrated automated system in the library. Information science information technology failed to find appropriate representation in the courses. This resulted in a scarcity of librarians who could plan, design, program and implement various information projects. It is also true that the vast majority of the present generation of librarians have inadequate knowledge about computers and their potential in library and information work. The efforts made to redress the situation have not helped very much. Three successive revisions of curricula and two reports on the subject have failed to find support from library schools, with regard to incorporation of information science courses into their curriculum. What made them oblivious to implementation? Of the many reasons, two are of particular importance: the lack of training laboratories with adequate information technology equipment, and the non-existence of a competent faculty with adequate qualifications in information technology.

LACK OF SKILLED OR TRAINED STAFF /PROFESSIONAL: Another problem is associated to dearth of professionally trained and unskilled staff. The level of short staffing is apparent while the little on ground are so little or no computer knowledge. This posed a lot of technical problems to the automation exercise. In moreover cases it was found that one or two Professionals are saddled with the responsibility of managing the system unit there by limiting the outcome of service delivering to clients.

CONCLUSION

Library automation is the process which needs proper planning, timely implementation and periodical evaluation. An automated library can provide better library services to their users and can maintain the library more properly which a manual library can't do. The record keeping activities and various report generation becomes very easy in an automated library system. But the success of any library automation programme depends upon its proper planning and execution. Hence library professionals need to take right initiatives in right direction.

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