

## SCHOOL LIBRARY AUTOMATION: A CHALLENGE

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**Abstract:** *School libraries are already in the process of automation. In this process, librarians need to know the essence and importance of automation. Rather than the developed countries, the developing countries like India are facing many challenges. Keen observation is necessary for effective management of software selection and challenges. With these, a Librarian can go for School library automation but in this process, they are facing many challenges. Here we can see the integrated library management library software packages, their features, problems, solutions, and advantages of School library Automation.*

**Keywords:** *Library Automation, School Libraries, Automation Software, Challenges.*

### Introduction:

The Advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has influenced almost all areas of human Knowledge. ICT has become part and parcel of modern-day life. Libraries are impacted by the new technology. The school libraries are also facing many challenges to overcome the problems and provide updated services to the users. The traditional school library operates with a manual system. But advancement in ICT has forced libraries to cope with the new systems and slowly computerization of library housekeeping operations has begun. School libraries are the resource centres which provide Information, inculcate ideas, and develop Knowledge. That is the reason why they become so essential for today's Information and knowledge-based society. It is fundamental for the school libraries to equip with modern technologies that are automated Digital libraries etc. in the process of library automation libraries are facing many challenges and today most the school libraries are not automated or computerized. The deficiency of traditional library services and tools forced Librarians to Automate the School library operations. Automation has made it possible for almost all school libraries to enhance online library management systems. This automation task is not so easy; it has many challenges and problems. By overcoming the threats one can automate the school library.

### Literature Review:

A survey was conducted to review the status of library automation in Minnesota schools. A total of two hundred schools were selected among them 57% responded. It reveals that the school library and media centres are progressing towards achieving automation guidelines. But still, some schools are lacking behind. The result suggests that school library media specialists are expected to work towards the achievement of automation status in the nineties. It concludes that the school library automation process is directly linked with the size of the library catalogue, circulation or

reference services, if the school is large then the chance of automation is fast. Schools are in the process of automation.(Chow et al., 2004)(Price, n.d.)

The scenario of school library automation is changed in the last two decades. In the early stage of automation, only circulation and cataloguing were included which will help the library teacher to easily check out and check in the library materials. Automation software provided the elementary searching of library catalogues (OPAC). The invention of powerful computer technology, schools' networks and good infrastructure in communities. OPACs were emerging as systematic tools to search books these helped library teachers as well as users. The library users and teachers both are having the potential to work in both the environments print as well as a digital environments. OPACs are providing digital files attachment and it incorporates the MARC record in the catalogue for digital files and documents. Provides information about Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) it is an industry initiative which develops the specification for industrial and administrative software applications to work effectively together. SIF is not a product but it is a blueprint for K-12 software.

Providing quality education is difficult for developing countries, they cannot invest the maximum money in education. The library is a learning hub for students and teachers. Reaching the desired goal in the case of library automation is quite difficult for developing countries. They face challenges like poor staffing practices, poor funding, lack of a library policy, poor ICT infrastructure, poor library facilities and lack of awareness about the importance of school libraries. Creating a public relations unit, school library fund, and school library department and collaborating with public libraries can help a developing country to bring changes in the field of school library automation.(Shonhe, 2019)

### **Objectives:**

- To know the history of library automation.
- To know the status of school library automation.
- To know the available software for school library automation.
- To know the challenges to automate school libraries.
- To know the advantages of school library automation.

### **Meaning and Definitions:**

#### **Library:**

The word Library is derived from Latin "Liber" Which means a "Book". In Greek and the Romance languages, the corresponding term is bibliotheca.

A library is a building or room containing collections of books, periodicals, and sometimes films and recorded music for use or borrowing by the public or the members of an institution. ("Library (computing) - Wikipedia," n.d.)

#### **School Library:**

A library within a school where pupils, staff, and often parents of a public or private school have access to a variety of information resources. ("School library - Wikipedia," n.d.)

### **Library Automation:**

Library Automation is the computerisation of library housekeeping operations such as acquisition, Classification, Cataloguing, Circulation, Reference and Serial Control. ("Category:Library automation - Wikipedia," n.d.)

### **History of Library Automation:**

In the history of Library Automation first punched cards were invented by Hollerith in 1880. It is used in tabulating the US census data. The University of Texas Library was the first to use punched cards in 1936 for circulation control. The Library of Congress used unit record Machines for the production of catalogues in 1950. In the 1960s the computer era started. In Library Automation computers were used for creating bibliographic Databases as Library catalogues. Library of Congress developed a machine-readable catalogue of its holding records using the MARC input format. In 1967 the OCLC (online computer library centre) started the first computer-based Library network. Micro /mini computers were used to create Library integrated text-based systems and to computerization of Traditional housekeeping operations.

The 1990s have seen the rise of computer networking in recent years every Library, small medium or large is now using the computers or implementing Automation of its activities and services. Computerized catalogues or OPACs are largely replacing traditional Library catalogues. The introduction of global networking such as the internet, cheap availability of technology and new media technologies made information more accessible. (Faisal, 2008)

### **School Library Automation:**

Automation at school libraries began in the west in the 1960s. Most of the schools in the US and European countries automated their Library housekeeping operations on a large scale in the 1980s with the development of microcomputers. Today libraries are unified with modern Information networks which help the students to access up-to-date information with ease.

### **Need and purpose of Library Automation:**

- To avoid duplication of work.
- To improve the quality of services.
- To use the services of the existing staff effectively.
- To control the collection.
- To serve the user's needs in a better way.
- To upgrade the library system.
- To reduce the manual working cost.

### **Features of Library Software:**

- **Cloud Hosting:** Cloud-based Library Management Software(LMS) are to achieve a result and flexible. So it offers many advantages to the library staff, students, as well as teachers. Cloud hosting-based LMS allows students to access their school library from anywhere at any time with a handheld device. Maintenance of cloud hosting LMS tool is taken care of by the service providers themselves.
- **Automated Cataloguing:** A school LMS generates the catalogues of a book automatically. The librarians need not worry about the catalogue cards it generates bibliographic records such as different subjects, publishers, price of the book, year of publication, and place of publication.
- **Inventory Management:** This module in Integrated Library Management Software (ILMS) allows librarians to real-time monitor the library records of borrowed books. Also helps to keep records of all the library activities and to identify damaged books weeding out process.
- **Report Generation:** All the ILMS are having report generation module it generates such as the total number of issued books, library usage reports, budget reports and most used books etc.
- **Barcode:** ILMS includes a barcode scanning feature. It allows librarians to scan the barcode and stock verification. To take students' sign-in sign-out records of the students as well as teachers.
- **Database Management:** The ILMS are designed and developed exclusively for library database management, thus software's capable of managing all the information about the library resources.
- **Membership Tracker:** This module allows tracking of the member's activity and book issue, return, renewal, Data etc.
- **Training:** ILMS vendors provide training for all the library staff, through, webinars, documentation, live online sessions etc.
- **Technical Assistance:** Some of the ILMS provides 24/7 technical assistance throughout the year to help the users, whenever they need assistance.
- **Data Backup:** The cloud-based ILMS are storing data in the cloud. The risk of data loss is very less compared to open source ILMS and this is a necessary and important feature that is provided by most of the ILMS.

### **Library Automation software:**

The Library Management software integrating all the modules which include Activities and routines of the library is essential. Thousands of integrated library management software are available in the market with needs along with budgets. The software ranges from 10,000 to 6,50,000 some are open source and also available in multi-user network versions. The selection of Integrated library management software is a challenging task for library professionals. In the

process of software selection, library professionals need to consider certain things such as budget, modules, developers and popularity. Few integrated library management software are as follows.

### **1. Alice:**

Alice for windows is an integrated library automation package developed by Dr M. Masoom Raza from the soft link. It provides a complete range of library functions using discrete modules and allows select modules that suit the individual library need. It has wide usage and is currently being used by more than 8,700 libraries all over the world. Modules are grouped into Standard modules, Advance modules and Special modules. Alice runs standalone with Windows 95, Windows 98/Me, and Windows NT Workstation/Server. It Supports Z39.50 Client /Server Architecture. Graphical User Interface (GUI). ("Alice (software) - Wikipedia," n.d.)

### **2. CDS/ISIS:**

CDS/ISIS stands for Computerized Documentation Services/ Integrated Set of information systems. It is a software package for generalized information storage and retrieval systems developed, maintained and disseminated by UNESCO. It was first released in 1985 and since then over 20,000 licenses have been issued by UNESCO and a worldwide network of distributors. UNESCO makes the software available free for non-commercial purposes, though distributors are allowed to charge for their expenses.

### **3. Koha:**

Koha is an open-source ILS, developed by Koha Community. Koha is written by radiocommunications in Perl, JavaScript, and HTML. It is initially released in January 2000. It runs on the LINUX platform and is available in 26 languages. It provides various Web 2.0 facilities like tagging, comments, social sharing and RSS feeds. Also provides a Union Catalogue facility, Customizable search, online Circulation, and Barcode Printing. ("Koha (software) - Wikipedia," n.d.)

### **4. NewGenLib:**

NewGenLib is an integrated library management system developed by Verus Solutions Pvt Ltd. Domain expertise is provided by the Kesavan Institute of Information and Knowledge Management. It is written in JavaScript and runs on Linux and Windows platforms. It is open-source software. The latest version of NewGenLib is 3.1.1. Many libraries around the world are using NewGenLib as their Primary integrated library management system. ("About: NewGenLib," n.d.)

### **5. DELPLUS:**

DELPLUS is an integrated module package; it supports the creation of bibliographic records in 13 Indian Languages. It assists with duplicate checking and provides online help and interlibrary loan.

Currently, it supports all the DELNET databases catering to all the network users. The software is ISO-2709 compatible. Free up gradation is available. It follows internationally recommended standards and formats such as MARC 21.

## **6. LIBSYS:**

LIBSYS is an Integrated Library System developed by a Gurgaon-based software company, LIBSYS Ltd. First released in 1988 and since then it has been implemented in a large number of libraries. The LIBSYS software was designed and developed to manage small and large library operations. LIBSYS10 is the latest version of LIBSYS library software. It is a user-friendly web-based library management solution. It supports RFID, Z39.50, and MARC 24 formats. ("Libsys - EverybodyWiki Bios & Wiki," n.d.)

## **7. OpenBiblio:**

OpenBiblio is an open-source Integrated Library System developed by the openbiblio development team. It was initially released in 2002. It is written in PHP script and runs on cross-platforms. OpenBiblio provides all the essential functionalities for a small or medium-sized library, it does not include the more complex features, such as acquisitions and serials management, provided by other open-source integrated library systems.

## **8. EasyLib:**

Easylib is integrated library automation software with extensive features. EasyLib was developed by three software professionals. It was initially released in March 2001. Its latest version is 6.2a. It is commercial software. Extensive modules are Requisition, Acquisition, Cataloguing, Accessioning, Membership, Circulation, Reports, Security, and Set up. ("About -," n.d.)

## **Challenges of School Library Automation:**

- Lack of Qualified staff.
- An Inadequate budget.
- Outdated Resources and Technology.
- An Inadequate Physical Library Space.
- Lack of User-Friendly Software.
- Failure in ensuring proper service from the vendor.
- Lack of Motivation and Training for the Staff.
- Poor ICT Infrastructure.
- Lack of Awareness.

## **Solutions to overcome the challenges:**

- Creation of Public Relations Unit.
- Establishment of School Library Fund.
- Allocation of Library Period.
- Establishment of School Libraries Department.



- Collaboration between School and Public Libraries.
- Employees to take Responsibility.

### **Advantages:**

#### **1. Improves the Ability:**

The School Management software improves the Librarian's skills to manage School Libraries quickly, efficiently, and securely. It also improves the efficiency of students and teachers that they can easily access the book with the help of software.

#### **2. Reduces the Library Management Expenses:**

With ILMS traditional paperwork expenses vanish and the manpower requirement is comparatively less. Thus it reduces the operational expenses.

#### **3. Saves Time:**

School Library Software is a Time-saving tool for Librarians, it helps librarians access the books quickly. It reduces the repetitive work. It helps to provide the right information at the right time to the right user.

### **Conclusion:**

School Library Automation Process has started long back and it continues, but still, not all School Libraries are automated. The developing countries like India Libraries still need to automate. Library automation is not an easy task it has many difficulties among them financial support and motivation from the management are major things. During this corona pandemic, all activities are in online mode like online classes, webinars, workshops etc. To go with developing technology and changing world School Libraries should automate. The standard software helps teachers and students to update their knowledge with library resources. They can be continuously in contact with Librarians. For school Library Automation the qualified staff is needed they should have interest and technical knowledge then only Libraries can Automate.

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