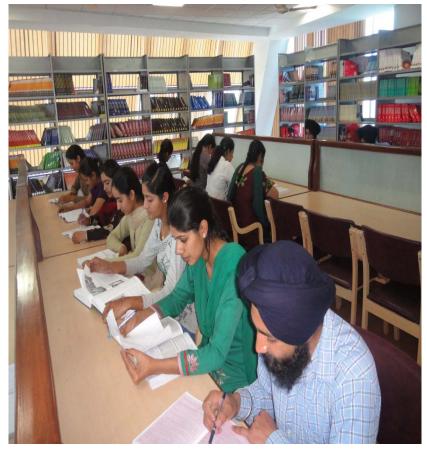# PUBLIC LIBRARY AUTOMATION

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Short Profile

Sangle Sandip Nanasaheb is a Research Scholar at JJT University Rajasthan, India. He has completed B.A., M.A., B.Lib & I.Sc., M.Lib.& I.Sc., M.Phil. and Ph.D.

ABSTRACT:
This paper discusses the public library automation. Automation which started in late 70s in few special libraries has now reached most of the university libraries, college libraries. It is yet to take off in public library in India owing to various problems. This paper tries to identify the barriers, advantages, risk in automation, and analyze the convenient steps in automating the library and the technology available.

KEYWORDS
Library automation; Public library automation.

INTRODUCTION :

A larger debate regarding the new model of the public library needed by our society has been taking place over the last few years in international and national meetings in an effort to define the public library's role and to integrate it into the information sector as a main component. Library automation is the application of computers and also connected tools to the processing of data in a library or libraries. The automation might also be applied to some office procedures.

What is library automation?

Automation is a process of using the machineries for easily working and saving the human power and time. The main purpose of library automation is to free the librarians and library staff and to allow them to contribute more meaningfully to spread of knowledge and Information. In the simple language "When we use machineries for collection, processing, storage and retrieval of information and do another works of library with the help of machineries that called library automation."

Why library automation

Even though this question seems to be very fundamental it is essential to emphasize this aspect as the library automation is yet to take off in majority of the Indian public libraries. Secondly, while justifying need for library automation more than cost-effectiveness the benefits derived by the library users become the major consideration. Since library does not happen to be an economic entity such benefits need to be looked at in a different perspective. To appreciate the advantages it becomes necessary to highlight the different levels of library automation. For convenience it can be visualized at four levels.

1. Library cataloging system   2. House keeping operations and networking
3. Development of CD-ROM library / products   4. E-mail system and internet

Public library automation

Many public library services have access to computers; there are libraries which have not automated any of their library functions. In addition to the automation of basis library functions such as acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation and access to OPAC some library services are also using computers for related activities e.g., i) Stock control and stock taking. ii) Accounting, community information and book selection. iii) Book reservations.

The application of computers to library related activities in some of the library services is very limited, and often on a small scale. The use of word perfect certainly restricts how the catalogues might be access if the library decided to make them available online. Use of database management system would be more appropriate for the development of an online library catalogue. The public libraries have not automated any of their functions, and those using computers on only a small scale, have plants to automate in future. The reasons given for this are that their existing manual systems are adequate and automation would bring no significant services improvement to users they have unreliable power supplies that could cripple the libraries operations and no funds are available to meet the high cost of initial software and future updates.

All the services that have automated all or most of their library functions have branch, regional,

district or affiliated libraries. Some also have several services points, located in various places. Most of the libraries that from parts of its system are using automated systems for most library functions. The library services that have branch or regional libraries are using automated system either at the main library only or at the main library and only a few affiliated libraries. The major reason given for automating functions only at the main or central library was a lack of funds to extend automation to all libraries within the system. Other reasons given were a lack of ICT experts and inadequate supporting and infrastructure for example, no electricity where branch libraries or service points were located.

Advantages of library automation

Library automation of computer application in the library and information function and services has the following advantages

1) Speed - Information processing is done much faster which ensures better work flow through the library.
2) Accuracy - The degree of precision and accuracy in processing information is high. However, it is dependent on the accuracy of information led the system.
3) Cost effectiveness – Operating costs can be reduced if the system is well designed and well managed.
4) Reduction in library workloads – Library workload can be reduced as the computer can do vast amount on work and processing.
5) Improved services to users – High rate and better quality in performance is possible through the use of computers.
6) Avoids/ eliminates duplication of work
7) Easier access to external database.
8) Providing online access and search of information possible.

Barriers of public library automation

- ✦ Fear of adverse impact on employment
- ✦ Apprehension that the technology could be too expensive
- ✦ The library staffs have to undergo extensive training.
- ✦ Lack of support from the government, may be owing to budget constraints
- ✦ Fifth reason could be retrospective conversion of data.

Steps of library automation

Step A: Describing existing library services and technology

1. Identifying existing services and functions provided by the library
2. Identifying existing technology being used in the library
3. Collecting and organizing basic statistical data

Step B: Assessing needs and setting priorities

1. Who should be involved in planning?
2. Needs assessment

3. Identifying approaches to satisfy the needs
4. Setting priorities
5. Developing a preliminary budget

Step C: Translating needs and priorities into specifications

1. Designing specifications
2. Preparing and distributing the Request for Proposal (RFP)

Step D: Evaluating proposals and selecting a system

1. Making the first cut
2. Seeing system demonstrations
3. Analyzing vendor responses
4. Costs
5. Obtaining responses from vendor's clients
6. Making the final cut

Step E: Putting your system into place

1. Contract negotiations
2. Hardware and software installation
3. Training

Step F: Retrospective conversion and bar coding

Costs of public library automation

- Planning and consulting costs.
- Purchase of the system, hardware, and software.
- Purchase of network-specific hardware, software, and cabling.
- Internet connection costs.
- Conversion of manual records into machine-readable form.
- Access, and subscriptions where appropriate, to external databases and systems.
- Ongoing operating costs.
- Maintenance of system hardware and software.

Risks in public library automation

- Loss of commitment.
- Vendor viability.
- Support of higher-level administrators.
- Computer center support.
- Inadequate resources.
- Organizational changes.
- Staff attitudes.

- Patron attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The present paper is based on library automation of public libraries; data of all libraries will be handled with ease, great speed, accuracy, high rate and better quality. It will save cost, time, and staff of library and will avoid duplication of work. All libraries will be connected through networking, hence collection will be shared. It will also help to adopt the suitable strategies for improving collection building. Union catalogue and cooperative bibliographic services will be introduced.

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