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LIBRARY AUTOMATION: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES
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ABSTRACT

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 also traces and analyze problems area like lack of proper planning, lack of fund/economical resources, lack of resources and technology, lack of skilled or trained staff /professional and other related issues. The Paper briefly describes some point/remedies for proper implementation of library automation in library housekeeping and service sector.

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KEY WORDS: Automation, Library-automation, issues and Remedies.

INTRODUCTION:-

Library is Heart of any academic institution. Also it is soul of any learning and research institution, which is pivot of teaching-learning process. Now in these day's we have just entered in new millennium or new technological era.

The ICT make lots of changes in every field also in Library information Services. In recent decades we have witnessed the establishment of automation industries and library information networks and services around the world through use of ICT. The use of Information Technology tools facilitates a vast flow of information to end user via information services.

ICT makes several changes in the area of library information services such as book acquisition, cataloguing Serial -control, Web-Opac, CAS and SDI etc. And change the traditional library into the e-library or information centre. Library information Officers are save budget, time manpower in routine jobs and able to provide effective library information services without any geographical limitation.

AUTOMATION: WHAT IT IS?

In the ancient times people worked by hand. They made every task, every works without any help. Later they began to do some simple (and later more complicated) machines, eg. water wheels for lifting water from channels, mills (water and wind mills) for milling corns, etc. They began to use animals to give their force, their power to get work machines, vehicles, etc.

In the XIXth century the machines were able to do many tasks. Steam engines gave the mechanical energy to machines, but the man had to control every machine and computer control all the data processing and retrieval process.

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"The term automation is used in automatic manufacturing, control system, computing machinery or equipment that reduces the participation of human labour in production or services" – New Encyclopedia Britannica

"Any work which has been done with help of automatic machine like computer without any human interface is called automation. 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:-

- The operations of processes are carried out automatically
- Avoids or reduces human actions and thus save labour
- Increases accuracy and quality of work
- Increases efficiency and spped- up the operations

LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

The Phenomena of mechanization of traditional library activities, such as acquisition, serial control, cataloguing, circulation control etc., was called library automation.

"Library automation refers to use of computers, associated peripheral media such as magnetic tapes, disks, optical media etc. and utilization of computer based products and services in the performance of all type of library functions and operation. Computers are capable of introducing a great degree of automation in operation, function since they are electronic, programmable and are control over the processes being performed".

Library automation is the general term for Information communication technologies that are used to replace manual system in the library.

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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. This is because of the high cost associated with computer hardware and software. No project can succeed without a prior feasibility study. 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. In light of the fact that there are now new hardwares and softwares used for library automation it becomes imperative for institutions to determine whether they have adequate sources of resources to operate library automation. Unless this is

done, there are bound to be problems here and there.

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

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- Skilled professionals
- Maintenance and development
- Services via automation

LACK OF FUND/ECONOMICAL RESOURCES

The most crucial hurdle for a library in pursuit of automation is to obtain the necessary funds. 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. Generally any successful and running operation required a sound financial aid for purchasing of hardware, software and other associate peripherals of ICT.

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 computerisation 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. There are long lists of application software packages in the market. Few of these softwares are UNESCO micro CDS/ISIS, TINLIB, Konlib pro-library manager, X-lib, Alice for window, Integrated Library Software Koha, Greenstone, Glass e.t.c. Using a well-drawn parameters as given by Adekanye (2011) the software packages were assessed. According to Adekanye (2011) the suitability of a package could be assessed based on the following:

- Producer/vendor reputation and reliability base on the performance of previous installations
- Software functional flexibility and expandability

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- 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

Emphasis in library education had previously been on traditional librarianship. The building up of a collection and its organization and administration dominated the curricula. 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

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Professionals are saddled with the responsibility of managing the system unit there by limiting the outcome of service delivering to clients.

OTHER PROBLEMS

Other problems encountered include the absence of committee consultants and Computer experts in library automation, a lack of infrastructure facilities poor (communication facilities and irregular power supply, the poor library) environment and the small amount of information contained in libraries.

CONCLUSION

The challenges discussed above should be born in mind by program implementers if they are to succeed. Any attempt at automating academic libraries should be one of trial and error and should be collectively done. Because automation will bring about tremendous impact on these libraries, it is essential that the authorities scout around for adequate funds to expedite the program. In order to cope with the anticipated changes, there is a need for capacity building; a change in the over all attitude and outlook of the staff would affect every aspect of the way they work in their respective libraries. Only through this will academic libraries be able to provide effective and functional services and thereby maintaining their edge as leading libraries in the country.

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