Library automation software usage in university libraries in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Usage of Library automation software in Sri Lankan University Libraries is emerging nowadays. They are of different types and categories.The objective of this study was to identify the types, user satisfaction levels and obstacles to the use library automation software inacademic libraries of Sri Lanka, Thirty three university libraries which actively function as separate branches were selected. A questionnaire used as a method of data collection, was distributed via e- mail, direct communication and observation.According to the findings of this study, it was found out that majority of the university libraries (55.5%) wereusing Open Source Software. Commercial software was used by 37% of university libraries. Apartfrom that 7.4% of the university libraries were using other software developed by thelibrary staff. Several crucial obstacles were identified, such as high price of the software, insufficient fund allocationsand infrastructure facilities, lack of skilled staff and negative attitude of the staff, lack of vendorssupport and after sales services and lack of proper training program.The following recommendations were made to overcome above obstacles. Standard integrated library software should be installed in the university libraries. Sufficient funds should be made available by the university administrations to automate their libraries. Furthermore, training library staff and upgrading library infrastructures should be carried out.

Keywords: Library Automation, Automation Software, University Libraries, Sri Lanka

1.0 Introduction

The rapid growth and use of emerging technologies have changed the traditional library into an automated, electronic, virtual and digital library. This revolution has completely changed the library scenario, especially in the academic setup. Computers are used in libraries to increase efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and services (Sinha, 2003)

As computer based systems have become more pervasive in all aspects of library and information work, the term library automation has become an umbrella term for many applications that are used within the library. Various library softwares are being developed for automation to fulfill different purposes. Library software especially addresses the need of housekeeping routines and information retrieval services.

According to Prytherch 2005, automation means the combination of hardware and software. Both are necessary for automating systems. In the field of libraries, software become more important than hardware. The most important rule in software selection is to "know your application and buy it" (Shafique 2008).

2.0 Literature Review

Thalagala and Gamage (2008) have stated that Library automation software path started in Sri Lanka with CDS/ISIS (Computerized Documentation System/Integrated Set of Information System) software by UNESCO in 1986 and the designation of SLISTIC (Sri Lanka Scientific and Technical Information Center) as the national distributer. According toRavikumar and Ramanan (2014) more university libraries started automation using proprietary software, LibSys4, which was provided to university libraries, by UGC (University Grant Commission) Sri Lanka, on a special fund basis. This statement indicates 90% of universities initiated library automation through UGC funds. Rajput and Gautham (2010) carried out a study on the status of library automation and problems in their implementation in special libraries of Indore city, Madhya Pradesh.

The study explained the various problems faced by authorities and the staff during the process of automation. Lethargic attitude towards automation and unsatisfactory library software are the major drawbacks to speedy automation. It finally highlights the key suggestions for better implementation of library automation and for overcoming the hurdles faced during pre and post automation.Rai & Kumar (2011) discussed the progress of library management software and traced the characteristics and trends of software with special reference to packages that provide either a web interface for some of their modules or total web-based solutions for all management modules. The paper also seeks to compare services, facilities and technologies incorporated in library automation packages. While discussing the information communication technology usage of university libraries and special libraries in Sri Lanka, Sanjeewani (2013) has pointed out that 82% of university libraries and 57% special libraries use automation software. According to her study WINISIS (Windows Integrated Set of Information System) is the most popular software among the special libraries and Koha is the most popular software among the university libraries.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

General objective of this study is to identify the library automation software usage in university libraries of Sri Lanka.In achieving these objectives, study aims;

- to identify the types of software used in Automation
- to identify level of satisfaction of current software
- to identify the perception of university libraries to change the Library automation software
- to identify obstacles in library software usage
- to provide recommendations to overcome above identified obstacles

4.0 Methodology

Libraries managed by University Grant Commission, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs were selected for this study.Fifteen main University libraries reported in the UGC Annual report 2011-2012 and 15 Faculty Libraries under the management of the above universities and 3 Libraries belonging to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs were selected for the main survey.

A survey was conducted using a questionnaire to get the information on automation software usage in University libraries. The questionnaire consisted of questions to identify the type of software and the user perception on the software. Questionnaires were distributed through email among University libraries to collect data. Observational visits were also conducted to the libraries to verify the responses. Collected data was tabulated and analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2010 according to the objectives.

5.0 Findings and Discussion

Out of 33 selected libraries responses were received from only 27 libraries. Therefore the results represent the data collected from 27 libraries only.According to the findings the most popular automated software used in Sri Lanka is Koha (33.3%) which is roughly in accord with the result of the survey carried out by Sanjeewani (2013),who found Koha usage to be (39%). The results also showed that a considerable proportion of university libraries use LIBSYS (25.97%) whereas Ravikumar (2014)recorded LIBSYS usage to be (47%), and AFW (14.8%). It has been reported LIBSUTE software was not used by any university library in Sri Lanka (Table 1)

Table- 1: Percentage usage of automation software by type

Types of Software	Libraries (%)
ISURU	3.70
AFW	14.80
WINISIS	3.70
KOHA	33.30
LIBSITE	0
LIBSYS	25.97

It was noted during the research that Kothalawala Defense University and University of Visual Performing Art was using WINISIS. But it is pertinent to note that both these universities have now shifted to Koha.
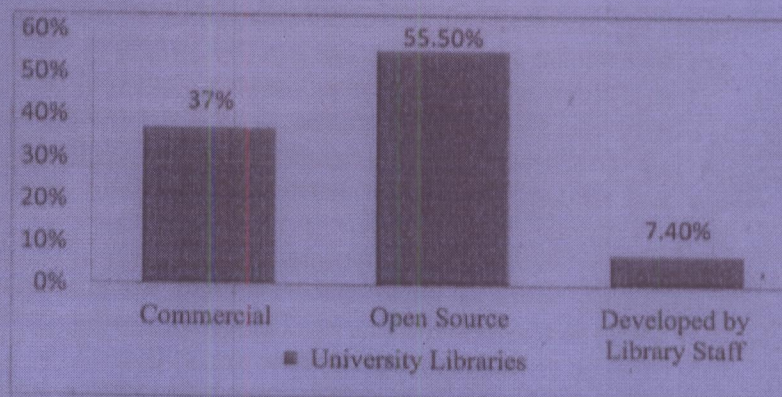

Figure- 1: Percentage usage of library automation software by category

Figure1 shows usage of library automation software by category. 55.5% of university libraries are using open sources software, whereas (37%) are using commercial library software. In house developed library software usage is 7.4%. According to Wanigasuriya (2009) out of 15 main University Libraries, only 10 University Libraries use automation software. Survey result shows 5 libraries using commercial library software, 3 libraries use free open source software and 2 libraries use in house developed library software.

The result reveals that university libraries have utilized both commercial and open sources software (OSS) for automation. In the beginning most of the libraries commenced their automation process with support of propriety software like LIBSYS and AFW. However at present Koha (OSS) has become more popular because many libraries struggle to grain financial support from the university to maintain commercial software. Koha is comparatively more cost effective.
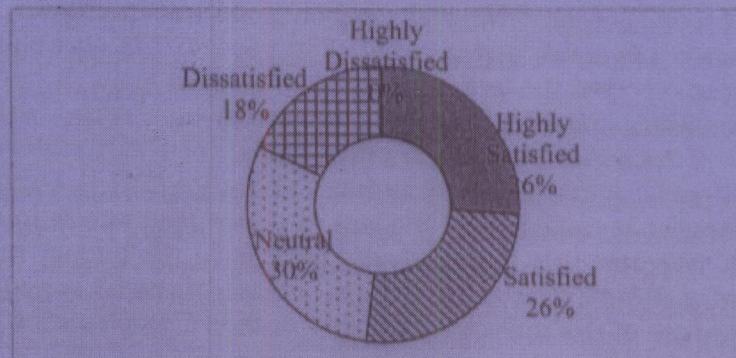
Figure- 2: Percentage satisfaction of currently used automation software

Figure 2 shows satisfaction levels of the currently used library software in the university libraries. 26% of libraries were highly satisfied with their current software. Dissatisfaction rate reported was 18%. 30% of libraries did not know about their software in depth.
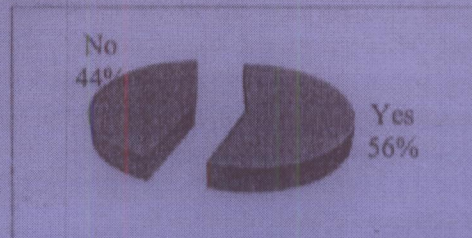

Figure- 3: Perception to change the library automation software

56% of libraries showed willingness to change the software used currently. Most of commercial library software users showed willingness to change their software, as these software lacked vendor support,had a high cost of license fees and maintenance fee.Library staff faced number of obstacles when handling the automation software in their libraries. The major obstacles are mentioned in the figure 4
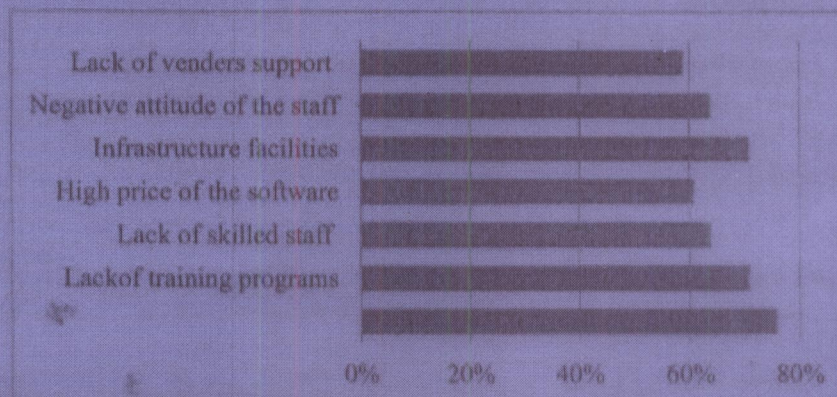

Figure- 4: Obstacles in library software usage

The lack of funds allocated was the common problemidentified by 76% of Sri Lankan University Libraries. Survey result of Gamage (2013), also point out that 93% of libraries reported the lack of financial support as major barrier. Lack of infrastructure facility and lack of training programs were reported by 71% of libraries. 64% of them indicated that negative attitude of library staff and the lack of skilled staff as their obstacles. According to Gamage (2013) around 58% of University Libraries are affected by the lack of skilled man power in developing libraries. This indicates that the university must train the human resources or recruit trained, skill staff when they fill the cadre.Lack of vender support and high cost of license fees of the software were also observed as obstacles among the users.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the main type of automation software used in university libraries was KOHA. By category Open sources software usage was very high. Nearly 52% of automation software users of libraries were satisfied with the software currently used. University libraries required more funds, Skilled Professionals and basic, IT equipment to accelerate the process. Because of problems and difficulties some universities are far behind the leading universities. To overcome the challenges universities should have executed plans with proper vision to achieve realistic goals in future and government should endorse the provision of financial aid and other facilities. Keeping the findings of the study in mind, the following recommendations are made.

1. A group of automated libraries should be formed at national level.
2. Librarians should conduct a survey of different automated libraries for the exchange of experiences before selection of software for their libraries.
3. Software provider or vendor especially, those who are providing software free of cost should also provide free training and strengthen the existing online user groups to facilitate the librarians and software users to share their problems and get solutions.
4. Seminars and workshops should be conducted to determine the librarians' experiences and views about the different library software.
5. Popularly used open source software' should be upgraded to meet the international standards and provide best performance

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