Online Services Rendered by Libraries

SUNITABEN J. CHAUHAN
Librarian,
Sheth H.P. Arts & T.S.M. Commerce College, Talod.
Gujarat (India)

Abstract:
Due to automation and networking, online services are easily available in libraries. Here, an attempt is made to discuss library automation, with its definition, needs its objectives, importance, advantages, internet, available online library services and its effects.

Keywords: *Library Automation, Online services, System*

1. Library Automation
Library automation implies a high degree of mechanization of various routine and repetitive tasks to be performed by human beings. With the advent of technology, human intervention is reduced to a great extent. The introduction of computers has enabled librarians to implement library automation. When we talk of library automation, it is principally the use of computers, associated peripheral media (disks, optical media, magnetic tapes, storage devices, etc.) computer based products and services in library work.

2. Definition
Library automation can be defined as: the application of computers to perform traditional library housekeeping activities and operations such as acquisition, circulation, cataloguing, reference service and serials control. Automation is used to reduce the amount of staff, time devoted to repetitive (and more often less challenging) activities that must be done in the proper functioning of any library activities and services. It is to be seen that, various library operations are automated so as to get maximum benefit for providing library services effectively and efficiently at a minimum time and energy.

According to the Webster's dictionary "automation is the technique of making an apparatus, a process or a system operate automatically". In other words, it is the machinery that mathematically manipulates information storing, selects, presents and records, input data or internally generated data. Automation word is used for automatic technical processing.

Automation is a technique to make a system automated that is self-active. For this work electronic machines are used to automate libraries. Thus library automation means the application of machines to perform the different routines, repetitive and clerical jobs which involve various functions and services of the libraries.

In libraries, automation is referred to as to the process of automaton in-house functions such as circulation, acquisition, serials management and cataloguing etc.

3. Objectives
The main objectives of library automation are as follows.
1.   To improve control over the library collection

2. To obtain the services of the existing staff effectively
3. To share effectively the resources among various libraries at a local regional, and national   level
4. To have an effective control over the entire operation   .
5. To avoid duplication and   repetitive work

4. Benefits

1. More time to work with the library users
2. Better access to the collection
3. More interface with the library users with other information   resources
4. Allows easy sharing of resources with other libraries
5. Enables Librarians to provide better services to the users
6. Ease of maintenance of statistics and over dues
7. Enhances consistency in the collection, streamlines circulation
8. Better facilities for the users by collaborating with other automated libraries
9. Report to the management
10. Time saving of clerical and repetitive tasks

5. Advantages

1. It provides users with timely access to various library materials
2. It motivates users and equips them with problem solving and information retrieval skills and provides them with life long learning experience
3. It supports new means of information   retrieval by introducing library users to global information
4. It eliminates routine and repetitive tasks or performs them more quickly and effectively. It reduces the amount of time spent on material acquisition, serials management, budget administration and record keeping.
5. It also allows library users to search collection in other libraries
6. It allows library users to use search strategies that exceed those that can be used with card catalogue

6. Why Library should be automated?

There are various reasons for library automation in any library

- To adopt new techniques
- Due to information explosion and growth of documents
- Lack of space
- To improve the control over collection
- To save the time of the library staff as well as the users
- To avoid the duplication of work
- Greater efficiency
- To share the resources through computer networks nationally and internationally
- Accuracy and promptness in service
- Large data can be handled with ease, great comfort and accuracy
- Availability of information in machine readable form
- Large data can be handled with ease, great comfort and accuracy

7. Internet
'Internet' is a global data communication system in which two or more computers are linked with hardware and software. 'World Wide Web' is one of the services in which documents, images and other resources are linked by hyperlinks and URLs via internet. With the use of internet, there is lot of flexibility in working time; place and information can be collected from any computer, sitting in any corner of the world. Methods to use internet include dial-up, landline, broadband, fiber-optic, Wi-Fi, cell-phone with 3-G technology, etc. English is the most popular language of the world, including Gujarati.

Though information on internet is available in almost all Indian languages, focus is given here only to English, Gujarati and information related to Gujarat state.

8. Online Library and Information Services available at Library
Libraries are expected to provide all such services which the diverse group of users requires for heir academic, commercial/business, entertainment and recreational purposes and for all age groups of users. It includes all services provided by the public libraries including urban and rural libraries to their users. Broadly it includes various routine/ housekeeping works either manually or computerized.

These services are as follows:
* Lending Services/ Loan of reading materials for home reading
* Reading Room Services
* Reference Services
* Current Awareness Services
* Computerized SDI Services
* Abstracting Services
* Indexing Services
* Bibliographic Services through OPAC of in-house databases
* On-line Services of International Databases
* CD-ROM based specialized subject databases
* E-mail/Internet Services
* Inter-library Loan Services
* Consultancy Services
* Organization of book exhibitions, lectures, seminars, workshops for developing book culture, literacy awareness, AIDS awareness, etc;
* Counseling and Guidance Services.

9. Effects of online services
1. Awareness of Library Services
2. Awareness of Library automation and online services
3. Awareness of various library sdoftwares like Soul, ALIS, LIB SYS, CDS/ISIS, WINSIS, LIBRARIAN etc.
4. Awareness of Reference Service through computer
5. Time Saving
6. Fastness in research work
7. Easiness
8. Authenticity
9. Deep Knowledge

10. Any time access

Thus, online services in libraries are a great blessing to librarians, library staff and mankind as well.

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