Automation and Networking Status of Aided Minority Degree College Libraries in Urban Bengaluru: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The impact of ICT on the Library and Information Centres, library developments, especially Library Automation, and networking, is vast and significant to a great extent. The academic libraries are on the threshold of a globalised era of profound and exciting transformation. The author has undertaken a study to determine the status of automation and networking in the aided minority degree college libraries of Bengaluru. The author finally concludes that in order to survive in this globalised environment, the college library professionals should acquire the professional skills and technological competencies which are very essential in the present day and consider how best these can be adopted to their libraries, to survive in this changing technological environment thereby meeting the future challenges of the 21st century.

KeyTerms: Library Automation, Networking, ICT, Digital Libraries, Libraries Services, Information Systems, Library Software, Information Resources.

INTRODUCTION

Library Automation in a simpler term is defined as a process of mechanization of Library operations which are of a routine and repetitive nature which usually covers all the housekeeping operations of the library and information centre. Library automation is the use of computers to control processes and replacing human operators. It is the technology concerned with the design and development of process and system that minimize the necessity of human intervention in their operation. It refers to the computerization or mechanization of all the library activities, such as acquisition, circulation, cataloguing, serials and OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog)[1].Thus an automated library system usually consists of a number of functional modules, such as acquisition, circulation cataloging serials, and an OPAC in which all these functional modules share a common bibliographic database. Networking is the linkage of working procedures for the exchange of information resources.

Library automation and networking is all about connecting to other libraries and information centres, search engines, peer groups, databases and experts[2]. The NAAC has recommended that many academic libraries go in for Library Automation and Networking for better services and quality in higher education. Similarly the National Knowledge Commission has also recommended to the Libraries to modernize their services.

Although IT application in college libraries is no doubt a Boon, its implementation is a most challenging job, especially in aided general degree colleges as they face a lot of constraints like shortage of manpower, lack of proper training, and personnel motivation[3].

The emerging ICTs in India have changed the traditional libraries into knowledge centres and librarians function more like consulting information officers or knowledge managers. However the situation in the degree college libraries in India is different and many are not in a position to fulfill their objectives. The reasons may be like, lack of good library policy, high rate of unplanned growth, irrelevant collections and storage, unqualified staff, inefficient retrieval system, diversion or unscientific use of funds and lack of support from the management and authorities[4].

Challenges of Library Profession in the 21st century are:

- Planning and implementing of the high quality library and information services in the changing social and technological environment of the 21st century.

- Organizing libraries, media centres and information agencies to serve the users effectively.

- Designing information systems that meet specific needs of library and information users.

- Integrating information technologies creatively and effectively into library and information services.

- Developing techniques to organize and retrieve vast and enormous amounts of information due to knowledge explosion.

- Sharing information resources through innovative networking and library automation and ensuring equitable access to a broad range of information.

NEEDS AND PURPOSE

The main motto of library automation is to provide the right information to the right person in a right manner in right time. The advantages may be in different levels which are as follows:

- Library cataloguing system

- Reduced staff

- Increase in the staff productivity

- Housekeeping operations

- Advance in technology

- System hardware and software

- Access to external information through internet

- Meets specific needs of library and information users

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sufficient studies have been undertaken regarding Library Automation in academic libraries. Some of the studies which are referred as regard to literature review are as follows:

Bansode[5] have reported on a study of 23 college libraries in Goa, India. Out of which only 4 colleges had fully automated, 5 colleges had partially automated and 14 colleges were in their early stages of library automation. The study found that majority of the libraries lacked the trained staff that was required for library automation, along with other common problems such as insufficient funds, lack of trained staff, and lack of space. Mulla[6] surveyed the automation Status and activities of engineering college libraries of Karnataka. The status of automation packages used by various libraries and opinions of the library Professionals about the performance of different modules of software used in their Libraries, with findings that most majority of the libraries had good ICT infrastructure. Maheshwarappa[7] studied the extent of availability and use of computers in Karnataka. The study found that out 571 colleges, only 121 colleges had computers and of which only 45 colleges were using computers for library in-house activities. Also found that the college libraries in Karnataka state showed a pathetic picture in the use of computer skills, etc.

From the review it was found that no such survey or study was conducted in Bengaluru colleges. Hence as a first step an attempt has been made by the author in undertaking a study on the status of library automation and networking in Aided degree college libraries of Bengaluru. Thereby contributing a bit of information to the already existing knowledge resources related to the topic on library automation.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the present status of the selected aided minority degree college libraries.

- To know the status of library automation and ICT in the selected colleges.

- To find out the library software used in the automation of the libraries.

- To ascertain the status of library network undertaken by the colleges.

- To understand the problems of professionals in the process of automation and networking.

- To find out the availability of computer systems used in the process of library automation and its services, and library website address of the colleges.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Present study is limited to the aided minority degree college libraries situated in Bengaluru only. For the purpose of the study both religious minority and linguistics minority have been taken into consideration, which include Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Maratha, and Jain institutions.

The following is the list of Aided Minority Degree colleges selected for the study:

Table 1: Aided Minority Degree Colleges

College	Minority Status
Abbas Khan College	Muslim Minority
Al-Ameen Degree College	"
Ambedkar Degree College	Linguistics Minority
B N M Degree College	Maratha Minority
Hasanath College for Women	Muslim Minority
Hasanath Degree College- Hennur	"
Jyothi Nivas College	Christian Minority
Mount Carmel College	"
RBANMS Degree College	Linguistics Minority
St. Josephs College of Commerce	Christian Minority
St. Josephs Arts and Science College	Christian Minority
St. Josephs Evening College	"

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has chosen descriptive research design and the method is normative survey, and questionnaire technique. Primary and secondary sources of information was collected from books, journals, magazines, annual reports of the colleges, and conference/seminar volumes that were related to the study.

Printed questionnaire was distributed in person to the 12 identified aided minority degree institutions in Bengaluru and simultaneously the soft copy was sent to the e-mail inbox of librarians who possessed e-mail IDs. Of the 12 questionnaire distributed, all the librarians responded making the response rate as 100 percent. In order to give authenticity to the findings, statistical analysis was carried out. The SPSS package was used for tabulations, simple percentile analysis have been used for analyzing the data

Analysis and Interpretation with Findings

The collected data through questionnaire was analyzed with the help of tables, and data interpretation was done keeping the

objectives of the study on focus. Various questions were asked relating to the automation and networking in the libraries and the response received from the library professionals are tabulated and presented in the tables below with relevant findings:

❑ **Library Automation**

Table 2: Status of Library Automation

Status	Colleges	%age
Fully Automated	4	33.3
Partially Automated	6	50
Not Automated	2	16.7
Total	**12**	**100**

Library automation and networking is one of the basic quality indicators for college libraries as emphasized by the NAAC and UGC. Table 2 shows that out of 12 colleges only 4 minority colleges have fully automated their libraries, while 6 of them have partially automated their library. Only 2 colleges have not automated their libraries.

❑ **Library Software Used**

Table 3: Library Software Used

Software	Colleges	%age
Easy Lib	3	30
Lib Soft	2	20
Marif Info System	2	20
E-Granthalaya	1	10
Libsys	1	10
Vergocis	1	10
TOTAL	**10**	**100**

Table 3 shows that librarians are using a range of automation software. Among them, Easy Lib Software is used by a large number 3(30%) minority Aided colleges, which is followed by Libsoft and Marif Info System 2(20%) each. The next major group of libraries using the software such as E-Granthalaya, Libsys and Vergocis contribute to 10% each of the total.

❑ **Type of Network in Existence**

Table 4: Type of Network In Existence

Network	Number of Colleges	%age
LAN	6	50
WAN	4	33.33
Non Availability	2	16.7
Total	**12**	**100**

It is found that 6 college Libraries have LAN facility and WAN facility are available in 4 college libraries. There are 2 college libraries not having any networking facilities (not automated) in their library and information centres.

❑ **Total Number of Computers Available**

The table 5 shows number of computers available in degree libraries of minority colleges. A majority of the college libraries 33.3% are having less than 10 computers, the next major groups of libraries 25% are having less than 5 computers. While two

Table 5: Availability of Computers

Computers	Colleges	%age
1 to 5	03	25
6 to 10	04	33.3
11 to 15	02	16.7
16 and above	01	08.3
Not available	02	16.7
Total	**12**	**100**

colleges are having computers between 11 and 15, only one college is having more than 16 computers in their libraries. It is found that many of the minority colleges were allotted less than 10 computers to their libraries.

❑ **Availability of Library Website Address**

Table 6: Availability of Library Website

Website	Colleges	%age
Yes	4	33
No	8	67
Total	**12**	**100**

Having a separate library website is one of the best practices for dissemination of library resources and services to the user community by 24x7 across the campuses for online access. Table 6 shows that only four colleges are having separate library websites. It is quite a surprise to note that the higher educational minority aided institutes surveyed in Bengaluru which are information technology hubs, where the librarians are not encouraged to maintain a separate dynamic library website.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study an attempt has been made to suggest a few recommendations which will help the library professionals, management and the authorities to successfully use the ICT facilities as well as to automate their college libraries

■ The minority educational institutions in coordination with the higher education department and the Government should have a quest to change the paradigms of higher education system.

■ The managements and the institutions should take up periodic surveys to access the necessary requirements for the implementation of automation and networking in the library and information centre.

■ Seminars, workshops, conferences, visits to other libraries and other such information gathering and public relations methods must be made a part of the libraries work schedule during each semester period for undertaking such automation and networking programs for the benefit of the Institution.

■ Those colleges which have partially automated their libraries should make efforts to become fully automated and those libraries which are not automated should take an initiation to begin the library automation as early as possible.

■ In The context of library automation and networking facilities. It is quite strange that the colleges in such a well

developed city like Bengaluru are not able to implement the Basic ICT enabled library facilities in their respective libraries, though NAAC, UGC and other quality agencies emphasize on it. This needs to be encouraged by the respective minority college managements.

CONCLUSION

Library automation in the 21st century is on interconnecting systems, sharing information resources through innovative networking and ensuring equitable access to a broad range of information and users. These developments include the growth of the use of networks and the internet. Library automation has changed the definition of the librarian, the library and information centre. Though many drastic changes have been occurring in the field of library and information centres in the wake of rapid information technology procedures, ICT and explosion of knowledge, the minority aided degree colleges of Bengaluru can move one step ahead to achieve the new horizons through the implementation of the library automation and networking in the library and information centres of their institutions.

The librarians should acquire the professional skills and technological competencies which are very essential in the present day and consider how these can be adopted to their libraries, to survive in this changing technological environment thereby meeting the future challenges of the 21st century, through library automation and networking. Also in order to survive in this globalised environment the college library professionals in coordination with the management should make serious efforts to automate and network their libraries thereby contributing to the fulfillment of the mission of the institution.

Finally it is necessary for library professionals to keep a watch on the developments and to choose appropriate technology depending on the needs, and at the same time it is equally important for the library professionals to interact with the computer professionals as the Library automation and networking at all levels needs good co-ordination between both these professionals. Though the latest technology penetration in library automation system is the barcode technology, the digital library, and the RFID security system, Some colleges are yet to take off with the basic library automation process which started in the early 1970s. Let us hope that in the near future to come, all the academic libraries shall be automated and networked. Thus In the changing scenario, there is a growing need to realize the importance of library automation and networking

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