

An Analysis of the Issues and Prospects of the Library Automation in the Mizoram Colleges

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Abstract – The paper discusses the importance of Library Automation and highlights the areas, factors and benefits of library automation. It also brings out problems as well as the present condition and future prospects of library automation of College libraries in Mizoram.

Keywords: College Libraries, Automation, Mizoram.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Automation is defined as a technique, a process or a system which operates automatically.

Library Automation is the process of automating the library functions using modern technology like applications of computer, telecommunication, computer software, microform of storage media, human interface. The main objective of library automation is basically to integrate all library services towards ensuring an easy and accurate retrieval of information. Automation has ushered in drastic changes in the way in which information is collected, stored, retrieved in library services making it more smooth and effective.

Today, libraries are applying electronic devices to develop their services in several ways and as such library automation is one of the most important fundamental elements for the development of library and information centres especially in the academic libraries of higher education. As of now, by taking meaningful initiatives to organize effective services, most of the higher educational Institutes and Colleges have automated their libraries.

2. AREAS OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

The automation of library includes the following areas and services:

1. Acquisition
2. Cataloguing and Indexing
3. Circulation
4. Serial Control

5. Library administration and management
6. Stock verification
7. On-Line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)
8. CD-ROM Database Search
9. Resource sharing
10. Information Retrieval and its Dissemination
11. Internet based Information searches
12. Current Awareness Service, etc.

3. FACTORS AFFECTING LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

Factors affecting library automation are:

3.1 Increased and diversified information needs: Today we are in the age of Information and Knowledge Society resulting to increased and diversified information needs of the society that compels better library services and management of information.

3.2 Consortium development: Library automation has become more essential for developing Consortium which controls and reduces information cost, improves resource sharing, develops a network environment and share licensing issues with each other (INFLIBNET, INDEST, etc.).

3.3 Digital Library initiative: The emergence of Digital Library in today's information environment has necessitated the automation of library services due to the fact that information is growing at an

exponential rate, the library facing manpower and financial constraints is to provide precise and timely information from every document under the root. There evolved the concept of resource sharing and networking. With the development of electronic publishing and storage the libraries are compelled to convert their holdings into electronic form and then putting them on the net.

3.5 Web-based services: The growing web-based services have also compelled library services to be automated by which various information needs of the users are provided for example *online subscription of Journals, e-mail, etc.*

3.6 E-Publishing: Most of the Scholarly articles, Theses, Research Papers, etc. have become in an electronic form and online resulting to the necessity of library automation.

3.7 E-Collection Building: Unless the library is automated the collection of emerging e-books, e-journals, CDS, etc. has no suitable place to be handled and managed.

4. BENEFITS OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

The information storage and retrieval problem has become progressively more serious in recent years. Keeping in view of the tremendous flow of information as well as the problem of organising and disseminating information in a systematic way library automation is the answer. Library automation is more convenient, more flexible and more comprehensive and also economical than the traditional method. Advantages of library automation are:

4.1 Library automation provides accurate information to the users.

4.2 It improves integration that helps to grasp details in real time and carries out various types of decision in a timely manner based on the information available due to automatic update of related function data.

4.3 It also provides easy access to library's holdings thus saving the time of users and the library staff.

4.4 Library automation also provides vast storage building that helps in providing enormous capacity of data storage and retrieval.

4.5 It increases efficiency in technical processing over manual system as well as library administration and management.

4.6 It also improves status of the library on the part of user's attitude towards the library that makes library more attractive.

4.7 It facilitates information exchange at various levels -local, regional, national and international.

4.8 Application of modern technology in the library obviously ushers more new services which are not possible in the traditional method.

4.9 Automation of library brings in quality in all aspects of library management.

4.10 It resolves the problem of staff inadequacy as all the library household operations are interrelated.

4.11 It helps in greater manipulation that enables services to be used in a variety of areas. It has greater coverage.

4.12 It also helps in bibliographic control and updating of databases.

4.13 Automation brings transparency in library administration and management.

5. PRESENT CONDITION OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION IN THE COLLEGES OF MIZORAM:

College library occupies an important position in the present set up of higher education and thus plays a vital role in higher education. The quality of higher education largely depends on the Colleges offering generally under-graduate education of single, multi-faculty and professional courses.

At present, there are 21 (twenty three) General Degree Colleges offering Arts, Science, Commerce and professional courses, 1 (one) IASE, 1(one) Law College, 1 (one) Veterinary Science College, 2 (two) Nursing Colleges, 2 (two) Polytechnics and 1 (one) Hindi Training College.

College library is regarded as the central figure of the College and as such it plays a vital role in achieving the goal and objectives of the College as well as enhancement of quality education in higher education.

A large number of College students in Mizoram mainly depend on the library resources like textbooks and academic journals. Few Colleges have separate library building and some College libraries are attached to the main building. Many of the College libraries are managed by College Librarians enjoying UGC pay scale analogous to the Teaching Staff with few supporting staff while some College libraries are managed by Deputy Librarian/Library Assistant. Library Committees have also been formed in most of the Colleges as per guidelines of the affiliating University.

The development of Information Technology in the field of Library and Information services has an impact on various College libraries resulting to procurement of SOUL Software for library automation.

6. ISSUES OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION IN THE COLLEGES OF MIZORAM:

As the concept of library automation is a new challenge for the Colleges of Mizoram in comparison with other states it faces many problems. Some major problems faced by the College libraries in respect of their automation may be highlighted as below:

6.1 Lack of proper direction: There is no proper direction from the concerned Department as well as from the Principals for library automation of the Colleges leading to negligence of it.

6.2 Lack of technical training: The Library Professionals require technical training for effective automation and there is a lack of such training for installation, management of Library Software.

6.3 Lack of needed infrastructure: Most of the College libraries have poor infrastructure like separate building, Internet facilities, Personal Computers which are needed for automation.

6.4 Lack of staff input: College libraries are managed by under-staff resulting to problem of smooth and effective automation

6.5 Lack of support from management: There is no proper support from the management for library automation.

6.6 Lack of long-range planning: Many of the Colleges have not set for long-range planning for future development that brings in the problem of library automation.

7. PROSPECTS FOR LIBRARY AUTOMATION IN THE COLLEGES OF MIZORAM:

Though facing some problems the College libraries in Mizoram are marching towards library automation due to the fact that the changing concept of library services and the rapid development of Information technology make the Library Professionals and the Management aware of IT applications in the College library services.

As of now, out of the 25 College/Institutes libraries in Mizoram, 22 libraries have now partially automated and 3 libraries are at the processing stage of computerization. The automated libraries are using SOUL 2.0 software developed by the INFLIBNET.

The role and activities of some important Bodies and Organisations for making better prospect of library automation in the Colleges of Mizoram may be highlighted as below:

The financial assistance to academic institutions from the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has greatly helped the Colleges in Mizoram for developing libraries especially for automation. All the 23 (twenty three) degree Colleges are under 2(f) & 12 (B) of the UGC Act and as such they are eligible for receiving financial assistance. With this financial assistance the Colleges have now been able to automate their libraries.

The various activities of the **UGC Inter-University Centre- Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET)**, Ahmedabad has greatly benefitted the College libraries particularly in Mizoram and paves the way for better future of library automation in the Colleges.

The role played by the **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)**, an autonomous body under the UGC for better future of library automation in the Colleges is remarkable. Based on the guidelines for developing College libraries automation is given due importance and weightage thus makes challenges for library automation.

The Department of Library and Information Science, Mizoram University also plays a vital role for better future of library automation in the Colleges by conducting Seminars, workshops, Refresher Courses that make the Library professionals aware of the challenges and importance of library automation and enhances the capacity for building the automation environment.

Thus the automation process of the College libraries has now entered into a new chapter. Though lagging behind in this aspect in comparison with the rest of the country it is hopeful that the College libraries in Mizoram will step forward and achieve the goal of automation in near future.

The automation in College libraries is inevitable due to the changing information environment and rapid development of ICT in the field of library services. No Library will survive unless its services are automated in the world of 'Survival of the Fittest'. College Libraries of Mizoram are also compelled to expand its services through technological devices to serve its clients effectively and efficiently resulting to accessing right information from the library. The Library Professional should be aware of the development of ICT application in library services and make use of it for making library more attractive, more effective and more efficient. With this automation of libraries the College libraries of Mizoram will of course enhance their role in higher education.

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