

Status of Library Automation in College Libraries of Paschim Bardhaman District: A Study

Biswajit Bhattacharya

Librarian, Bidhan Chandra College, Asansol, West Bengal

Abstract

New technology and the impact of ICT has completely transformed the concept of conventional library function and services. Instead of browsing the catalogues for hours, with a click of a mouse the user can now search the collections of a library and are able to reach to his/her desired information without wasting time. Library automation helps to organize and produce information in a systematic manner with minimal human error. This study highlights the present status of automation in college libraries of Paschim Bardhaman district and the challenges libraries are facing to provide quality services with limited resources.

Keywords: Library, Library Automation, College Library, Library Software, Academic Library

1. INTRODUCTION

Library plays a pivotal role for the development of any academic institution. The richness of the library depends upon how good its collections are. Library automation is the process of application of computers in routine library works to provide better services to the users with the help of new and advanced technology. Library automation helps in minimizing human intervention in performing day to day library works so that minimal error and high level of accuracy can be achieved to run the library in a systematic manner. The main focal point of library automation is to support the systems and services of the library with the help of computers and other advanced technologies to convert the concept of traditional library works into automated one.

Libraries are recognised as a powerhouse for using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the process of automation of its day-to-day work as well as providing retrieval services to the users with high level of accuracy to save the valuable time of the users. Application of ICT helps to avoid repetitive job and save time for both the library staff and the users. Computers are not only used as a data processing tool but also for information storage, organization, access and retrieval.

2. DEFINITIONS OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION

According to Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences (Kent, 1977), "Library Automation is the use of automatic and semiautomatic data processing machines to perform such traditional library activities as acquisitions, cataloguing and circulation. These activities are not necessarily performed in traditional ways, the activities themselves are those traditionally associated with libraries; library automation may

thus be distinguished from related fields such as information retrieval, automatic indexing and abstracting and automatic textual analysis”.

The Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989) defines automation as “application of automatic control to any branch of industry or science by extension, the use of electronic or mechanical devices to replace human labour”.

According to ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science (Levine-Clark & Carter, 2013) automation is “the performance of an operation, a series of operation or a process by self-activating, self-controlling, or automatic means. Automation implies use of automatic data processing equipment such as a computer or other labour-saving devices”.

3. NEED OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION

Information explosion resulted in the large amount of literature in every field of knowledge. Because of information explosion libraries are facing difficult challenges to keep these collections in a systematic manner with its limited number of staff and space. Library automation helps to complete the work in a methodical and useful manner. Library automation is an essential criterion for modern libraries for the following reasons:

- To provide improved and time bound services to the users
- To eliminate human error in various repetitive job in the library
- To provide new modern-day services to the users
- To enhance library services and help user to access it from anywhere
- To enhance efficiency of library staff by enhancing technical knowledge
- To reduce time span taken by a staff to serve the user
- To increase cooperation and resource sharing among libraries

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of this study are:

- To find out the status of automation in govt. aided college libraries of Paschim Bardhaman district
- To find out different areas covered in library automation process
- To highlight the services rendered by the libraries
- To identify various challenges faced by the libraries to serve its users

5. METHODOLOGY

The study is conducted by following the descriptive research design specifically survey and content analysis methods were used to collect required data. In order to investigate and analyse the problem of the research and to accomplish its objective required data is collected through personal conversation and by browsing through the websites of different colleges.

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the district of Paschim Bardhaman 21 colleges are there under Kazi Nazrul University. Out of which 12 government aided college libraries are taken into consideration for this study namely: Asansol Girls' College (AGC), Banwarilal Bhalotia College (BBC), Bidhan Chandra College (BCC), Deshabandhu Mahavidyalaya (DEM), Durgapur Women's College (DWC), Khandra College (KHC), Kazi Nazrul Islam

Mahavidyalaya (KNIM), Kulti College (KUC), Michael Madhusudan Memorial College (MMMC), Pandaveswar College (PAC), Raniganj Girls' College (RGC) and Trivenidevi Bhalotia College (TBC).

7. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data collected to complete the study has been analysed with the help of different tables to find out the present status of libraries.

7.1 LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

Collection of a library plays an important role for the development of an institution. It is said to be the soul of the institution. The richness of the library depends upon how good its collection is. Two major components for the development of any library are its collections and its users.

Table 1: Library Collections

Name of the College	Books	Journals & Magazines	Newspapers	e-resources
AGC	34082	13	5	NLIST + Open sources
BBC	61808	12	2	NLIST + Open sources
BCC	36383	12	10	NLIST + Open sources
DEM	25059	10	4	NLIST + Open sources
DWC	20768	12	4	NLIST + Open sources
KHC	18004	11	4	NLIST + Open sources
KNIM	13232	20	3	NLIST + Open sources
KUC	15678	14	5	NLIST + Open sources
MMMC	19969	11	5	NLIST + Open sources
PAC	9000	1	2	NLIST + Open sources
RGC	27188	14	4	NLIST + Open sources
TBC	92585	14	5	NLIST + Open sources

Table 1 describes about the number of collections of the libraries and it is found that TBC library with a total number of 92585 books have a very good collection followed by BBC library with 61808 books. Libraries of BCC, AGC, RGC and DEM colleges have moderate collections while PAC library has the minimum number of collections with only 9000 books. Almost all the libraries subscribe between 10-15 journals and magazines for their colleges except PAC library which subscribes only 1. KNIM library subscribes maximum number (20) of journals and magazines among all libraries. BCC library subscribes 10 newspapers for its users while other libraries subscribe between 2 to 5 newspapers for its users. All the libraries provide e-resources to its users through NLIST subscription from INFLIBNET and open sources available in the web.

7.2 STATUS OF AUTOMATION

The application of computer in routine library work to provide better and efficient service to the users is the ultimate motive behind library automation process. It needs meticulous planning and proper execution to complete the process of library automation to serve the user community in an effective manner.

Table 2: Status of Automation

Name of the College	Fully Automated	Partially Automated	Year of Automation	Software used
AGC		✓	2005	KOHA
BBC		✓	2011	Aadija Library Solutions
BCC	✓		2013	SOUL 3.0
DEM		✓	2022	KOHA
DWC		✓	2017	KOHA
KHC		✓	2018	KOHA
KNIM		✓	2015	SOUL 2.0
KUC		✓	2008	SOUL 2.0
MMMC		✓	2011	KOHA
PAC		✓	2016	KOHA
RGC	✓		2016	SOUL 2.0
TBC		✓	2015	KOHA

Table 2 clearly describes that all the colleges adopted the process of automation for their libraries and the process of automation was started at first in AGC library with the software developed by the BCA department of the college and presently it is using KOHA software. Out of 12 libraries 7 libraries (58.33%) use KOHA open-source software for their colleges while 4 libraries (33.33%) use SOUL proprietary software. BBC library using a customised software for their college namely Aadija Library Solutions while all other libraries are using either KOHA or SOUL software for their libraries. Out of 12 colleges only two college libraries namely BCC and RGC are fully automated whereas rest of the colleges are partially automated.

7.3 AREAS OF AUTOMATION

Library automation process is the migration of library procedures from manual to computerized, such as from card catalogue to OPAC, or from manual circulation system to automated one with the help of digitized cards with barcodes. A library software comprises various modules in it and if we use all its modules then only the real purpose of using the software in an effective manner is totally justified.

Table 3: Automated Modules in the Software

Name of the College	Acquisition	Cataloguing	Circulation	Serial Control	OPAC
AGC		✓	✓		✓
BBC		✓	✓		✓
BCC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DEM		✓	✓		✓
DWC		✓	✓		✓
KHC		✓	✓		✓
KNIM		✓			✓
KUC		✓			✓
MMMC		✓	✓		✓

PAC		✓			✓
RGC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TBC		✓	✓		✓

Table 3 defines that out of all five modules of library software only BBC and RGC library are using all the modules namely Acquisition, Cataloguing, Circulation, Serial Control and OPAC. Cataloguing and OPAC module is used by all the libraries (100%) and Circulation module is used by 9 libraries (75%) out of 12. KNIM, KUC and PAC are not using the Circulation module of the software for their library. Acquisition and Serial Control module is used by only two libraries (16.66%) namely BCC and RGC.

7.4 LIBRARY SERVICES

Library services are the most important function for any library. The goal of a library is not reached until its resources reach the correct users and to bridge the gap of resources and users library services play the most important role.

Table 4: Library Services

Name of the College	Reference	Circulation	Reading Room	Reprography	Online Services	Internet
AGC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BBC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
BCC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
DEM	✓	✓	✓			✓
DWC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
KHC	✓	✓	✓		✓	
KNIM	✓	✓	✓			✓
KUC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MMMC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PAC	✓	✓	✓			
RGC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TBC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

It is clearly visible from the Table 4 that Reference, Circulation and Reading Room service is provided by all the libraries (100%) for its users. Reprography service is only provided by 3 libraries (25%) out of 12 namely AGC, DWC and RGC. Online services are provided by 9 libraries (75%) out of 12 except DEM, KNIM and PAC library while internet service is provided by 10 libraries (83.33%) out of 12. KHC and PAC College libraries are not providing internet services for its users.

7.5 CHALLENGES FOR THE LIBRARY

Information explosion brought various new challenges for the library as huge number of resources are generating every day and it is very difficult for a library to keep balance while acquiring resources, process it with limited trained staff, and present it before the end users with latest technology to maintain quality services.

Table 5: Challenges faced by libraries

Name of the College	Insufficient Fund	Lack of Latest Technology	Inadequate Professional Staff	Lack of Proper Training	Less Awareness in use of Technology	Lack of Space
AGC	✓	✓				✓
BBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
BCC	✓	✓			✓	
DEM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DWC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
KHC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
KNIM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
KUC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MMMC	✓	✓	✓	✓		
PAC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RGC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
TBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

From Table 5 it is found that all the college libraries are facing the problem of insufficient fund to develop the library collections. To provide best service to the users’ latest technology like RFID is not used in any library. Inadequate number of professional staff and lack of proper training among them is another challenge faced by 10 libraries (83.33%) out of 12 (Except AGC and BCC). Except 2 colleges (AGC and MMMC) all other libraries are facing the problem of less awareness in use of technology among users as many students in these colleges are first generation learners. 6 libraries (50%) out of 12 namely AGC, DEM, KHC, KNIM, KUC and PAC are facing space problems in their library where as other libraries have adequate space to organize its resources.

8. CONCLUSION

Library automation becomes basic need for any library now a days to provide better services to the users. Library automation helps in maintaining its resources in an organized and systematic manner without human error. It helps to avoid duplication of works and finding the areas which need attention for improvement by analysing various reports generated through the system. But the real success of any library automation process needs proper planning and execution right from the beginning so that unnecessary wastage of money, time and manpower can be avoided and it can be executed in a hassle-free manner. Involvement of well-trained library professionals in the process of automation is the pre-requisite criteria so that error free execution of the work can be materialized. Though libraries are facing various challenges in implementing all the modules in automation software it is the need of the hour that all libraries should take proper initiative so that all the functions and facilities of library management software can be used to provide quality service to the users.

REFERENCES:

1. Das D., Chatterjee P., “Library Automation: An Overview”, International Journal of Research in Library Science, July-December 2015, 1 (1), 1-7.

2. Das M., “Issues and Challenges of Library Automation in the College Libraries of Assam with Special Reference to Kamrup District (Rural): A Study”. <https://ir.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/1944/2026/1/22.pdf>
3. Jadhav V. S., Mugade V. S., Vedpathak S. Y., “Status of Library Automation: A Study of Management Education Institutes Libraries”, IJFANS International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences, 2022, 11 (10), 1726-1733.
4. Kent A., “Encyclopedia of library and information science”, 1997, New York: Marcel Dekker.
5. Levine-Clark M., Carter T., (2013). ALA glossary of library and information science (4th ed.). Chicago: American Library Association.
6. Patel S. N., “Library Automation: An Overview”, International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences, June 2014, 5 (2), 35-40.
7. Paul A. K., “Library Automation in Academic Libraries: An Introduction with its Various Aspects”, International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management (IJAEM), February 2023, 5 (2), 35-40.
8. Reddy P., “Impact of Information Technology on Libraries”, 2001, New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications.
9. Simpson J., Weiner E., “The oxford english dictionary (2nd ed.)” 1989, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
10. <https://agc-opac.kohacloud.in/cgi-bin/koha/opac-main.pl>
11. <http://bbclib.aadijatechnologies.com/index.php>
12. <http://bcclib.bccollegeasansol.org/index.php>
13. <https://dbmcrj.ac.in/About-library/>
14. <http://www.dwcollege.org/Women's%20Library/index.html>
15. <https://khandracollege.ac.in/library.php>
16. <https://sites.google.com/view/knim-central-library/home>
17. <https://kulticollege.ac.in/library.php>
18. <https://michaelmadhusudancollege.ac.in/facilities/>
19. <https://pandaveswarcollege.ac.in/books/>
20. <http://rgclib.aadijatechnologies.com/index.php>
21. https://tdbcollege.ac.in/library_at_a_glance.php