Open Source Software for Library Automation

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ABSTRACT:

Use of different software applications in libraries has become essential due to some visible factors like as Growth of Electronic Resources, Anytime Anywhere Access and Resource Sharing. Library automation, its services and the use of open source software are essential for efficiency and effectiveness and at a minimal cost, too. Library automation benefits both the library staff and the users as it reduces the level of job stress on the staff and enhances remote and timely provision of up-to-date information to the users. This paper opines majorly aimed to establish the relevance of using open source software in library automation. To achieve this goal, the paper was divided into sub-headings that respectively highlighted the relevance of library automation, spelt out the salient issues to consider in library software selection, the characteristics of OSS that qualify them to be effective library automation software, and enumerated and briefly discussed different OSS available for library automation.

KEYWORDS: Library automation, Open Source Software, OSS, Library effectiveness, selection criteria for OSS.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The impact of ICT has spread over every field to provide best and fastest services to its customers. It's the demand of the clients in IT era as the clients need immediate information to end their tasks in their respective areas of knowledge. Hence the Libraries have used IT in the different areas of knowledge from its generation to dissemination and for satisfying the needs of its' users in a speedy way and to exist their importance in the digital era. Libraries use IT in different areas like as Acquisition, Budgeting, Serial Control, Circulation, digitization, etc., and managing databases to provide different services to its' users. Libraries use different Softwares to manage their databases and provide services to the end user. The use of different

Softwares is based upon the size of the users, size (Collection) of the Libraries, Parent organization's attitude towards Libraries, Kinds of services, customers' information seeking behaviors, and ofcourse based upon the economic condition of the Libraries. Inspite of these all conditions many Libraries have used freely available software which also known as *OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARES (OSS).*

2. WHAT IS OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE (OSS)

Open Source Software is a new idea to create "free" software. The term "free" should be equated with freedom, and as such librarians who use "free" software should have the following qualities:

1. Free to run the software for any purpose like library works/ services in LICs
2. Free to modify the software to suit their needs in LICs
3. Free to distribute modified versions of the software to the libraries

According to Open Source Initiative (http://www.opensource.org/):

> "Open source promotes software reliability and quality by supporting independent peer review and rapid evolution of source code. To be certified as open source, the license of a program must guarantee the right to read, redistribute, modify, and use it freely."

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Open-source software (OSS) is computer software that is available with source code: the source code and certain other rights normally reserved for copyright holders are provided under an open-source license that permits users to study, change, improve and at times also to distribute the software.

Open source software can be defined as any computer software, generally developed as a public collaboration, whose source code is made freely available.

3. ADVANTAGES OF OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARES IN LIBRARY AUTOMATION

Library Automation mainly concerned with the benefits of the following:

Benefits for Patrons: Library automation offers many opportunities to improve services to the library users. Benefits include faster access to resources through OPACs, remote access, access to online reference tools, etc.

Benefits for Staff: Automation reduces the need to do repetitive jobs manually. It reduces the manual work involved in circulation, cataloguing, acquisitions, etc. Automation allows the staff to take benefit of online resources, and offline databases in giving reference services.

Benefits for Institution: Automation not only builds positive reputation of the library services it also increases access points for the users.

There are certain benefits to use Open Source Software for automation. The following are the major benefits of OSS.

- ➢ Reduced Software
- ➢ Cost
- ➢ Ease of licensing restrictions
- ➢ Quality Control
- ➢ Localization

- ➢ Ample support
- ➢ Quality software
- ➢ Easy Evaluation
- ➢ Platform Independent
- ➢ Flexibility to choose support

4. SELECTION CRITERIAS OF OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARES FOR AUTOMATION

The specific selection criteria that should guide the choice of open source software are as follow:

i) User friendliness
ii) Portability
iii) Well designed screens, logically arranged functions with extensive help messages
iv) Minimal training
v) Multi-user and unlimited user access
vi) Multilingual & Multimedia supported
vii) Supporting Internationally known standards (MARC, AACR-2, Dublin core etc.)
viii) Training and Support (E-mail, Discussion Forums)
ix) After installation service availability and,
x) Cost of installation

5. SOME OPEN SOURCE OFTWARE AVAILABLE FOR INTEGRATED LIBRARY MANAGEMENT.

- ➢ **KOHA Software:** The software is available at http://www.koha.org
- ➢ **Evergreen Software:** The software is available at: http://evergreen-ils.org/downloads.php
- ➢ **ABCD Software-** ABCD, which in full is, "Automation of liBraries and Centres of Documentation":It is available at: https://sites.google.com/site/abcdlibraryautomationsoftware/downloads
- ➢ .**NewGenLib:** It is available at: http://www.verussolutions.biz/euniversity.php
- ➢ **Emilda-** It can be accessed at: http://sourceforge.net/projects/emilda/
- ➢ **PMB (PhpMyBibli)-** The software is available at: http://www.sigb.net/
- ➢ **WEBLIS-**It is available at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=16841&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

6. CONCLUSION:

Library automation and the use of open source software are relevant for achieving optimal library effectiveness at a minimal cost. This process benefits both the library staff and the users as it reduces the level of job stress on the staff and enhances remote and timely provision of up-to-date information to the users. To achieve a successful automation of the library services with the open source software, it is recommended that all key factors such as; consideration of user requirements, presence of the infrastructure (hardware, software, network), support from software developers, availability of user group for the software, and competent staff must be prioritized.

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