

IMPACT OF AUTOMATION ON LIBRARY SERVICES

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Abstract

The essence of automation is to minimize the employment of manual labour in the production, service and programmed decision making systems of an organization, where machines can be utilized more efficiently and economically, and where unique human skills can more effectively be utilized outside the system, as designers, planners, controllers and maintainers. To accomplish this job the design of the systems must be considered in terms of both organizational objectives and the longer range evolutionary, technical progress taking place in the environment in which the organization exists. In other words, automation is an attempt to minimize the manual operation in any organization by the technical innovations.

1. Introduction :- The meaning of the word “Library” has changed considerably in the recent time. Unexpected and manifold growth of information has made the library/information centers to introduce changes in the management for effective control and dissemination of information. The information explosion and steady growth of literature has faced library and information professional to device ways for bibliographic control. For this, computer has emerged as the most effective tool. With its vast capacity, speed, accuracy and memory, computer has made easy handling of large quantities of information. The purpose of library automation is to free the library professionals from the routine clerical work and allow them to provide more

meaningful service to spread of knowledge and information.

2. What is Automation :- The word automation has been derived from a Greek word ‘Automate’ which means something which has the power of spontaneous motion of self movement.

ALA Glossary of library and information science defines automation as “the performance of an operation a series of operations or a process by self activating, self controlling, or automatic means. Automation implies the use of automatic data processing equipments such as a computer or other labour saving devices”.

3. Characteristics of Automation:-

1. The operations/process are carried out automatically.

2. Avoid or reduced human action and thus save time and labour.
3. It accelerates efficiency and speed in operations.
4. Expands the range and raises the quality of existing services.
5. Instantaneous answer to multiple queries.

4. Need of Automation in Libraries:-

The passport for living in the world of 21st century is the ability for independent learning and visa for entry into it is acquaintance with information technology. The information technology comes to rescue human beings to control and disseminate exploded knowledge and information. The ability of a computer to put items rapidly in order to do so in a variety of sequences or by a number of different access points all derived from a single record, undoubtedly one of its most alluring attributes to a librarian.

“Dennis Reynolds” suggested to justify the process of automation-

- 4.1 To increase technical processing efficiency over a manual system.
- 4.2 To realize financial savings or curtailing cost in certain cases where cost savings have been realized through automation.
- 4.3 To improve library services.
- 4.4 To improve library administration and management.
- 4.5 As a response to a breakdown of crises in the existing manual system.

- 4.6 To facilitate savings of resources.

5. Areas of Automation of Libraries: -

Computers can be used practically too all library operations. Lot of research is going on to develop a knowledge based expert system for classification. The other operations/activities that are enabled to computerization can be divided into three parts.

A) Library House keeping operations.

B) Information storage; retrieval and dissemination.

C) Management support activities.

Library House Keeping Operations:-

House keeping operations include those functions which are done in the background so that the library can fulfill its unlimited goals. The major house keeping operations that can be automated are acquisition of documents, cataloguing, classification, circulation, serial control, stock taking, OPAC search etc.

1. Acquisition of Documents:- Library's acquisition department is responsible for purchasing of books and other documents for the library collection.

The library has to maintain and use of various records in the acquisition section. An acquisition section purchases reading material for a library which accounts for a large part of budget.

Manual acquisition system faces the problem of maintaining huge data and files, records, book orders etc, with routine jobs use of computerized acquisition system reduces the

routine, clerical and repetitive tasks. This will help the professional staff for qualitative improvement in their work.

The functions of an ideal acquisition system, which are similar to most of the libraries, are:-

- To search a bibliographic file to determine the status.
- To order for a duplicate copy.
- To search the book-seller files so that it helps in deciding to order books of interest immediately through on-line.
- Capacity to provide detailed financial information in a variety of ways.
- Capacity to select books from an external database.

2. Cataloguing :- Catalogue is a very good information retrieval tool which helps to locate the holding of a library. Different library professional gave different definitions of with "C. A. Cutter" in 1876, wrote that catalogue is used for achieving the following objectives-

- To enable a person to find a book of with either the author, the title or the Subject is known.
- To show what the library has to buy a given author or a given subject or In a given kind of literature.
- To assist in the choice of a book or to its edition.

Catalogue is an organized record of the holdings of a library. It gives access to a library collection. Conventional cataloguing involves the use of many man-hours of professional staff. Selecting list of catalogue records by special criteria such as subject, geographical area covered etc. MARC project, UNIMARC, BNB MARC. While developing co-operative computer based cataloguing various constraints need to be solved. Other factors include economic, telecommunication likely use by the stage and users and how the catalogue is to be consulted. In the developed countries the developments are breathtaking. In the British Library in London, due to be stocked by 1994, users will be able to access a new electronic catalogue called the on-line access catalogue of OPAC.

3. Serial Control :- Serials (e.g. Journals, periodicals, magazines, yearbooks etc) carry latest information about current activities of divergent fields of research and application.

The main objectives of an automated serial control system are to handle serials and maintain holding list. In order to achieve these objectives the system must perform the following functions-

- Inputting serial data.
- Ordering new serials.
- Renewals of presently subscribed serials.
- Entries for the receipt of an individual ideas as and when the issues are received.
- Sending reminders if necessary.
- Cancellation of presently subscribed serials if necessary.

- Keeping track of amount spent on serials and other related works such as binding etc.

4.Circulation system :- Circulation is an important area, which needs to be automated, because of the nature of job that prevails in the circulation. Circulation involves the charging and discharging, member's registration, issue, renewal, return and reservation of documents, maintaining statistics, sending reminders etc.

Computer Based Circulation System:-

- Creating new membership.
- Charging and discharging of books.
- Reservations of books.
- Personal current status.
- Generation of Due-Date slips.
- Transaction file.
- Document file.
- Borrower's file.

5. OPAC (On-line Public Access Catalogue)-

On-line public access catalogue (OPAC) was a major development in the early eighties, which have been designed to the principle means of catalogue access to the library collections, both in the reading rooms and externally over telecom networks. These OPACs have replaced and still replacing the traditional card catalogues in the developing countries like India. In the early Nineties web OPACs have appeared in the west as an

improvement over OPACs by exploiting the facilities of INTERNET.

WEB OPAC :- The concept of web OPAC is of recent origin in the WEST. The web OPAC is the new OPAC serving as a gateway to the resources not only held by the respective library but also to the holdings of other participating library without limiting to local collection but going beyond further to regional, national and international levels.

Features of web OPEC are as follows:-

- It offers the libraries the opportunities to have access to various resources of other libraries on the web.
- It allows users to interact with documents stored on computers all over the world.
- Makes easier to access catalogue data in the form of bibliographic records.
- Powerful tool that links all the electronic resources for easy access.
- Makes the catalogue from providing information for providing access to large banks of actual information.
- It becomes another search engine.
- Referred as 'web cats' and as well a type of "Information gateways".

Conclusion: Recent advances in computer, communication, photography, technical products

and services, technical publication and library techniques permit data to be collected, transmitted, stored, processed, retrieved and displayed more rapidly, accurately, completely, economically and flexibly. Such advances are gradually changing the way in which library operations are performed. The degree of centralization of authority and decision making, relationship among line and staff activities and relative position of data processing activities have been affected by automation. The increasing complexity of library operations, improvements in existing managerial techniques and advances in information technology have also led to the development of sophisticated and highly automated managerial planning control systems. Automation has brought new dimensions to library fiscal management. The total quality management and quality of work life has led to efficient and effective library services. The librarians are using sophisticated managerial techniques to manage library staff of diverse background and skills especially in developed countries.

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