



"A STUDY OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF RAJKOT CITY"

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ABSTRACT:

In society, public libraries are the only place where information is available freely to all without prejudice or discrimination. In the current era of information explosion, library professionals face a challenge in providing library services and information to the users efficiently. Besides, providing easy access to essential databases that patrons need, library automation has also made library administration easier for professionals. Present study aims to understand the current status of automation in public libraries of Rajkot city, Gujarat. During the study it was observed that 7 (86%) out of 8 public libraries were automated. For automation library professionals were using different software such as SOUL, LA, or RMC Library. However, public libraries need to cover more areas under the automation. In addition, most public libraries in Rajkot city still use educational CDs and DVDs as e-resources, which needs to be updated in light of the advent of information and communication technologies.



KEYWORDS: Automation, E – resources, ICT facilities, Public libraries.

INTRODUCTION:

A public library serves as a vital resource for disseminating information to all categories of users irrespective of their age, race, sex, colour, creed, religion and literacy level. By providing access to information and knowledge, public libraries facilitate socio-cultural and educational development (Lalnunpuia, 2019). The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto recognizes the contribution of libraries to education, culture, and information, as well as their vital role in fostering peace and spiritual wellbeing. Therefore, public libraries are crucial to the development of future lifelong learning systems (Patil, 2013).

Traditional libraries take a long time for users to search for information. Modern information explosion has resulted in a large amount of literature in every field of knowledge, which makes it impossible to manage a library's collection manually. In addition, users are looking for relevant, authentic information readily available in one place. A challenge for library professionals has been the rapid delivery of library services and information. This development has given rise to the concept of Library Automation (Das & Chatterjee, 2015). Libraries and information centres have devised library automation efforts and practices to deliver better library and knowledge services at the earliest opportunity to their users.

A library automation system automates the traditional functions and activities of libraries and services, such as acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, serial control systems, etc. In addition to assisting library staff in their routine tasks, automation also provides easy operations through database connectivity across geographies via the Internet (Narayana, 2019). Library operations and management have become highly productive in the computer age, and users are able to process large amounts of data easily. A touch of timelessness and access to materials through computers provide dynamism and impetus to the entire library network. As a result, automating library systems improves both work efficiency and the environment (Narayana, 2019). The present study aims to understand the status of automation in the public libraries of Rajkot city, Gujarat. It would provide baseline information on automation in public libraries that could be considered during development strategy planning and its impact on community users.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Public libraries are responsible for serving the public's information needs (Jibril, 2013). Unlike academic, school, private, and special libraries, public libraries offer a wider range of services to their patrons. Public libraries are funded by the government with tax-payers' money, and its services are provided free of charge, therefore they are referred to as the People's University (Hopper, 2013). Library automation has increased the number of patrons visiting the library, as well as allows remote access to information resources for those who are unable to visit physically (Ndum, Edem & Chinwe, 2012). Moreover, library automation facilitates access to essential databases that patrons need (Ajaykumar, 2013).

Globally many studies have been carried out to identify the impact of automation in public libraries as well as factors influencing its successful implementation. The use of ICTs in African public libraries has been examined by Chisenga (2004). According to him, outdated hardware and software, insufficient budgets, lack of precise policies, erratic power supplies, a lack of skilled personnel, and a negative attitude towards automation and technophobia were some of the challenges these libraries encountered. Similarly, in a study conducted by Olatju Abayomi (2017), public libraries in South West Nigeria were surveyed regarding automation. The results indicated that the acceptance and use of ICTs were determined by performance expectations, effort expectations, social influence, and facilitating conditions in public libraries. In addition, there were several challenges that hindered libraries from effectively using ICTs, including but not limited to unreliable power supply, inadequate ICT infrastructure, a lack of technical skills, a negative attitude toward automation, lack of senior management support, improper library software, and technophobia. In another study, it was revealed by Krubu and Osawaru (2010) that inadequate funding from the parent organization was the main factor hindering the effective use of information communication technology (ICT) in Nigerian libraries.

According to Omotosho and Okiki (2012), Nigeria, in particular, is overwhelmed by socioeconomic and political problems. This has led to the government abandoning the educational sector and especially the public libraries (Omotosho and Okiki, 2012). Public libraries are not performing to their fullest capacity because of this neglect (Omotosho and Okiki, 2012). Moreover, public libraries faced challenges related to lack of knowledge at the policy level, insufficient librarian training, insufficient funding, insufficient awareness, and insufficient information resources (Omotosho and Okiki, 2012). Additionally, Hopkinson (2009) asserts that erratic power supplies, expensive hardware, and lack of trained personnel are problems associated with library automation in developing countries.

In India, Thomas (2001) studied the use of IT in public libraries in India, he pointed out that the major problem encountered by the library was the updating of databases and the accuracy of entries. Aswal (2006) emphasizes the importance of Information and Communication Technology in the development of advanced network systems for resource sharing. According to Ingale (2014), ICT is crucial to automating library services such as acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and Serials Management. The contribution of the latest technologies, such as RFID, smart cards, etc., to the public library in Naka City was highlighted in Shuji (2007). The report also

emphasizes the importance of technical verifications and biometric technology as a step towards a card-less society.

A study by Gadwalwad (2015) discusses the history of library automation and public library development in India. It briefly discusses the need for library automation, the growth structure, pre- and post-implementation issues, and so on. Raval (2013) mainly discussed problems associated with pre- and post-automation processes and identified technological, economic, and behavioural problems as the three major problems faced during the Pre and Post Automation process. Lalnunpuia (2019) investigated the actual challenges and obstacles that the automation process faces in Mizoram's public libraries. According to Lalnunpuia (2019), lack of knowledge in IT, inadequate infrastructure, government negligence, poor awareness regarding the necessity, remoteness of geographical location, poor internet connectivity, insufficient funds, Unskilled incumbents in the library were the major barriers to public library automation in Mizoram. Maru (2019) reported the status of automation in the public libraries of Goa state. Maru (2019) argued that library professionals need to upgrade their skills to meet the growing expectations of library users in this era.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:

The study area was limited to public libraries in Rajkot, Gujarat.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the level of library automation in public libraries of Rajkot city
2. To find out type of software used for the automation in public libraries of Rajkot city
3. To study areas of automation covered in public libraries of Rajkot city
4. To collect the details of E - resources and to identify type of software used for it's management in public libraries of Rajkot city
5. To investigate the availability of ICT facilities in public libraries of Rajkot city

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In the present study, a total 8 public libraries of Rajkot city were surveyed. During the study questionnaire survey tool was used to accomplish the aim of the study. The questionnaire contains a variety of questions pertaining to library automation and its usage, e - resources as well as availability of ICT facilities. Out of 8 questionnaires distributed 8 valid questionnaires were collected and then data were analysed, tabulated and interpreted. Results are presented in the form of frequency as well as percentage.

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS:

In the present study, data were collected from 8 different public libraries in Rajkot city. Out of these 8 public libraries 3 libraries were run by trust and 4 libraries were run by a local self-government body and 1 library was a government public Library. During the study, it was found that 7 public libraries (87 %) out of 8 were automated (Fig. 1). Besides, 7 (86 %) public libraries were completely automated while in 1 public library (Government public library) most of the areas were automated (Fig.2). The survey found that only one automated library was using SOUL software, while other public libraries used different software's, including mostly RMC Library and LA.

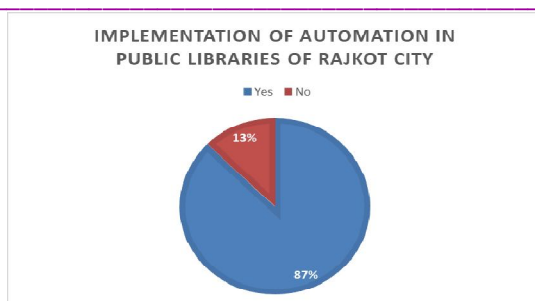


Fig. 1 Percentage of public libraries using automation

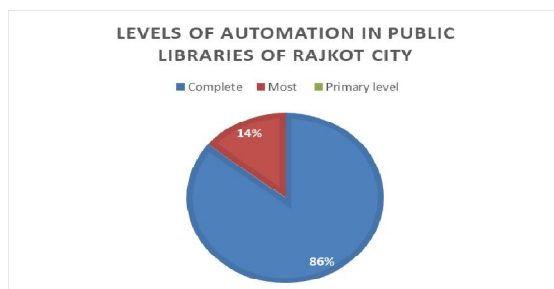


Fig. 2 Levels of automation in public libraries of Rajkot city

Areas of Automation in Public Libraries of Rajkot:

Table -1 Areas of automation in public libraries of Rajkot city					
Tasks performed through automation	Frequency	Percentage	Services provided through automation	Frequency	Percentage
Book Selection-Purchase	3	37.50%	Book Issue-Return	7	87.50%
Journal/Magazine Selection- Purchase	3	37.50%	Book Reservation	4	50.00%
Budgeting	0	0.00%	OPAC/Web OPAC	6	75.00%
Acquisition	5	62.50%	Reference Service	6	75.00%
Books data entry	7	87.50%	Inter library loan (ILL)	0	0.00%
Book cancellation	5	62.50%	Document Delivery Service (DDS)	3	37.50%
Book binding	4	50.00%	Communication Service (CAS)	3	37.50%
Book Bank	0	0.00%	Selective Information Service (SDI)	3	37.50%
Reporting	7	87.50%	E-books service	3	37.50%
other	0	0.00%	E-Journals Service	0	0.00%
			Others	0	0.00%

The present study reveals that out of total 7 automated public libraries, in 7 (20%) libraries reporting and books data entry, in 3 (9%) libraries book as well as Journals/magazine selection-purchase, in 5 (15%) libraries stock acquisition and book cancellation, in 4 (12%) libraries book binding process were done by automation software. While budgeting and book banks were not accomplished by automation in any of the surveyed libraries (Table - 1).

With reference to services offered by automation software in public libraries, in 7 (20%) libraries book issue - return, in 6 (17%) libraries OPAC/Web OPAC, in 6 (17%) libraries reference services, in 4 (11%) libraries book reservation, in 3 (8%) libraries document delivery services, in 3 (9%) libraries Communication Service (CAS), Selective Information Service (SDI), and e - books services were provided by automation. On the contrary, Inter Library loan (ILL) and e - journal services were not provided by automation in any of the surveyed public libraries. All the professionals of the surveyed public libraries believed that library management can be done easily through automation software (Table - 1).

E - Resources and software used for it's management

In the present study, out of 8 surveyed public libraries e-resources were maintained in 6 public libraries of Rajkot city. While E - resources were not found in 2 surveyed public libraries. Different types of E- resources were found in public libraries like in 6 (26 %) libraries educational CD/DVD, in 5 (22%) libraries databases and reports, 4 (17%) libraries E – books and in 1 (4%) library course materials were available. Public libraries were not using any software to maintain e-resources, according to the survey.



Fig. 3 Different types of E- resources available at public libraries of Rajkot city

Availability of ICT facilities in public libraries:

In the present study, different questions regarding ICT tools were posed to the public libraries during the survey to find out if they had access to ICT facilities, such as barcode technology, internet access, separate library websites, the use of social media to enhance library services, anti-virus software to protect library computer data, and provision of a budget for the use of ICT in libraries. During the survey, it was found that 7 (86 %) public libraries were using barcode technology for... Besides, seven public libraries (86%) had Internet access as well as separate websites. In the survey, it was observed that all the public libraries were using social media to enhance the library services and anti-virus software to protect library computer data. Furthermore, every year financial allocations were made for ICT in 7 out of 8 public libraries.

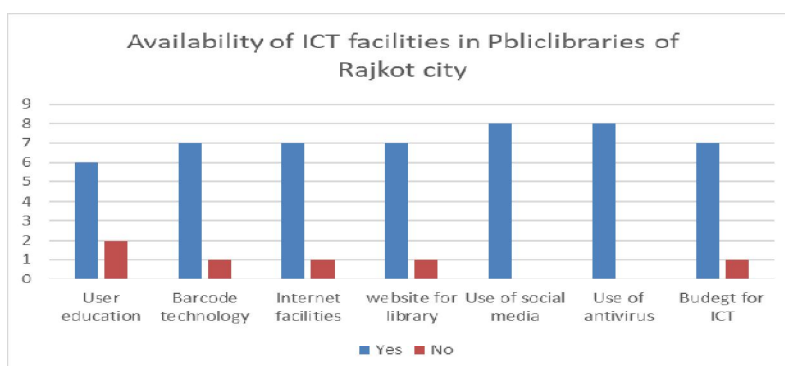


Fig. - 4 Availability of ICT facilities in public libraries of Rajkot city

In addition, "User education" is equally important for effective use of ICT tools in the libraries. In the present survey, user education was provided in six public libraries so that users could easily access information as per their need.

CONCLUSION:

Information and communication technology has become a vital tool for satisfying users' demands efficiently and conveniently. It is evident from the present that the public library system has become increasingly automated. However, it was observed that very limited areas were covered under automation in public libraries of Rajkot city. In order to optimize performance, other areas such as book banks, budgeting, and interlibrary loan (ILL) and electronic journals should also be automated. Moreover, it is imperative that public libraries are updated with the current e-resources and its management.

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