# Importance of Library Management Software Packages Selection in Academic Library

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**Abstract** - This research paper has been revealed an importance of library management software package's selection. Software is a key ingredient to the emerging information societies. Software package selection has most important role in the computerization of library. Software is the necessary prerequisite of computing. It is the systematized representation of our knowledge, to know about our problems and how to solve them. It makes possible to exploit and multiply this knowledge and to know by means of computer and communication technology. To select the wrong program from the wide range, now available for all aspects of information management, will only cause frustration and disappointment on the part of both staff and user. The development of integrated library specific software provide in modules is much more significant. Hence before selecting the software for library, one must evaluate the nature of library services, and collection. A lot of software packages are available in world market and have some unique features.

Keywords: *Library Management, Choosing and Criteria, Software Package's Selection, Computerization.*

## I.        Introduction

Libraries are known as the backbone of any institution or an organization to which they are connected. They are expected to make available appropriate information to its users in time. Now a day's, information & communication technology has an impact on all the functions of human life. Information & Communication Technology (ICT) is now becoming more essential in every type of libraries. The role of library professionals has been around the understanding and use of technological resources to meet to the increasing information dependence of the society.

Software plays the most important role in the computerization of library. Software is the necessary prerequisite of computing. It is the systematized representation of our knowledge, know-how about our problems and how to solve them. It makes it possible to exploit and multiply this knowledge and know-how by means of computer and communication technology. This is also the prime objective of a library i.e. "Right information to right user at right time" and if we analyze the definition of computer "A device which stores data, process it and retrieve information as and when required" we find great resemblance with the age-old function library i.e. "Acquisition, Processing and Retrieval of Documents".

## II.    Library Software

The computer hardware cannot function without the support of software. Many software are available in the market. In library applications three levels of software are needed.

1. Operating System Software- MS DOS, UNIX, NOVEL, WINDOWS, 8X.

2. Library Application Software- CDS/ISIS, Libsys, Slim, Libri, Librarian, Granthalaya, Aslis, Basis plus, Oasis/Alice, Telelip, SOUL etc.

3. Word Processing- WordStar, Word Perfect, MS-Office- 97, 2000,2003, 2007, 2010 etc.

4. Networking and Communication Software- PROCOMM, NFTSCAPE, INTERNET, EXPLORER or any Web Browser.

Before discussing about the process of software selection it is important to remind the process of library computerization. The complete process of library computerization may be divided in following steps:

1. Software Selection

2. Hardware Selection

3. Site Preparation

4. Demonstration and General Training

5. Feedback, Customization and Object Oriented Training

6. Procedures for Bibliographical Data Entry

7. Commissioning

**Software Packages for Libraries are Available in Indian Market:**

Following few standard integrating packages has been developed for the Indian library applications.

| S. N. | Software packages | Developing Agency |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | CDS/ISIS | UNESCO |
| 2 | Defence Library Management System | DESIDOC, New Delhi |
|  | Defence Library Management System | DESIDOC, New Delhi |
| 3 | Easylibsoft | Easylib Library Automation Services, Bangalore |
| 4 | Granthalaya | INSDOC, New Delhi |
| 5 | Koha |  |
| 6 | Librarian | Soft-Aid, Pune |
| 7 | Library Management | Raychan Sysmatice, Bangalore |
| 8 | Library Manager | System Data Control Pvt. Ltd. Mumbai. |
| 9 | Libsys, Micro-Libsys | Libsys Corp. New Delhi. |
| 10 | MECSYS | MECON, Ranchi. |
| 11 | Sanjay | DESIDOC, Delhi |
| 12 | SOUL | INFLIBNET, Ahmedabad. |
| 13 | Wilisys | Wipro India, Bangalore |

**Application Software in Principal Sources:**

A librarian can obtain application software mainly from the three following principal sources:

1. Bought off-the-shelf (and used with or without modification),

2. Commissioned from a software house,

3. Written in-house, either by a member of staff or by available computer staff. Generally speaking, the last two options are not recommended for librarian

Seeking to implement routines on a microcomputer, although they have been used by some librarians; Off-the-shelf software, on the other hand, is readily available for all library routines, and it can be and running very quickly. The business software will not, of course, be tailor-made (unlike the library-specific software), but the range of software now available is such that it should be possible to find a very close match to requirements.

**Choosing Software:**

The new user of a software packages often experiences difficulty in drafting an appropriate specification of the features that might be useful in software package, and thus experiences difficulty in developing the crucial systems requirements specification. This specification must be unique to each application. But often a general checklist of the functions that are normally available in a specific kind of software package forms a useful basis from which the new user can develop their own specification. Such checklists can be further developed by examining the features of the systems in the marketplace. This needs to be regularly updated to accommodate new developments.

**Criteria for Choosing Application Software:**

The following key factors are considered when examining software, and choosing one application package in preference to another. It is important to apply these criteria in such a way that they are used to identify a match between what the package offers and the requirements of the system. Clearly there are additional specific factors that must be considered when choosing any specific kind of package, such as a library management system or a document management system, which are determined by the functions that the system needs to fulfill.

**General Criteria for Software Selection:**

If we look over the steps of computerization and definition of software, we find that it is the most important and basic step where our professional knowledge and experiences are required. Other steps like hardware selection and site preparation are concerned with the knowledge of computers and related technologies. The demonstration, feedback and procedure formulation depends on the knowledge of selected application software. The software selection for a library should be considered as selection of new classification code of cataloguing rules, so utmost care should be taken to select appropriate library software. In following section some major points to be considered for library software selection are discussed. Usually the application software programs are developed by the computer professionals and marketed as other marketable articles, which certainly have some limitations.

**Library Software Selection Steps:**

The complete process of library software selection may be fragmented in following steps:

1. Background Study of System Analysis

2. What is to be computerized?

3. Defining Guide lines for Software Selection

4. Collection of Information

5. Evaluation and Comparison

6. Demonstration and Feedback

7. Customizations

7. Final Selection

**1. Background Study of System Analysis:**

First of all it is needed to analyze the procedures followed in different sections and identify limitations, collected and analyzed to have a better idea about present library system and also to define and justify the need of computerization.

1. Nature and objective of library.

2. Total number of collection.

3. Special collection and its nature and usefulness.

4. Pre year acquisition and procedures followed for acquisition.

5. Per year subscription of serials.

6. Classification code and cataloguing rules followed.

7. Documentation services: CDS, SDI, Indexing and Abstracting Service etc.

8. Future prospects concerning the networking of library with national and international library networks.

9. Man power available: Number of professionals having exposure to computers.

**2. What is to be computerized?**

On the basis of background study and analysis it is necessary to sort out the functions and activities of library which are to be computerized aims and objectives, function selected for implementation depending on the need of the library.

1. Only Information Storage and Retrieval Systems:- Bibliographical Data Entry, Technical / Cataloguing System.

2. All Housekeeping Operation:- Acquisition, Cataloguing, Serial Control, Circulation, and Documentation Services. With MIS (Management Information System), Networking Facilities, Barcode Facility, Bibliographical Records in other Roman Script and Web OPAC.

### 3. Defining Guide lines for Software Selection:

Before going to search for appropriate library software, the clear vision of library's aims, objectives and requirement is necessary. The basic works/ requirements of Acquisition, Cataloguing, Serial Control and Circulation Sections of a library are as follows.

### 1. Acquisition Section:-

The acquisition module of the library software package should be able to perform following operations.

1. Pre-order Searching/ Duplicate Search

2. Print Purchase, Reminder letters cancellation and Subject-wise list of orders

3. Fund account reports

4. Accessioning

5. Notification of users etc.

### 2. Cataloguing:

The cataloguing module of the library software package should be able to perform following operations.

1. Preparing local Catalogues

2. Classification of Documents

3. Verification of Records

4. Generation of Added Entries, Indexes and Cross –References

5. Printing Catalogue Cards and Generating Catalogue on Electronic Storage Media Viz. Magnetic Tape, Floppies, CD-ROMs, Pen drive, etc.

6. Contribute to Bibliographic Control.

### 3. Serial Control:

The serial control module of the library software should have following facilities:

1. Subscription/ Ordering on new Journals.

2. Sending Reminders.

3. Receiving the New Journals.

4. Preparation of List of Periodicals Received and Cancelled.

5. Preparation of list of holdings with their status (i.e.on shelf, in binding, in circulation etc.)

6. Estimation of the budget for the next year.

7. Announcement of the missing serials for re-ordering the same.

8. Documentation services as SDI and CAS.

## 4. Circulation:

In addition to the Issue, Return the circulation module of the library software package should have options to perform the following functions:

1. Provide information about the location of the Item (at the Bindery, on reserve, Being Re-catalogued etc.).

2. Give details of items on loan to a borrower to whom it was issued.

3. Record of Reserve, alerting the library staff on return of a reserved item by a borrower and print a book available notice.

4. Renewal of Loan.

5. Alerting library staff about over-due items and printing of overdue notice.

6. Calculation of Fines, Printing of fine notice, recording receipt of fines and even printing of fine receipts.

7. Calculation and Printing of Various Statistical reports.

8. Provision for handling special categories of borrowers and special types of materials.

9. Option to handle Inter-Library Loans Services etc.

In addition to above section vise requirements following points should also be added in the guidelines.

1. Reports Generation and MIS.

2. Hospitable for Local Variations.

3. Security.

4. Display and Card Printing Facility in Desired Format.

5. Web OPAC.

6. Data conversion facility in CCF, MARC and ISO 2709 Formats.

7. Adaptability for Bar Code Facility.

8. Option to enter bibliographic data in other than roman script. etc.

## 5. Collection of Information:

On the basis of pre-defined needs and guidelines inquiry letters and call of quotations should be sending to different library software developers/ vendors. This letter should contain the proposed level of computerization and nature of the library. In addition to it following queries should also mentioned in the letter to get the information regarding the system requirement and to clear the terms and conditions.

1. Hardware and Operating System Required.

2. Limitations for Number of Bibliographic Records Entry etc.

3. Data Base Managements System (DBMS).

4. Programming Techniques used.

5. After sales service, number of service points and their location, guarantee/ warrantee, terms and conditions for AMC (Annual Maintenance Contract).

6. Frequency of Revisions and terms to get them.

7. Conditions of Transfer of source code and cost. etc.

## 6. Evaluation and Comparison:

Evaluation and comparison of all collected information about library software package should be done in the light of their usefulness in the library. Each software packages should be evaluated in the light of defined guidelines of requirement, feedback of present user, system requirement and cost. It is necessary to short-list the only relevant software packages from the long list. A detailed comparative chart of short-listed software packages should be prepared and developers / vendors may further asked to response regarding special requirements.

## 7. Demonstration and Feedback:

After detailed comparison and evaluation, short-listed software's vendors asked to organize the onsite demonstration. If it is not possible then two of three responsible employees- who are engaged in the process since beginning-should sent to attend the offsite users and should used to evaluate the software package as per library's requirement.

## 8. Customization:

The feedback of employees attended and evaluated the demonstration should be compared in the light of not-negotiable requirements and specialties/local variations and if there is any modifications is /are required is must be communicated to the vendor before final selection. The terms and cost of modifications/ customization should also get cleared at this event. After any such customization the effect of that on other applications/ modules should be verified and tested.

## 9. Final Selection:

The cost and time required by different vendors for customizations should be evaluated and compared again in the light of defined guidelines, opinion of present users, hardware and system requirement and total cost of the software packages (including additional charges for customization). The most appropriate one should be finally selected and purchase order should be dent to deliver, install and demonstrate the software. It is necessary to have minimum hardware, required to install

and demonstrate the software in the library, so the procurement of the required hardware (if not available) should be done before delivery of the selected software package.

## III.    Conclusion

The complete process of library software package selection is quiet complex and time consuming. In addition to the thorough knowledge of present library system and trends, it also require the knowledge of available software packages, basics of computers and business tricks to deal with hardware and software vendors. Here it is worth noticeable that many of the usually complaint that library software packages are programmed by non-library professionals so it is not possible to get the desired software in the market. I feel it is due to carelessness and compromise of librarians, because the market to any commodity developed and refined as per the need of customers and in this era of consumerism it is responsibility of customers to be aware. The question may arise that if such a huge home-work is required by librarians to select library software package, why they should not refer to get an in-house developed library software package. Here we have to keep in mind the cost and unavailability of competent programmers/software developers. It must be more time and cost consuming and will not be tested, so it is better to go for a tested software package developed by reputed agency rather than experimenting to develop in house software package.

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