A Survey of Library Automation in Educational Libraries in Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT:

With the advancement of information and communication technology, there has been an immense growth in literature. This has led to an information explosion, leading to an increased amount of reading material. The increase in the number of users and the demand for better library services have made the libraries use technological convergence. The advent of computers allowed libraries to manage and provide access to their collections quickly. Computers in libraries are also used for the storage of information as well as for accessing and retrieving bibliographic information. Libraries are expected to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to provide information more expeditiously and exhaustively than before. Computerization of library "housekeeping" operations is an important activity in this context. "Automation," when used in a library or similar environment, refers to the computerization or mechanization of activities

Keywords: Library Automation, Housekeeping, Information communication and Technology (ICT), Educational Libraries

INTRODUCTION:

The library automation is planned for automated acquisition, technical processing, circulation, cataloguing, serial control and online public access catalogue. Library automation involves automation of routine works, services, office work and scientific management of libraries. Computers are used in libraries to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their operation and services; they have also provided information management for taking effective decisions. Development and use of information and communication technology (ICT) enable the libraries not only to offer their clientele the appropriate information available within their libraries but also gain access to catalogues of other libraries, both local and outstations (Anil Singh, 2003). Library automation in India started in the late 1970s in few specialized libraries has now reached most of the academic libraries.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Sadanand Y. Bansode and Shamin Periera (2008) did a Survey of library Automation in College Libraries in Goa State, india- A Journal of Library Philosophy and Practice. The status of automation in the colleges of Goa is similar to that of college libraries throughout India. Libraries, librarians, and college adminstrations must initiate automation in order to provide effective and efficient services to users. Library professionals must upgrade their skills in order to meet the growing expectations of users from libraries.

Adin, Bankarpur, and Kumbar (2024) conducted a study on Information Seeking Behaviour of Public Library Users in Belagavi District. The main objective of the study is to define the information required from respondents at all stages to determine their purpose in visiting a public library and their opinions on library resources and services. A questionnaire was used to collect user data. A total of one hundred fifty questionnaires were administered on the respondents. One hundred twenty-six copies were collected for analysis. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. The studies revealed that the majority of respondents were male candidates, 42% were undergraduates, most persons regularly used comparative examination materials to search for jobs, and 90% of the users were 20 to 30 years. Forty percent of respondents were highly satisfied with the availability of library resources.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out how many libraries have undertaken automation.
2. To find out which areas are automated.
3. To find out whether sufficient staff is available to carry out automation.
4. To find out the barriers to automation faced by libraries.
5. To find out reasons behind not automating library housekeeping operations.
6. To suggest appropriate measures to be taken to enhance the use of software for improving library services**.**

METHODOLOGY:

The survey is based on interviews, Google Sheet questionnaire, and personal visits. The opinions of librarians regarding library software were acquired using a structured questionnaire. The interview was carried out on the basis of the questionnaire. Opinions on different issues pertaining to the library housekeeping operations among the respondent librarians were sought. The questionnaires were mailed to college libraries, Shared in Google Form in available Library Professional Whatsaap Groups in the state, of which 122 were received duly filled with all the relevant information requested in the questionnaire. However, geographically the scope of the study was limited to located in the state of Andhrapradesh only.

IMPORTANCE OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

Library automation refers to the integration of technology in library operations, making processes such as cataloging, circulation, and information retrieval more efficient. Automation enhances user experience, improves resource management, and facilitates access to digital content. For college libraries, which serve as vital educational resources, automation can lead to significant improvements in service delivery and operational efficiency.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA:

Data analysis is a crucial process to understand and apply data effectively. Its importance spans many fields and activities. Hence, data analysis is required.
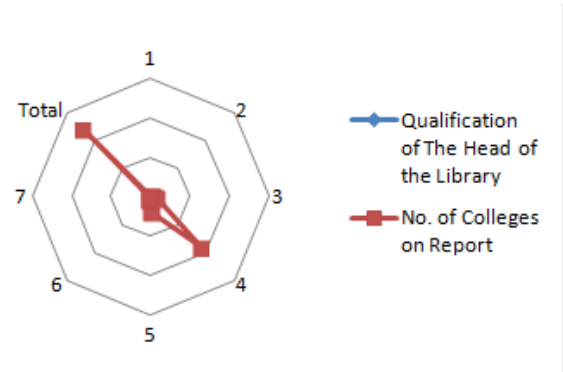
1.1. Designation of the Librarians:

96 of the Libraries are headed by a Librarian, while the remaining 26 are ether headed by Assistant Librarians or Non Professionals. This generally owes the post of Librarians remaining unfilled by Colle-
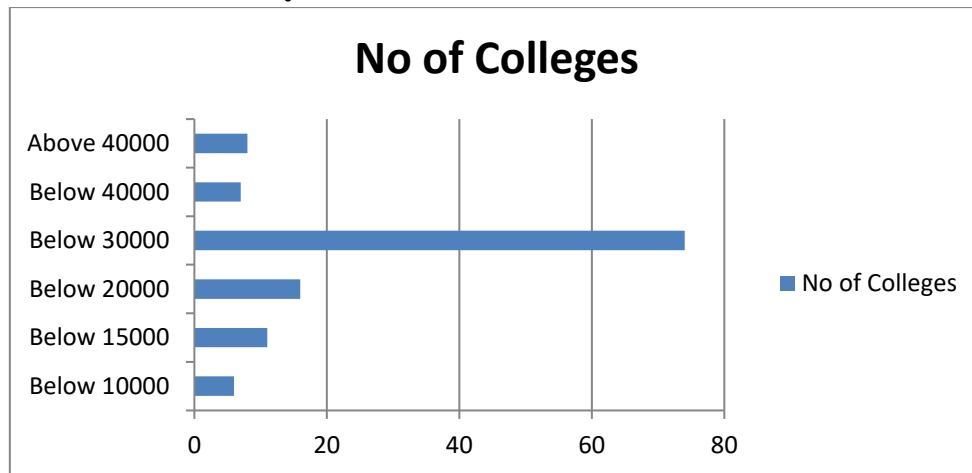
ge Administration.

1.2. Qualification of the Librarian:

S.No	Qualification of The Head of the Library	No. of Colleges on Report
1	Ph.D	2
2	M.Phil	2
3	NET/SET	6
4	MLISc	89
5	BLISc	18
6	CLISc	3
7	Others	2
	Total	122

1.3. Total Collection of the Library Books:

1.4. Status of Library Automation:

The data shows that 94 libraries are automated. The 28 other libraries carry out their library operations manually and provide services to their users in a traditional way.

1.5. Software used for Automation:

Many college libraries in Andhra Pradesh employ SOUL, KOHA, and NEWGENLIB as their library management software systems. These systems facilitate comprehensive automation functions and are considered to be cost-efficient.

1.6. Areas for Automation:

The primary objective of the college libraries is to finalize the retrospective conversion of computerized circulation systems. A total of 76 college libraries have successfully automated their cataloguing and circulation processes. Among the various housekeeping operations, acquisitions remains the least automated, likely due to the complexity of the software's acquisitions module.

1.7. Outsourcing:

None of the libraries examined are delegating their automation tasks to external agencies. They are striving to accomplish automation efforts using the resources currently available within the library. Budget constraints may be a contributing factor to the decision of libraries not to outsource tasks such as data entry, barcode label generation, and hardware maintenance.

1.8. Staffing:

Adequate staffing is crucial. The necessary staff count is determined by the volume of documents within the library and the number of patrons utilizing its services. The table below presents the perspectives of librarians from libraries that have implemented automation regarding the adequacy of their staffing levels.

1.9. Unemployment in LIS:

Unemployment among Library and Information Science graduates in Andhra Pradesh is a multifaceted issue that requires a concerted effort from educational institutions, government bodies, and the LIS community. By addressing the skills gap, enhancing professional development, and promoting awareness of diverse career opportunities, stakeholders can work together to improve employment outcomes for LIS graduates. The future of LIS in Andhra Pradesh holds potential, but proactive measures are essential to ensure that graduates can find meaningful and rewarding careers in this vital field.

1.10.   Expert Personnel and Development Programs:

   The following table shows the number of libraries which have recruited specialized ICT staff.

Specialized Staff	No Specialized Staff
6	88

Among the 94 libraries that have implemented automation, only 6 employ specialized personnel in information and communication technology (ICT). The other 88 libraries rely on experts from within their institution or external sources. Furthermore, a significant number of the libraries surveyed do not provide their staff with opportunities to attend ICT training programs.
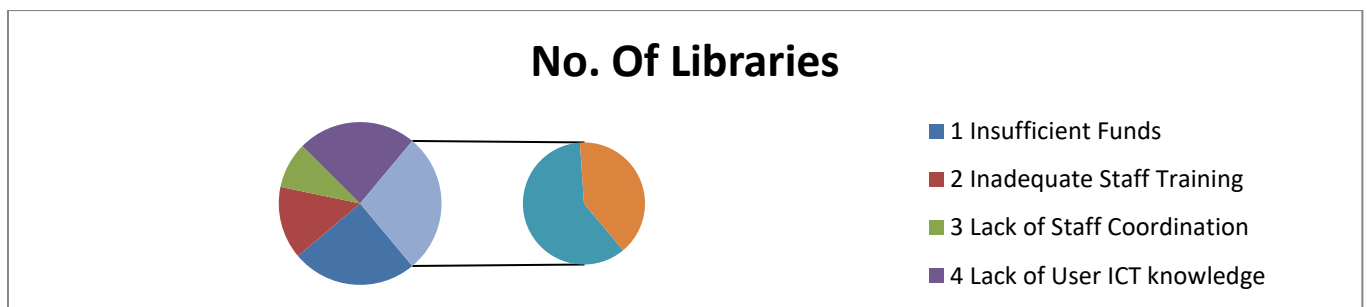
1.11.   Internet Services:

Libraries in Andhra Pradesh are vital institutions that provide a wide array of services, fostering education, research, and community engagement. As they continue to evolve with technological advancements and community needs, libraries play an essential role in promoting literacy, access to information, and lifelong learning. Ongoing support from government and community stakeholders will be crucial in enhancing library services and ensuring they remain relevant and accessible to all.

Only 42 libraries have a LAN in the library to provide automated services in the library, and the services provided by these libraries are tabulated in the following table.

1.12.   Barriers Faced by the Library:

Traditional barriers like insufficient funds, lack of space, and lack of training are the problems faced by many libraries.

No. Of Libraries
- 1 Insufficient Funds
- 2 Inadequate Staff Training
- 3 Lack of Staff Coordination
- 4 Lack of User ICT knowledge

CURRENT STATUS OF LIBRARY AUTOMATION IN ANDHRAPRADESH:

Adoption Rates:

A survey conducted among various college libraries in Andhra Pradesh reveals a mixed adoption of library automation. While a substantial number of libraries have implemented automated systems, many still rely on traditional methods. According to the survey:

- Approximately 60% of the college libraries reported having some level of automation.
- Among these, only about 30% have fully automated systems with integrated library management software (ILMS).
- The remaining libraries utilize partial automation, primarily in cataloging and circulation.

Software Utilization:

The survey identified several software solutions being used by college libraries, including:

- **KOHA**: An open-source integrated library system that is popular among many institutions due to its cost-effectiveness and flexibility.
- **SOUL**: A software developed by the Informatics India Ltd., commonly used for library management.
- **LibraryWorld**: A cloud-based service that provides comprehensive library automation features.

Digital Libraries and Resources

The integration of digital libraries is a key component of automation. Many college libraries in Andhra Pradesh have started digitizing their collections and providing access to e-resources. The survey indicated that:

- About 40% of libraries offer digital resources, including e-books, e-journals, and databases.
- Collaboration with organizations like the National Digital Library of India has facilitated access to a broader range of digital content.

CHALLENGES IN LIBRARY AUTOMATION:

Despite the advancements, several challenges hinder the full realization of library automation in college libraries in Andhra Pradesh:

- **Financial Constraints:**Many institutions face budgetary limitations that restrict their ability to invest in advanced library automation technologies. The initial costs of software, hardware, and training are significant barriers for smaller colleges.
- **Lack of Technical Expertise:**The successful implementation of automated systems requires trained personnel. A shortage of skilled staff in library automation and digital resource management has been a persistent issue. Ongoing training and development programs are essential to address this gap.
- **Resistance to Change:**In some cases, there is resistance among library staff and users to transition from traditional practices to automated systems. This resistance can stem from a lack of familiarity with technology or fear of job displacement.
- **Future Prospects:**The future of library automation in Andhra Pradesh looks promising, driven by various initiatives aimed at improving educational resources:
- **Government Support**: Initiatives from the government to enhance digital infrastructure and promote e-learning are likely to encourage further automation in libraries.
- **Collaborative Efforts**: Partnerships among colleges, universities, and technology providers can facilitate knowledge sharing and resource pooling, making automation more accessible.

- **Emphasis on User-Centric Services**: Libraries are increasingly focusing on user needs, which may drive the development of more intuitive automated systems and digital interfaces.

1.13. Suggestions:

- Colleges without qualified librarians should recruit them.
- Few college libraries are fully automated. The libraries in which automation has been initiated should try to become fully automated and the libraries in which automation is yet to start begin as soon as possible.
- Retrospective conversion of the documents and well as the other jobs related to automation may be outsourced to complete the automation of the library.
- Parent institutions should provide sufficient funds as per the norms given by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan (1965) or by Kothari commission (Gupta, 1992).
- Staff of the library should be sent to training courses to upgrade their IT Skills.

CONCLUSION:

Library automation in college libraries in Andhra Pradesh is at a pivotal stage, with significant progress being made alongside ongoing challenges. As technology continues to evolve, the need for automated systems will only increase, enabling libraries to serve as dynamic hubs of learning and information. By addressing the challenges and leveraging available resources, college libraries in Andhra Pradesh can enhance their services and better support the educational aspirations of students in the region. The status of automation in the colleges of Andhrapradesh is similar to that of college libraries throughout India. Libraries, librarians, and college administrations must initiate automation in order to provide effective and efficient services to users. Library professionals must upgrade their skills in order to meet the growing expectations of users from libraries.

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