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Library Automation of Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT: Library automation stresses the application of Information and Communication Technology to library operations and services. The functions that may automate are cataloging, online public access catalog, circulation, and report generation. The study aimed to assess the library services of academic libraries using automation. This study sought to find out the status of the library automation; the different functions of the systems; and the problems encountered by the academic libraries. The study employed the descriptive survey method that involves the collection of detailed and factual information for catalogers and library clientele, with a researcher made survey questionnaires. Data were validated through the answers of the respondents and the available library records. The results showed that OPAC, Circulation, Cataloging, and Statistical reports are well functioning. In the same manner OPAC considered as the library directory. However, the Circulation maintained the smooth borrowing, and returning of resources. The Cataloging helped the catalogers processed and classified books and other library resources. Moreover, the Statistical records provided the detailed data on the utilization of the library. On the other hand, the study revealed the problems encountered by the academic libraries namely: automation is electricity dependent; regular training for the technical services librarian and staff; constant upgrading of the system; maintenance for the technical support. These contribute to the fast, effective, efficient, and adequate implementation of plans and programs, operations and services of the academic libraries.

KEYWORDS: Library and Information Science, library automation, academic libraries, Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), circulation, cataloging, statistical report, and descriptive design

INTRODUCTION

Library automation stresses the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) to library operations and services. The functions that may automate are cataloging, online public access catalog (OPAC), circulation, and report generation (UNESCO, 2011). Many libraries are in the development of rethinking the success of the automation tools they are using to provide library services, both within and outside of the library buildings. Internally, the core competent motivating many of library services has been the integrated library system (ILS), this is known as library services platforms (NISO, 2012). In the world, the library is updated of the latest technology as to the resources, facilities, and equipment. Automation is the term commonly used in the library nowadays (Breeding, 2009). Moreover, Swan (2006) illustrated that there are several open sources available in the Internet that one can use for the in-house Integrated Library System (ILS) or there are also several commercialized databases available in the market. An integrated library system highlights that there is no duplication of records since the bibliographic database can be viewed before new records are encoded. Chances of errors are reduced since the record is entered only once. It enhanced the competence in providing excellent service to the users by minimizing their time and effort in locating information in the library. Library automation lessens the possibility of errors in the operation especially in the circulation of library resources (David, 2009). According to Ratha (2012) automation helps in improving access and retrieval of resources in the library. It facilitates wider dissemination of information sources and services. It also increases in providing quality and fast delivery of services to users. It improves the management of library physical facilities and utilization of resources. It creates resource sharing and open partnership with other libraries in allowing off-campus researchers to use the library facilities and resources provided that he or she paid the research fee. Moreover, she gives emphasis to library automation that the process is time consuming, continuous training of library staff and personnel is needed, electricity dependent, the maintenance is very costly for constant upgrading of the system and appropriate technical support, and it needs a very expensive investment for financial resources. Consequently, Bilal (2002) presented that library automation is an enterprise resource planning system for the library. It is a system used for processing and performing the technological activities and services of the library. These activities are acquisition, cataloging and classification, circulation, statistical records and reports, etc. The system is used for easy access and retrieval of information in the library. However, Rao and Choudhury (2009) provided the easiest and fastest way in providing quality services to the clientele or library users. In the world of technology, automation is the competitive way of enhancing technological advancement for the convenient and more efficient.

Generally, there are two diverse interfaces to explore the access and retrieval of the electronic catalog: one used by the catalogers that allows them to maintain the library organization and management resources, and one provided for users that allows them to search and display the results in the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). It emphasized that OPAC and circulation are considered as the frontline services of the Integrated Library System (ILS) which is commonly known as library automation (UNESCO, 2011).Moreover, breeding (2006) revealed that library automation and technological trends and challenges have evolved at a leisurely pace. Currently, library users are techno-savvy and have high expectations for knowledge and information provider in the 21st century. The 21st century knowledge manager is creating toward a new phase of innovation. On the other hand, Breeding (2008) presented that academic libraries shift toward collections of frequently advanced capacity of digital content, and automation systems must similarly take a new design. A new generation of interfaces has

begun to emerge into a modern face for the library resources are available in the databases. With the advent of technology, Philippine libraries look forward to computerization as a major goal of academic libraries in the 21st century. Manjunath (2011) revealed that libraries have capability to effect a dramatic transition from traditional to digital will depend to a great extent on the internal and external environment – institutional support, political stability, economic growth, social and cultural transformation, and regional cooperation. Shaping the innovative library platforms using new capabilities to influence the librarianship professions in positive way. The librarians need to focus the values of librarianship have to be embedded in the product. Defining the future possibilities of participation and collaboration with other academic libraries and creates innovative partnership and linkages. The implementation of library automation is valuing the 21st century services. Library services provide knowledge creation and knowledge discovery platforms (NISO, 2012). On the other hand, Castek (2011) emphasized that library automation helps the librarians and the clienteles in providing fast delivery of services. Through library automation, librarian provides easy access and retrieval of information sources and services in the library and creates innovations in providing quality and better services to the clienteles in the 21st century. In the same manner, Laceda (2002) revealed that library automation caters to the need and demand of the clientele in the fastest way by providing all the available library resources in the library, the complete bibliographic information of the book, automated borrowing and returning of library materials. Using the validated school IDs of the clientele, the circulation in-charge will identify if the clientele has an overdue books or if he/she is still allowed to borrow books. Moreover, statistical reports and records – at the end of the semester – records showed as to how many students borrowed from what college and what specific type of references they borrowed.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Status

Functions

Library Automation of Academic Libraries

Problems
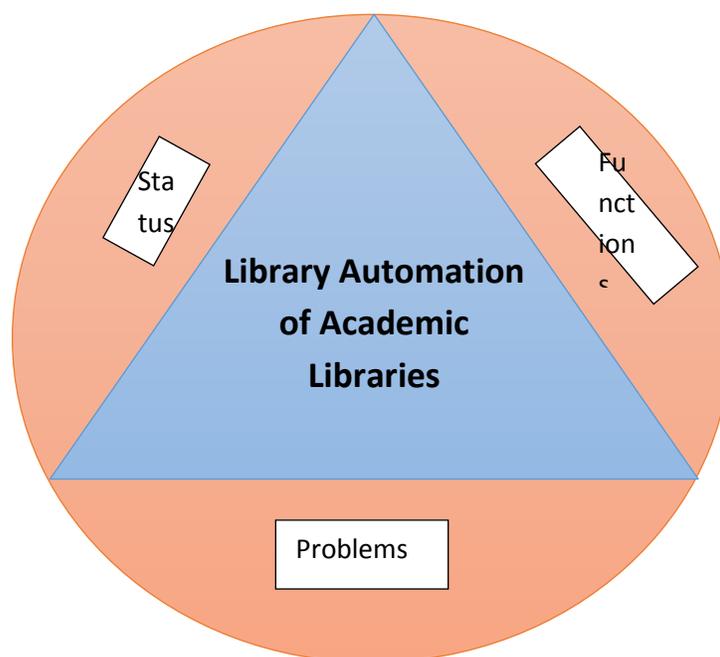
The library automation of academic libraries engaged the computerization of all aspects of the library's internal operations and to provide fast services to library users. Library automation is composed of "open source" and "commercialized" systems. Open source integrated library system of automation is a free software developed by an information and communication technology (ICT) experts. The software is intended for libraries with small collection. However, the commercialized library system is available in the market and intended for large number of collection. In this study, the library automation of academic libraries regardless of open source or commercialized system is evaluated in terms of the status, functions, and the problems encountered.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to evaluate the library automation of selected academic libraries in Cebu City, Philippines. Specifically, it assessed the status of the library automation; identified the different functions of the systems; and the problems encountered by the academic libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the descriptive survey method of research which involves the collection of detailed and factual information for technical services librarians and staff of academic libraries. Information was gathered and retrieved through survey questionnaires, interviews, and consulting available library records like utilization statistics of library resources to validate the results. There were 20 respondents (technical services librarian) from selected academic libraries in Cebu City, Philippines. They were chosen purposively their expertise to conduct the assessment. Academic libraries are those libraries which use an Integrated Library System (library automation) in providing library services like borrowing and returning of books and other library materials, locating books in the shelves using OPAC among others. The researcher asked permission by sending formal letters to the Head Librarian to conduct and administer the survey questionnaires of which results in each category, namely: a) status of library automation in terms of OPAC, circulation, cataloging, and statistical report; b) different functions of the systems in terms of OPAC, circulation, cataloging, and statistical report; and c) the problems encountered by the academic libraries are personally retrieved, tallied, analyzed and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the status of the academic libraries, the study revealed thatOPAC allows the clientele for basic search by keyword, title, author, and subject; and for advanced search by Boolean operators. OPAC focused on the complete bibliographic information of all the resources and other materials in the library. It considered the library directory. It also guides the clientele to the exact location of the books. Moreover, Circulation showed the updates on students who have unreturned and overdue books. Circulation records revealed the number of copies available in the library. It also showed the updates on books that have been borrowed and or available in the shelves. Furthermore, Cataloging helps the technical services librarian to find out if the books are existing in the records or not. It helps the technical services librarian in assigning call numbers, subject headings, and authority file of the personal and corporate authors. It also

helps the catalogers in processing and classifying books and other library resources. However, Statistical records or reports of the library showed as to what type of resources, and what specific sections of collection had been borrowed every day. It showed the number of students served every day, in a week, in a month, and in a semester. It also showed as to what college got the highest number of researchers or clientele in a semester. This is supported by Bilal (2002) that library automation is used for processing and performing the technological activities and services of the library like acquisition, cataloging and classification, circulation, statistical records and reports. Moreover, library automation is used for easy access and retrieval of information in the library. As regards, the different functions of the systems, the study found out that OPAC serves as the library directory (directory of all the library books and other resources).On the other hand, circulation facilitates the electronic borrowing and returning of books and other library resources. However, the cataloging system processes and assigns the call numbers of the books and other library resources in the fastest way in using the online copy cataloging and original cataloging. Furthermore, the statistical record provides the detailed and summarized records on the utilization of books and other library resources. This is affirmed by Castek (2011) that library automation facilitated and assisted the librarians and the clienteles in providing fast services. Through library automation, librarian provides easy access and retrieval of information sources in the library and creates innovations in providing quality and better services to the clienteles in the 21st century.

Consequently, the problems encountered by the academic libraries are ranked from highest to lowest: automation is electricity dependent; regular training for the technical services librarian and staff; constant upgrading of the integrated library system; proper maintenance of the technical support; and acquisition of quality automation is very expensive. It was confirmed by Ratha (2012) that library automation needs continuous training of library staff and personnel, electricity dependent, the maintenance is very costly for constant upgrading the system and appropriate technical support, and it needs a very expensive investment for financial resources.

CONCLUSION

The library automation comprised the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in academic libraries to automate its operation. Academic libraries respond to the needs and demands of the clientele by providing automation. The administrators illustrated their interest and support to the library plans and programs by providing financial assistance, and the library personnel proved their initiatives in the promotion and implementation of the automated system. Automation is important for the 21st century knowledge management to provide innovative, creative and collaborative learning experience to the modern library users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, the researcher recommended the provision of the policies and guidelines of the library automation should be done to achieve quality and better library services; library automation should be enhanced and user-friendly; technical services librarian's trainings and hands-on programs in the technical procedures of the systems; and another research study on library automation and library management system.

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