AUTOMATED LIBRARY SERVICES PROVIDED BY COLLEGE LIBRARIES IN THE WESTERN REGION OF MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract :

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed the functioning of academic libraries. Library automation has become an essential criterion for providing efficient, accurate, and user-centric services. The present study aims to investigate the status of automated library services provided by college libraries in the Western Region of Maharashtra, which includes districts such as Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, and Solapur. The study was conducted using a survey method. A structured questionnaire was distributed to college librarians, and a total of 109 valid responses were received for the analysis of automated services. The data was analyzed using simple percentage method and presented through bar graphs. The study concludes that while basic automation has been achieved, there is a need to strengthen advanced automated services. The paper suggests that proper financial support, trained manpower, and INFLIBNET training are required to bridge the gap between urban and rural college libraries.]

Keyword : Library Automation, Automated Services, College Libraries, Western Maharashtra, ICT, OPAC, Circulation Service.

Introduction :

The library has always been considered the heart of any academic institution. It is a center for learning, research, and dissemination of knowledge. In the traditional system, library services were largely manual, labor-intensive, and time-consuming. The processes of acquisition, cataloging, circulation, and reference services were carried out manually, which often led to delays, duplication of work, and inefficient use of resources. However, with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the entire scenario of library and information services has undergone a paradigm shift. Automation has become not just an option but a necessity for college libraries to survive and to provide efficient and effective services to its users.

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In India, the university grants commission (UGC) and other governmental organizations have underscored the significance of adopting information and communication technology (ICT) and automation in libraries to enhance access and equity in education.

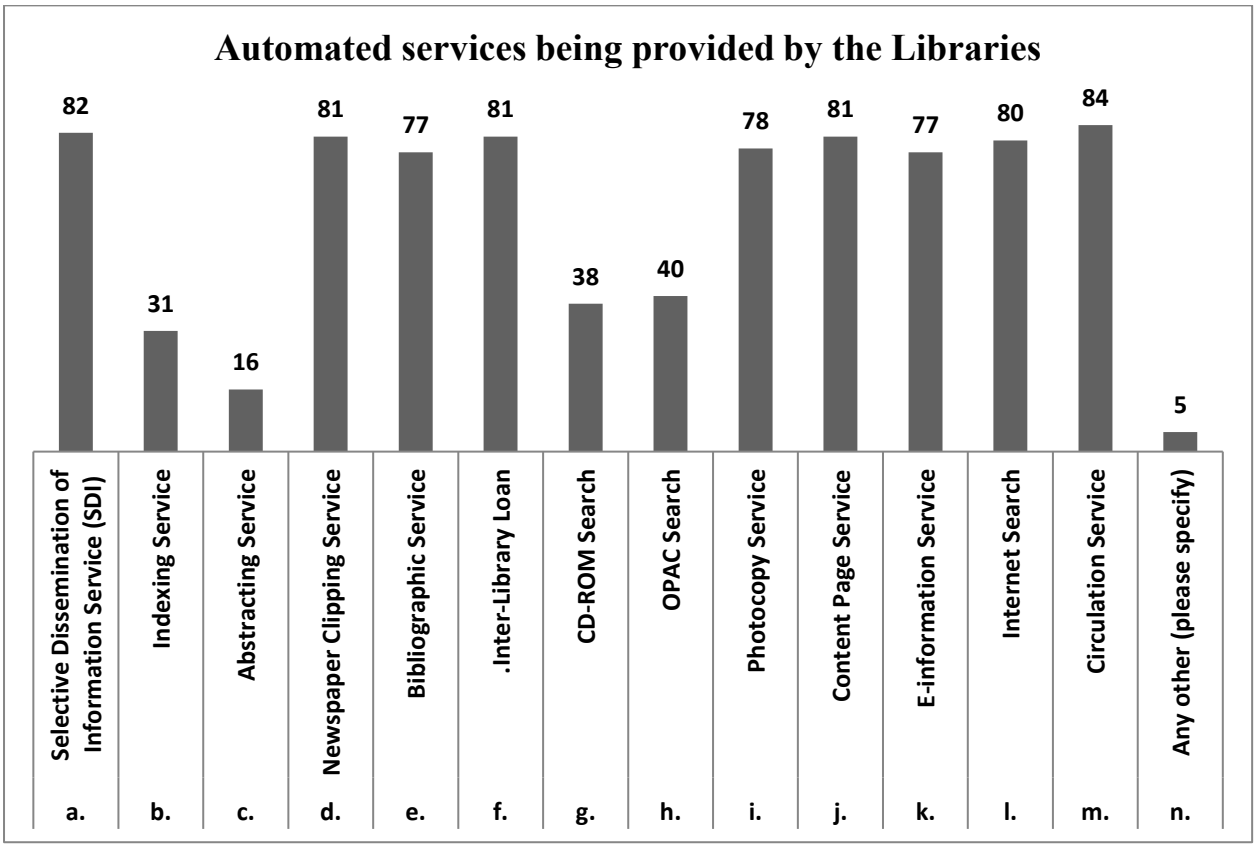
1. Library automation is a major application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to automate the major activities of the library such as circulation, acquisition, serial control and cataloging.
2. Library automation can be defined as the use of computers and associated technologies to automate the housekeeping operations and services of a library. It is the mechanization of library activities. In today's digital environment, libraries should keep them updated with the latest trends and technologies and should introduce some of the latest automation-based digital services & facilities to grab the user's attention towards the library.
3. According to the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, library automation is the use of automatic and semi-automatic data processing machines to perform such traditional library activities as acquisition, cataloging and circulation.

   The present study is carried out in five districts of the western region, which are Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Solapur, which is considered the educational hub of the state of Maharashtra. This region has a high concentration of colleges affiliated to Savitribai Phule, Pune University, Shivaji University, Solapur University, and other universities selected for the study. These colleges are diverse in nature, including aided, unaided, rural, and urban colleges.

Automated services being provided by the Library?

Automated library services encompass a wide range of services. The core areas are acquisition control, cataloguing, circulation control, serials control, and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Beyond these housekeeping operations, automation has enabled value-added services such as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Service (CAS), reservation of documents, online renewal, e-mail alerts, access to e-resources, institutional repositories, and web-based library services.

Table No. 1



The present question was designed to identify the types of automated services being provided by the college libraries in the Western Region of Maharashtra. For this question, a total of 109 responses were received. Since it was a multiple-choice question, respondents were allowed to select more than one service.The analysis of the data reveals that the most common automated service provided by the libraries is Circulation Service, reported by 84 libraries, which accounts for 77.1% of the total respondents. This is followed by Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Service with 82 libraries (75.2%), Newspaper Clipping Service with 81 libraries (74.3%), Inter-Library Loan with 81 libraries (74.3%), and Content Page Service with 81 libraries (74.3%). Similarly, Internet Search Service is provided by 80 libraries (73.4%), Photocopy Service by 78 libraries (71.6%), Bibliographic Service by 77 libraries (70.6%), and E-information Service by 77 libraries (70.6%).

On the other hand, advanced or specialized services are found to be less common. OPAC Search is provided by only 40 libraries (36.7%) and CD-ROM Search by 38 libraries (34.9%). Furthermore, Indexing Service is provided by 31 libraries (28.4%) and Abstracting Service by only 16 libraries (14.7%), which is the lowest among all. Only 5 libraries (4.6%) mentioned other automated services.

This indicates that while routine and traditional automated services like Circulation, SDI, and Content Page Service are well-established in most college libraries, value-added and technology-intensive services like OPAC, CD-ROM Search, Indexing, and Abstracting services are still in the developing stage in the Western Region of Maharashtra.

Conculsion :

It is observed that services which are directly related to daily library operations and user demands, such as Circulation Service, Selective Dissemination of Information Service, Newspaper Clipping Service, Inter-Library Loan, Content Page Service, and Internet Search are provided by more than 70% of the libraries. This shows a positive trend towards modernization and user-oriented service delivery.

However, the study also highlights a significant gap in the provision of specialized and technology-intensive services. Services like OPAC Search, CD-ROM Search, Indexing Service, and Abstracting Service are provided This indicates that many libraries are still at the initial or intermediate stage of automation and have not yet fully utilized the potential of Integrated Library Management Software (ILMS).The disparity may be attributed to factors such as lack of adequate funds, insufficient trained staff, poor internet connectivity in rural areas, and lack of awareness.

Therefore, it is recommended that UGC, INFLIBNET, and parent institutions should provide more financial assistance and regular training programmes for library professionals. Special focus should be given to rural colleges to minimize the digital divide. In short, college libraries in Western Maharashtra are on the right track of automation, but they need to move from basic automation to advanced, web-based automated services.

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