ABSTRACT

Purpose: Libraries of Colleges and Universities of Assam are making an earnest effort to implement modern information and communication technologies in their day to day activities. Information received on the software packages used for library automation shows that SOUL package is used by all the surveyed College Libraries of Assam and the surveyed University Libraries of Assam are using both commercial as well as open source LMS. For automation, College and University Libraries of Assam had no other options besides commercial packages like LibSys, SOUL, etc in the early years of the 21st century. But, development of open source LMS and popularization of the packages in the last few years have brought a cost beneficial option for the libraries to implement open source LMS packages like Koha, NewGenLib, etc.

The purpose of the study is to find the status of library automation in the Colleges and Universities of Assam and also to identify the open source Library Management Software packages for the Library and Information Centres. The study also aimed to prepare a plan for implementation of open source Library Management Software for the College and University Libraries of Assam and also to propose a model of a Union Catalogue of the said libraries.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The methodology for conducting the study consists of library user survey through prescribed set of questionnaires, personal interview, observation and literature review. Literature review helps in preparing the outcome and principles of different aspects involved in carrying out a study. Documents like books, journals, articles, online resources, dissertations, theses and seminar papers dealing with open source and LMS have been consulted. Search engines, Meta search engines, Wikis, Blogs, various Institutional Repositories, and Digital Libraries etc. are used extensively for searching online resources for the study. The geographic area of the study is confined to the College and University Libraries of Assam. In the study few popular open source LMS packages are compared with the two proprietary LMS packages, namely SOUL and LibSys, used in College and University Libraries of Assam.

Findings: The study reveals that, though, the libraries of Colleges and Universities of Assam are making an earnest effort to automate their traditional housekeeping operations using different LMS packages, still there are lots to perform by them for the significant development of library automation in the region. The study reflects that the status of College
Libraries of Assam is not similar with the University Libraries in terms of manpower, size, fund, etc. It is also found that Koha is the best software package when compared to the other selected LMS systems having regard to supporting library standards, functionalities of different modules, offering enhanced services and also incorporating most recent technological advancements.

**Research Limitations/Implications:** The whole survey of the study is entirely based on the College and University Libraries of Assam only. This study is an effort to raise the automation scenario of these libraries and to find out the prospects of using open source LMS in the College and University libraries of Assam in managing their library housekeeping operations.

**Originality/Value:** The research work will be of utmost value to academic communities, researchers, LIS professionals and Library Management Software (LMS) developers. This study it is hoped will have a special significance in the present juncture, as the library automation is the major task which practices needs huge money but use of open source LMS can reduce the financial barrier in economically developed state like Assam.

**Keywords:** Open Source Software, Library Management Software, Integrated Library Systems, Library Automation, Library Automation Standards, College Library, University Library, Union Catalogue, Koha

**Research Type:** Descriptive, Evaluative, Survey Based.