Problems and Prospects of Library Automation in Manipur

Informative Abstract

The influence of ICT has been witness almost in all works of life in today’s modern world. Application of ICTs and Computerization of library and information centre has been a slogan move and put up by every right thinking information professional all over the world. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have brought tremendous changes in the process of transmission and management, particularly in the present library services. In fact, automation of libraries is one of the major changes brought about by the development of (ICTs). It has enabled to transform the traditional system of library into a more modern set up. Application of information technology in libraries is found to be helpful to obtain the right information at the right time at the right place. It improves the status of the library and on the other hand, reduces the work load of library professional. It enables information dissemination efficiently from the enormous collection of information of information resources. Automating library can relieve the library staff from many routine, administrative or clerical functions. Automation includes mechanization of various processes and their operation as well as the use of machines, equipments, tools etc. in libraries. Automation or mechanization is playing a vital role in the present library and information centers.

Library Automation means the use of computer (s) and application of information technology in the library. Automation includes mechanization of various processes and their operational as well as the use of machines, equipment, tools etc in libraries. According to ALA Glossary of library and information science “automation is the performance of an operation, a series of operation or a process by self-activating, self-controlling, or automatic means. Automation implies the use of automatic data processing equipment such as
computer or other labour saving devices”. In general usage, automation can be defined as a technology which concerns with performing a process by means of programmed commands combined with automatic feedback control to ensure proper execution of the instructions. The resulting system is capable of operating without human intervention. In the present work the status of automation of the functioning of various types of libraries of the state are taken into consideration. When we talk about library automation, there are also, on the other hand, certain problems and prospects to be dealt with. The general problems in library automation are untrained professionals who need to develop skills for the process, lack of fund, shortage of infrastructure and also the approval of the authority concerned. ICT gadgets which are useful in automation also require to be seriously taken into consideration. Regarding prospects we can mention about the availability of such gadgets at the affordable cost, options to more convergent hardware and software, possibility to join training packages, separate budget for automation, availability of professionally trained persons in the market, etc.

Keeping all these aspects in view the present study has critically analyzed all the prevailing problems and possible prospects to have a complete automation of the library systems in the state of Manipur.

Library automation is not a new area of study today. A sizeable number of literatures are found in different resources highlighting the findings of the studies related to various aspects of the automation. In the present study a total of 100 (one hundred), literature have been scanned, collected and reviewed.

The present study has been taken up with following objectives:

- To survey the existing different types of libraries of Manipur;
- To identify the number of automated libraries in Manipur;
- To ascertain the stock of the present status of library automation in the state;
To analyse the problems and prospects of automation of libraries and their mode of delivery of services in the state; and

To make suggestions and recommendations through which initiatives can be taken up towards automating libraries of Manipur to provide their services effectively.

The following methods and techniques have been used in the study:

- Survey of all types of libraries that are in existence at different levels that have been taken into account as the population of the study;
- Available related literature in the area of the study has been scanned for review to have a thorough knowledge on it.
- As a study questionnaire has been used to collect data from the libraries
- The statistical Package i.e., SPSS has been adopted for analysis of the data to make the interpretation more empirical. The analysed data have been presented through tables, charts, graphs, etc. Harvard style manual has been used for text and reference citation throughout the course of the study.

The present work has been organized into six chapters as detailed below:


The present study has covered 75 libraries of Manipur comprising of 54 (72.00%) academic, 15 (20.00%) special and 6 (8.00%) public libraries. The institutions of these 75 libraries belong to different nature of organization namely, 73.33% education, 6.67% both education and technical, 8.00% technical only 2.67% cultural, 9.33% related to other organization.

The selected 75 libraries are divided into three types viz, public, academic and special libraries. Out of total 75 libraries, 4% libraries were established
between 1930 – 1948, 28% libraries between 1948- 1968, 45.33% libraries between 1968- 1988, 28% libraries between 1988-2008, 6.67% libraries 2008 and above. Majority i.e., 74.67% libraries were established at the same year with their respective institution/ organization, 1.33% was established 2 (two) year before the institution was established, 1.33% was established 17 year before the institution was established4% library were established one year after establishing their respective institution, 4% library established 2 year after establishing the institution, 4% established 3 year after establishing institution, 1.33 library was established maximum 57 year after establishing institution.

Out of 75 libraries in the study, as reported by the respective librarian 37.33% libraries have less than 5000 books, 26.67 libraries have between 5000 and 10000 of books and 36% libraries have more than 10000 number of books. 40% library under central government, 23.33% under state government, 22.22% under semi government 57.89% under private and all the libraries under voluntary organization have less than 5000 number of books. 4%, 10.67%, 6.67% and 5.33% libraries under central government, state government semi-government and private organization respectively have 5000-10000 numbers of books. 8% of central government, 207% of state government 2.67% of semi-government and 5.33 of private organization have more than 10000 numbers of books. 33.33%, 6.67%, 55.56%, 26.32% and 50% of central government, state government semi-government, private and voluntary organizations respectively do have bound volumes. 46.67%, 83.33%, 33.33%, 68.42% and 50% libraries under central government, state government, and semi-government, private and voluntary organization have less than 1000 number of bound volumes.

Central libraries have more number of library staff with an average of 6 staffs and private libraries have least number of library staff with an average of only 2 staffs as compared to the other libraries funded by different organizations. Maximum variation within central libraries (S.D. =8.73) and minimum variation within library under voluntary organization (S.D.=0.71). Central libraries have
more number of professional staff with an average of 3 professional staff, followed state government libraries with an average of 2 professional staff and other libraries have almost same number of professional staff with an average only 1.

Out of 75 libraries in the study, as reported by the librarians, 40%, 44.44% and 31.58% libraries under central government, state government, semi-government and private organizations respectively have adopted classification scheme (s). Cataloguing code (s) is used by 60%, 60%, 55.56% and 14% libraries of central government, state government, semi-government and private organization respectively. And Subject headings 13.33%, 10%, 22.22% and 5.26% libraries under central government, state government, semi-government and private organizations respectively. But, libraries under voluntary organization do not have the above mentioned facilities. And 33.33% public libraries, 37.04% academic libraries and 40% special libraries have adopted Classification Scheme (s). Cataloguing Code is use by 33.33% in public libraries, 35.19% in academic libraries and 40% in special libraries. And Subject headings 33.33% in public libraries, 9.26 in academic libraries and 6.67% in special libraries.

Out of 75 libraries under study only 17(22.67%) libraries are automated. Among this, 5(33.33%) are from central government libraries, 8(26.67%) from the state government libraries and 5(21.05%) from private organization libraries. All the libraries of semi-government libraries and voluntary organization under study are not automated. Among the automated libraries, 2(13.33%) libraries of central government and 5(16.67%) libraries of state government organization are in the initial stage. 2(13.33%) libraries of central government, 3(10.00%) libraries of the state and 4(21.05%) libraries of private organizations are partially automated, whereas, only 1(6.67%) library under central government organization is fully automated. Therefore, we may conclude that majority of the libraries in Manipur are partially automated.
The most important major problem faced by the types of automated libraries is lack of financial resources and less number of trained and qualified staff. All the special libraries and 11(73.33%) academic libraries have the problem of financial resources. Majority of 12(80%) academic libraries an one special library have the problem of less number of computers and other requisite hardware. One academic library has reported that software used in the library is not user friendly and not compatible to use. 2(13.33) academic libraries reported that the processes of collections of library materials within the libraries are not conversant with standard software package.

Majority of 43(63.24%) non-automated libraries faced lack of knowledge of the technological requirement of the work. Followed by 38(55.88%) with the problem of under staff leads to non-automation of library. 35(51.47%) with the problem of no leadership activities towards automation, 32(47.06%) with the problem of lack of interest by the authorities in library automation, 21(30.88%) with problem of difficulty in preparing proposal for automation, 12(17.65%) with the problem of lack of physical infrastructure and the least problems is that 11(16.18 library was established newly and need to add more requisite items for automation. Problems are associated with the lack of computers and other requisite hardware’s, Non compatibility of software and lack of user interest on it, Want of leadership activities towards automation, difficulty in preparing proposal for the automation, Lack of knowledge of the technological requirements of the work, Authorities should understand the significance of library automation.

Automation will facilitate modernization of library, networking amongst libraries, provision of effective services, digitization of library resources, meeting user’s need efficiently and introduction of innovative practices. 57(76%) librarians suggested that automation will facilitate modernization of library, networking amongst the library, provision of effective services, digitization of library resources, meeting user’s need efficiently and introduction of innovative
practices. 30(40%) librarians suggested that automation work will be taken up in a phased and planned manner. Sound financial support is needed to fulfill all the materials needs in library automation. Thus, 6(8%) librarians suggest that increase in budget will enable to contribute towards automation of the library.

From the present study of different libraries in Manipur, the following suggestions can be drawn to improve the present situation.

1. Priority should be given to inculcate positive attitude in the minds of existing library staff towards Library Automation and use of ICT. Authorities and staff should accept changes through ICT.

2. The authority should have positive attitude towards library development and know the importance of library automation.

3. The librarians of the concerned institution or organization should develop a network of cooperation so that they can complete the process of automation successfully by helping each other.

4. Unskilled/untrained staff should not be kept as library in-charge.

5. Lack of proper guidelines and planning for automation of library activities.

6. Qualified librarian, adequate and sufficient staff should be employed to the libraries.

7. Adequate training for computer application should be fixed to the library staff. Long term training programmes should be organized so that the librarian and its staff can develop their knowledge and can build confidence to proceed for the work of automation.

8. Fund should be allotted for the library separately; therefore, provision of a separate fund should be made to meet for library resources.

9. It is essential to get vendor support to customize the software according to the needs of the library.

10. Workshop, Seminar etc. should be organized to update knowledge on the trends of ICT applications in the library.
Knowing working in automated system is a manifold benefit and automation of library helps in to create efficient service, provide accurate service, capable of satisfying the users’ repetitive works. However, the study reveal that the libraries of various types academic, public and special libraries in the state of Manipur need to go a long way towards application of ICTs in the service of the library. But expectation is there for development of library in the state in the years to come. Libraries have to play a leading role to maintain their position as the principal information resource and service provider. Automating a library is only the way to keep up with new trends to satisfy the end user’s to provide pinpointed and exhaustive to information seeker. The suggestions and recommendations as outcome of the study need to materialize if the state wants to have a new environment of library system to provide its services effectively in an efficient manner.

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