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Integrated Library System Implementation: The Bowen University Library Experience with Koha Software

Ayoku A. Ojedokun, Grace O. O. Olla and Samuel A. Adigun
Bowen University Library,
Iwo, Nigeria
aaojedokun2003@yahoo.co.uk
graceto2003@yahoo.com
akinomatics@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to share the Bowen University Library experiences running and administering Koha Integrated Library System (ILS) for about nine years. The paper describes the application of the software by the staff of Bowen University Library. The authors perused the library annual reports and the quarterly reports of activities as kept by sections and units. Clarification was also sought from the librarians, who daily run and maintain Koha software to gain an understanding of challenges they face and how these challenges were resolved. The users noted that Koha ILS helped tremendously with the library technical processes and services, and that the challenges encountered and their successful resolutions had also helped in the effective delivery of the library and information services and the development of staff IT skills. The authors noted from practical perspective that these experiences were useful for people who were evaluating open source ILSs, those already running ILSs, as well as those who were in the process of adoption. Unfortunately, to the knowledge of the authors, there has not been much of any existing literature on practical experiences of running and maintaining an open source integrated library system such as the Koha. The paper therefore could thus contribute to knowledge in this domain of ILS.

Introduction

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2016), describes the integrated library system (ILS) as an enterprise resource planning system for a library, and it is used to track items owned, orders made, bills paid and patrons who have borrowed items. It is also known as library management system (LMS). It is made up of modules integrated with a unified interface e.g. acquisitions (ordering, receiving and invoicing materials), cataloguing (classifying and indexing materials), circulation (lending materials to patrons and receiving them back), serials (tracking magazines, journals and newspaper holdings) and the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC, public interface for users).

This system has made library materials' processing a lot easier compared to the old system of manually and independently processing of the same. In the old system, librarians ordered materials with ordering slips, catalogued materials manually and indexed them with the card catalogue system (in which all bibliographic data was kept on a single index card), collected fines using a designated staff, and users signed out books manually, with the book slip kept in the book pocket bearing the borrower's name kept at the circulation desk. Locating and retrieving items in this old system required that the patron knew either the call number or the book subjects indexed without which the user will be unable to locate and retrieve the needed material.

Library automation is growing at a fast rate as a result of the growth of the ILS market. The growth in the 1990s was attributed to the decline in the cost of hardware and software, addition of missing modules in the automation software (e.g. acquisitions and serials), and the creation of software that is machine independent i.e. can operate on a much wider variety of hardware (Gilliam, 1990). Further developments have again seen the ILS vendors