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Research Paper

Soul and Alice: A Comparative Study between the different Functional Modules

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Abstract

Library management is the word which means to manage all the functions of the library, so that the library can perform actively and can satisfy their users by providing their required materials or documents. For giving better service to the users, the libraries are trying to convert their documents and the way of giving services from manually too electronically so that the library can satisfy the users. And this converting process is known as to automating the library functions. The present study compares the differences between the different modules and their functions of SOUL and Alice. The study focuses on to evaluate a critical comparison between the acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, serial control, OPAC and administrative modules of SOUL and Alice. With the help of this study one can easily identify the library management software they really want for managing a automated library. The study reveals that though a library management system both the software has all the functional modules but Alice LMS is more user friendly rather than SOUL because of its flexibility.

Introduction

The library *plays* a vital role in every educational institution and it also influences the people of a society to upgrade their knowledge and utilize that knowledge in

day-to-day their life. At the same time the growth and development of ICT as well as use of computer is come up as a blessings in the field of library and information science; housekeeping activities which reduces the work load and save the time of library professionals and make library services smooth and effective. In this ICT era we can see that the whole library concept has been changed in terms of collection development, organization and its services to the user. Apart from that the users are always in a hurry to get relevant information in their hand at a minimum time. For that reason the concept of library automation has brought up.

Objective

The main aim of the present study is to identify the functional features of the software's and make a comparison between the software's. The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To know about SOUL and Alice
- To make a critical comparison between SOUL and Alice.
- To know which is user friendly or easy to use.

Review of the Literature

Aute and Ghumara (2014),in the article “Library Management Software: LibSys7 and Alice,” evaluate about two different software LibSys and Alice, where LibSys is introduced as a high quality, better efficiency and responsiveness software while Alice is introduced as a most useful software for the library automation as per its free cost. Chauhan (2010) ,“Open Source Software for Library Management: A Study,” selected some open source software for his study in the context of Nepal. In his study, the tried to isolate the interest of implementing a digital library project in the academic library's of Nepal. As well as the study also discussed about some open source software and their implementation procedure. Husain and Ansari (2007), “Library Automation Software Packages in India: A Study of the Cataloging Modules of Alice for Windows, LibSys and Virtua,” this study reveals that each package has got its own capabilities and limitations.

The study also discuss about the unique features of each of these software. Lakpathi (2017), in his study, “Status of Library Automation in India,” discuss about the present library automation status in India and identify the problems that are facing by the library professionals using library software in India. He also mentioned in his study there is an urgent need of upgrading the knowledge of library professionals.

Library Automation

Automation is the process where things are done automatically with the involvement of machines. It reduces the duplication of work and also helps in resource sharing. Library automation is the application of information communication technology to library services. Library automation helps the library to keep running with the latest development. It makes the library flexible and reliable and tries to reduce the work load of the library staff. Automation has the capacity to be accurate and perform in a good speed. Library automation is defined as the management of library that helps in cataloguing, circulation, acquisition, serial control, OPAC and arrangement of other library materials with the help of machinery equipment and internet. Library automation software is divided into two types i.e. commercial software and open source software. SOUL represents commercial software as well as Alice represents open source software.

Soul

The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) designed and developed integrated library management software for library automation which is known as a SOUL acronym of Software for University Libraries. Having the name as Software for University Libraries this software is not only suitable for university libraries but also for all type and size of libraries including college and school libraries too. It is user friendly library using client server architecture. The first version of this software was released under CALIBER 2000. The database of the SOUL 1.0 is designed on MS-SQL and is compatible with MS SQL Server 7.0 or higher. The latest version of the software i.e. SOUL 2.0 was released in 2008. The database for new version of SOUL is designed for latest versions of MS-SQL and MySQL (or any other popular RDBMS).

Alice

Alice was developed by Softlink International Australia in 1983. It is known as Alice for Windows all over the world. It is marketed through a number of agencies. In India, this software package is marketed by Softlink Asia Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi. This software is suitable for all types of libraries, such as primary and secondary schools in the public and private sectors, colleges, public libraries, booksellers, educational resource centers, charities, hospital, prisons, law practices, police forces, industrial companies, consultancies and palaces. **(Softlink, 1999)**

Data Analysis

There are different features are available in both the software (Alice and SOUL) but among that features some are available in one software which are not available in another one even in the same modules. Here the study reveals the differences.

Table 1: Comparative features of Acquisition Module of SOUL and Alice

Sl.No	Particulars	Alice		SOUL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Purchase suggestion from the user	√	×	√	×
2	Duplication check	√	×	√	×
3	Approval process from library committee	√	×	√	×
4	Purchase order	√	×	√	×
5	Vender/supplier information	√	×	×	√
6	Acquisition work process	√	×	√	×
7	Payment details of purchase order	√	×	√	×
8	Multiple currencies and conversion rates	√	×	√	×
9	Report generation	√	×	√	×

Integrated library software SOUL and Alice, both are provided with the Acquisition module. This module has the features of purchase suggestions from the user, duplication check, purchase order, acquisition work process, payment details of purchase order, multiple currencies and conversion rates, report generation etc. These are the basic features of SOUL and Alice. Here, the above table 2 has found out that the feature of “approval process from library committee” which one is available on SOUL acquisition module is missing from Alice acquisition module. That means this feature is not available in Alice acquisition module. On the other hand “vendor/supplier information” is very important on Alice acquisition module before purchasing documents, which seems not that important in SOUL acquisition module. The availability of these two features creates differences between SOUL and Alice acquisition module. But the other features are almost same to each other.

Cataloguing Module

Table 2: Comparative features of Cataloguing Module of SOUL and Alice

Sl.No	Particulars	Alice		SOUL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Catalogue facility	√	×	√	×
2	Adding/editing/deleting/catalogue record	√	×	√	×
3	Multilingual support	√	×	√	×
4	Format for different item type	√	×	√	×
5	Authority file for author, publisher	√	×	√	×
6	User services(CAS/bibliographic services)	√	×	√	×
7	Z39.50	×	×	×	√
8	Export/import data	√	×	√	×
9	RFID integration	√	×	√	×
10	Barcode label printing	√	×	√	×
11	Report generation	√	×	√	×

Cataloguing module is one of the important modules for library automation software. SOUL and Alice also has their catalogue module with some basic features which makes both the software almost similar to each other. But through the table 3 it comes to know that Z39.50 is a kind of feature which is available on Alice for imported MARC cataloguing. But this feature is not provided on SOUL cataloguing module. On the other hand authority file for author and publisher is also not available on SOUL. Hence, one another features i.e. user services (CAS/Bibliographic service) is available in SOUL but not in Alice. The above table has successes to make a critical comparison between SOUL and Alice acquisition module.

Circulation Module

Table 3: Comparative features of Circulation module of Alice and SOUL

Sl.No	Particulars	Alice		SOUL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Membership registration	√	×	√	×
2	Member card creation	√	×	√	×
3	Check in/check out	√	×	√	×
4	Renewal/reservation	√	×	√	×
5	Offline circulation	×	√	×	√
6	Inter library loan	√	×	√	×
7	Circulation reports	√	×	√	×
8	Print transaction for borrower	√	×	√	×

Circulation is the desk for the daily transaction of library resources. In SOUL circulation module members of a library should have to register before creating a member card. But this facility is not available in Alice circulation module. One of the most important facility is provided by Alice circulation module i.e. “offline circulation”. When server is not working, offline circulation is the option to continue the transaction process. Later on circulation report has uploaded to the server. This facility makes Alice more user friendly than SOUL, because it is not available in SOUL circulation module.

Serial Control Module

Table 4: Comparative facilities Serial control module of Alice and SOUL

Sl.No	Features	Alice		SOUL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Subscription suggestion from user	√	×	√	×
2	Adding new subscription	√	×	√	×
3	Receipt of new issue	√	×	√	×

4	Cataloguing	√	×	√	×
5	Search subscription	√	×	×	√
6	Creating purchasing order	√	×	√	×
7	Check-in of individual issues of journals	√	×	×	√
8	Claims	√	×	√	×
8	Administration of binding	√	×	√	×
8	Payment	√	×	√	×

The Table 5 has mention the facilities of serial control provided by SOUL and Alice such as subscription from user, adding new subscription, receipt of new issues, cataloguing, administration of binding, payment etc. But the unavailability of some facilities has created differences between this software. Alice is provided with some facilities such as search subscription, check-in of individual issues of journals and claims. These all are not available in SOUL serial control module. These kind of facilities makes Alice better than SOUL.

OPAC Module

Table 5: Comparative facilities of OPAC Module of SOUL and Alice

Sl.No	Features	Alice		SOUL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Simple search	√	×	√	×
2	Advance search	√	×	√	×
3	Boolean search	√	×	√	×
4	Tag cloud	√	×	×	×
5	Most popular	√	×	×	√

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is a module where library patron easily gets the information about the document of their need. The above table shows that both the software SOUL and Alice have their own OPAC module and provides different

search technique like Simple search, Boolean search and advance search. There are two different search technique i.e. Tag cloud, Most popular and Authority search which makes Alice OPAC module more easy to use. SOUL is also provided with one of the different search technique known as Member OPAC which is not available in Alice.

Administrative Module

Table 6: Comparative function of Administrative module of Alice and SOUL

Sl.No	Features	Alice		SOUL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Authority creation for acquisition module	√	×	√	×
2	Authority creation for cataloguing module	√	×	√	×
3	Authority creation for circulation module	√	×	√	×
4	Authority creation for serial control	√	×	√	×
5	Authority creation for OPAC	√	×	√	×

Administrative module is the main module of any kind of software. The entire program is set up in the administrative module. SOUL and Alice administrative module has the provision for creating acquisition module, cataloguing module, circulation module, serial control and OPAC. All the functions are available in both the software.

Conclusion

Most of the academic institution libraries as well as public libraries are using library management software for automation. It helps library for growth and development of the library collections and provides as much as possible services to the users. The numbers of libraries using library automation software are increasing day by day. The reviewed literature says that Alice, the integrated library management software is easy to use rather than SOUL because of its special requirement. The analysis study helps to know more details about SOUL and Alice.

The data which are collected through designing of checklist, tables and figures of modules are helps to make a critical comparison between the modules of SOUL and Alice. This analyzation has fulfilled the aim and objective of the study of the researcher. It also finds out that being the commercial library system Alice is more users' friendly software than SOUL.

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Website

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