Summer Fellowship Report

On

Use of Koha feature and Wish list at Selected Libraries in Assam State

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<u>Contents</u>

I)Introduction:

Library is a physical collection of books, magazines, issues, daily newspapers, etc. for reference or borrowing. The word library is derived from the words "Bibliotheca" and "Bibliothēkē" from Latin and Greek languages respectively.

The first libraries consisted of the earliest form of writing-the clay tablets in cuneiform script discovered in Sumer, some dating back to 2600 BC. Private or personal libraries made up of written books appeared in classical Greece in the 5th century BC. In the 6th century, at the very close of the Classical Period, the great libraries of the Mediterranean world remained those of Constantinople and Alexandria.
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library)

In the 21st century, libraries are not restricted to physical buildings and walls anymore. It is made possible by technological developments and the invention of the computer and the internet. Koha, an open source Integrated Library System (ILS), is used by various libraries around the world. It has an SQL database and the cataloguing data is stored in MARC and can be accessed through Z39.50 or SRU.

Koha has most of the features that would be expected in an ILS, including:

- Various Web 2.0 facilities like tagging, comment, social sharing and RSS feeds
- Union catalogue facility
- Customizable search
- Online Circulation
- Bar code printing
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koha_(software))

II)Objectives

- **To explore the various features of Koha used in four selected libraries of Assam.**
- **To prepare a wishlist of features.**

III)Literature Review:

In the book, "**Koha 3 Library Management System**" the authors *Amit Gupta and Savitra Sirohi* writes about the features in koha and their maintenance in great detail and in a language a user could understand very easily. This book is mainly aimed at guiding the readers on how to install koha on a system.

The book starts with installing and configuring the LAMP stack and the Koha application to meet our needs. It then goes deeper into setting up various rules and configuring settings for Koha. It also covers data migration of catalogue records, software maintenance, and customization of the application. Chapters are also dedicated to providing an insight into advanced topics such as LDAP integration and Internationalization. It also includes loads of tips for troubleshooting and maintenance   activities. (https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/koha-3-library/9781849510820/)

Although it is mostly focussed on installing and configuring koha, it does help in understanding the various features in koha.

IV)Research Methodology:

This study is primarily based on data collection from interviews with the librarians and technical department of multiple libraries of the Assam state. All the interviews are taken separately so that it can help in gaining individual perspective about their working experience with koha and their expectations in the upcoming updates. The interviews with the people working in koha help in collecting valuable insights in the current scenario of koha.

This case study includes four selected libraries of Assam state. They are:-

1) Kamrup Public Library
2) National Law University and Judicial Academy Central Library
3) Assam University Library
4) Pandu College Library

From these four libraries, responses were recorded mostly from the librarians and the technical department not only the features and wishlist of koha but also their experience with it and the various problems they face. Even though only four selected libraries were required for this case study, it should be noted that a few more interviews in other libraries were conducted too.

Questionnaires were also sent to each of the librarians of the libraries and the answers were recorded accordingly.
During this study, secondary sources like internet articles and books were also used in order to complete this study.

V)Features in Koha:

Although there are a lot of features in koha, only the major ones are covered in this study. These features could easily be found in the main page of koha.

A brief overview of the features are-

1. **Circulation:**-It includes borrowing a book from any branch (not just the branch where the borrower first registered) and returning an item at any branch; also reserving an item for at any branch.

2. **Patrons:**-When we click on the add patrons, a form appears which prompts us to fill in the member particulars. Also the koha system automatically allots one card number to the patrons. It prompts us to conform to the record when the details are filled. The user sees this only when he accesses his/her membership information at the OPAC. Patrons are basically used to group members and there are different restrictions for different patrons.

3. **Koha Cataloguing Module:**-The cataloguing module is one of the principal strong points of Koha. Several "frameworks" can be defined to do different types of cataloguing for monographs, electronic resources, periodicals, etc. It also includes importing records in ISO2709 format (the MARC reservoir) and through Z39.50 (client) for fast cataloguing.

4. **Authorities:**-Authority records are a way of controlling fields in the MARC records. Using authority records will provide one with control over subject headings, personal names and places.

5. **Serials:**-The Serials module in Koha is used for keeping track of journals, newspapers and other items that come on

a regular schedule. As with all modules, one needs to go through the related implementation checklist before using Serials.

6. **Acquisitions:**-The Koha Acquisitions module provides a way for the library to record orders placed with vendors and manages purchase budgets. It makes it possible to acquire materials and add them directly to the catalogue. It also manages budgetary matters, orders placed with the suppliers, etc.

7. **Reports:**-Reports in Koha are a way to gather data. Reports are used to generate statistics, member lists, shelving lists, or any list of data in your database. Koha's data is stored in a MySQL database which means that librarians can generate nearly any report they would like by either using the guided reports wizard or writing their own SQL query.

8. **Koha Administration:**-It usually controls the way koha works. Under it is Global System Preferences where the user needs to set these preferences before anything else in Koha. System preferences can be searched (using any part of the preference name or description) using the search box on the 'Administration' page or the search box at the top of each system preferences page.

(Description of the features from:

http://knowgate.niscair.res.in/documents/10181/21379/03-KOHA+Overview+%26+features.pdf/1ad67a95-ee85-4a4e-8206-d95c12edac61

https://koha-community.org/manual/18.11/en/epub/)

VI)Major Findings and Analysis of Data:

1)Features:

The selected libraries namely:- Kamrup Public Library , National Law University and Judicial Academy Library, Assam University Library and Pandu college library are situated in Kamrup district. Almost all of the major features are being used in the libraries.

I have created tables where the information regarding the features used in the libraries are shown:-

Features	Kamrup Public Library	National Law University And Judicial Academy Library	Assam University Library	Pandu College Library
Circulation	*	*	*	*
Patrons	*	*	*	*
Cataloguing	*	*	*	*
Authorities	*	*	*	*
Serials	*	*		*
Acquisitions	*	*		*
Reports	*	*	*	*
Koha Administration	*	*	*	*

(Asterisk* represents that the feature is being used in the corresponding library)

From the given table, it is clear that all of the major features of koha are being used in the selected libraries except for Assam University Library where "Serials" and "Acquisitions" are not used.

It was also found out that RFID integration with koha is not yet done in Kamrup Public Library and Pandu College Library. Again, OPAC is not available in Kamrup Public Library.

2)Wishlists:

Wishlist is a compilation of the features or modifications expected in the selected libraries. Most of the data in the wishlists are being collected from the answers recorded against the questions enquired in the questionnaire that was sent to each of the selected libraries.

A)Assam University Library:

a. *Mobile registered based OTP verification*
b. *Mobile version*

(a) Mobile registered based OTP verification: Mr. Saroj Kumar Mandal, a library assistant at the Assam University Library, expresses that OTP (One Time Password) verification through sms or e-mail on mobile phones is much required in order to restrict fake circulation/issue and return of documents or books.

A one-time password (OTP), also known as one-time pin or dynamic password is a password that is valid for only one login session or transaction, on a computer system or other digital device. The most important advantage that is addressed by OTPs is that, in contrast to static passwords, they are not vulnerable to replay attacks. This means that a potential intruder who manages to record an OTP that was already used to log into a service or to conduct a transaction

will not be able to abuse it, since it will no longer be valid. A second major advantage is that a user, who uses the same (or similar) password for multiple systems, is not made vulnerable on all of them, if the password for one of these is gained by an attacker. A number of OTP systems also aim to ensure that a session cannot easily be intercepted or impersonated without knowledge of unpredictable data created during the previous session, thus reducing the attack surface further.(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-time_password)

In case of koha, it would help avoiding theft of books and only registered members would have the right to borrow books from a particular library. Secondly, the members would not have to worry about their leaked passwords.

(b) Mobile App: Since many users access internet through their smart phones, it would be sensible to create a mobile app of koha. People would easily be able to access their account and important information like the date of renewal, number of books they borrowed, etc. This feature could also serve a user to view books in the catalogue and curate their decision of picking a book up. Moreover, it would boost the business of the company as koha will get more exposure if it is available on smart phones. So basically, it would make one's life easier. A user could access koha anytime and anywhere when it is on a smart phone.

B)Kamrup Public Library:

> *a. User friendly interface*
> *b. Properly designed guide/manual*

(a)User friendly interface: Beginners will be able to learn or use koha if the interface is made simpler for users. The current version is really complicated to understand for a

complete beginner. A useful thing would be to show or highlight the main features and present the user some information regarding the particular feature currently selected. This kind of feature/mini tutorial is widely used across a lot of softwares and apps. It shows up when someone fresh installs software.

(b)Properly designed guide/manual: A guide which is well designed or built could work wonders! The user would not have to move to other websites in order to learn how to use it. Although there is an existing manual with some good and helpful content, there is a need to create a centralized guide (and not multiple manuals fragmented in different pages) where the user should have the choice to search his query by typing terms into a search box.

C) National Law University and Judicial Academy Library:

a. Discussion forum and content uploading
b. User friendly stock verification

(a)Discussion forum and content uploading: A discussion forum, or message board, is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. They differ from chat rooms in that messages are often longer than one line of text, and are at least temporarily archived. Also, depending on the access level of a user or the forum set-up, a posted message might need to be approved by a moderator before it becomes publicly visible. Forums have a specific set of jargon associated with them; example: a single conversation is called a "thread", or topic. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_forum)

A popular example is Reddit where there are different discussions to participate. In case of koha, it is really necessary for discussions on bugs, faults, updates, etc. It could also prove useful if someone decides to enquire about something the person might require help on.

(b)User friendly stock verification: The term stock verification refers to the process of checking as to what is in stock in relation to what there was. The emphasis is being put more on finding which items are missing than on how much the loss is calculated. In library context, it is the periodic verification of books and other reading material. (https://www.slideshare.net/Shanthakumaragowda/stock-verification)

In koha, it is somewhat a tough procedure to do a stock verification of the books. It is currently done by using the "Inventory tool".

D)Pandu College Library:

a. Sign in using gmail or phone number
b. Middle name in patrons

(a)Sign in using gmail or phone number: This would particularly be helpful in mobile version of koha if it exists in the future. Sometimes, users forget their passwords for their account or even their user ID. Then this feature might help them in resetting their passwords through gmail or registered phone number.

Signing in using Google accounts are done through a protocol called OAuth. OAuth is an open standard for secure access delegation, which means it is a service that allows web giants like Google or Microsoft to permit its users to share their own select pieces of information with third-party websites or applications, while protecting the confidential info of users at the same time. (https://www.scienceabc.com/innovation/oauth-how-does-login-with-facebook-google-work.html)

(b)<u>Middle name in patrons:</u> Some people have middle names and adding this feature would be good and increase the accuracy of the details of the user. While an option to keep that field vacant would be convenient if the user does not have any middle name.

VII) Conclusion:

Automation of library has a long way to go at least in Assam. Many libraries are yet to utilise its advantages. There are only a handful of libraries where automation software, particularly koha is used. This has happened mostly because there are not a lot of trained professionals in Assam. Therefore, focus must be shifted towards education and training of this technology for the youth. This could also help in mitigating the problem of unemployment.

Again, the selected few libraries where koha is used are pretty much content with it. There are a few problems in koha which needs to be fixed in the upcoming updates of koha though.

It is also to be noted that a significant number of libraries use alternative softwares to koha which only means that not all users are comfortable with it yet. It is also found that many libraries have shifted to other softwares because of it being a bit less user friendly and somewhat complex to handle.

No doubt koha is a wonderful integrated library management system. Moreover it is open source. Thus anyone can use it for free. But the developers need to work harder to make it more user friendly than others.

VIII)References:

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