Integrated Library Systems (ILS)

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**Integrated Library Systems (ILS)**

Libraries hold central importance in the lives of academicians, researchers, and scientists because they contain thousands of volumes and resource materials for every subject. Before the computerized system in the library, cataloging was performed manually through book lists and book purchase lists. Library cards were issued to every person and an issue date was written on it along with a return date. The card was then stamped by the librarian and given back to the students. Likewise, at the end of every book, a slip was attached which contained the issue record of every book. There were few constraints as well, the book was either returned late or not returned by the student. In 1936, the little mechanized system was introduced in the libraries in the form of punching machines (Pruett, Joseph & Najomi, 2013). This system could not make a significant effect because all the work was still performed manually.

In the mid-20th century, when the computerized system starts to emerge, it was also introduced in the libraries through a library automation system. The libraries then used this technology to keep records and after a decade, in the 1970s, ILS was introduced. This system had various software and hardware options through which the digitization age of library records was finally started (Omopupa et, al, 2019). This database would help the staff to upload digital lists, catalogs and custom reminders to check the status of books. In the 21st century, after the internet facility was made readily available to the masses, libraries also provided users with direct access. They would now access books directly and make online reservations as well. In the recent decade, the database was more improved and with the feature of cloud options, books were scanned and cataloged through their ISBNs (Kelsey & Paul, 2016). Moreover, librarians and other concerned authorities, saved more time and managed to stock more books comparatively.

An integrated library system (ILS) is a database of resource planning through which book records can be kept, new catalogs can be made and bill orders are paid in a computerized way. Integrated Library System and Integrated Library Software (IOLS) can be used interchangeably because these are synonymous terms. It helps both library personnel and researchers in keeping track of the required material. Its significant features include reports, online public access catalog, patron management catalog, database and cataloging modules (Shifting Practices: Reflections on Technology, Practice, and Innovation). All these features are interlinked and make this database more user-friendly and reliable. Moreover, it caters to the multiple needs of libraries for instance, it provides access to external sources other than the library’s internal sources and it improves operational competence. ILS is significant for libraries these days because it makes cataloging easier and old manual records can be use this software for automatic cataloging purposes (Wang, Yongming & Trevor, 2012). In manual work, one has to search by the name, bibliography, issue number and most of the time the books can either be missing or misplaced. In such a scenario, ILS keeps track of the book by checking its status too. It also connects different libraries for resource sharing purposes through OPAC (online public access catalog). It provides every patron with a separate and unique identification (ID) number to track the activities (NewGenLib 3).

Integrated Library System is important because it creates a digital record of catalogs, lists and availability of books. The librarian does not have to manually check the status of a book, likewise, the books can be searched through an online cataloging feature. This saves a lot of manual work and long searches through thousands of resources. Moreover, it is economical as it saves manual labor so less staff can be hired comparatively. ILS can be managed by one librarian as the data needs update once in a while and it automatically saves new information in the library database. It prioritizes important work for the library workers by taking control of the most important task of listing, cataloging, and tracking. Librarians can spend more time in handling other issues such as concerns of researchers or library users. It builds people’s reliance on library and library resources (Giri, 2012). Researchers and academicians can consult various open access and closed access journals and books which cannot be accessed from other means especially in the case of closed access journals (Breeding, 2009). The integrated library system facilitates the patrons and librarians by gathering all the information in one place and one location. It decreases the chance of errors that may occur otherwise, in case of manual listing.

Integrated Library System, is linked to the data already present in common databases and then it integrates this data and future data into its database. ILS follows multiple protocols and these features are known to be its main features and one of the emerging features as well. These protocols include Z39.50, MARC, NCIP, Unicode, URL, XML and Open archive initiative (Breeding, 2009). ILS is also linked with various E-learning websites for increased resource availabilities to university students. In the future, emerging features may include electronic resource management, content management system and digital library system software.

Koha and Evergreen are open-sourced with ILS and are used by thousands of students and faculty members in universities and colleges worldwide. In real life, these two software along with other Integrated Library System software are preferred by students and academicians because they are reliable (Todd & Christopher, 2018). Students and personnel related to information studies, use ILS because of its cataloging and categorizing features, information studies and libraries share proximity due to which it demands classification, organization and quick availability of information. In a case study done to assess the performance of ILS, data was collected from the libraries of higher education in Kuwait. After analyzing Koha’s use, it was found that 92.8 percent preferred its use over manual library search because its modules were updated over time (AlKanan and Asma, 2016).

Integrated Library System is an easy, effective and advanced way of collecting data and keeping its record because of its distinctive features such as digital cataloging, categorizing and return status features. It is both cost and time effective, likewise, it is helping the researchers, students, and academicians worldwide.

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