

Koha

An Open Source Library Application Software

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Abstract - A properly computerized library will help its user with quick services. Library automation refers to mechanization of library housekeeping operations predominantly by computerization. Koha is an integrated software system with required models for small to very large libraries. Being an open source any library wanted to go for automation for their library housekeeping operations can make use of this software. Open source package KOHA is found most useful and gives highest level of satisfaction to its users.

Key words: Open source software, Koha, Library automation

I. INTRODUCTION

Library is a growing organism. Library automation has become a must in the changing world scenario. Twentieth century saw the emergence of information and communication technology (ICT) and their use in the libraries. Application of the computers has led the changes in services and sources in the libraries. To provide services to their users quickly and efficiently, librarians applied automation in their libraries[1]. Currently library management software are integrated system based on relational database approach, in which system files are integrated in such a way that any change in a single file can activate appropriate changes in the related files. These software, being developed by the vendors, were very costly and was not affordable for many libraries. Also they had to depend the vendor for any fault. This made professionals to think differently and they reached the conclusion 'the open source software'.

II. WHAT IS OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE?

Any software that is available to the user at free of cost and if it gives the user the freedom to share study and modify is called open source software. Open source movement was started by Richard Stallman in 1983. The term 'open source' was given by Christine Peterson of the foresight institute in 1997[2]. Some of the benefits of open source software in libraries are;

- ✚ Oss helps libraries to be self-reliant
- ✚ Libraries can develop the software according to their own needs and circumstances

- ✚ They are more effective in the research and development activities
- ✚ Oss is independent of the type and size of the library[3]

III. KOHA-THE FIRST OPEN SOURCE LIBRARY SOFTWARE

A. A Brief History

Koha, the first open source integrated library system was developed by Katipo Communications Limited of wellington, New Zealand for Horowhenua Library Trust, a regional library system near wellington. They were using an old integrated library system that was no longer being developed. It is designed to manage physical collections of items (books, CD's, videos, reference, etc.)[5] The user interface is very configurable and adaptable and has been translated into many languages. It provides cataloguing, Searching, Member / patron management, an acquisitions system, and circulation (issues, returns, and reserves). Circulation is handled with a full screen curses interface or a Web-based interface. It has OPAC and cataloguing, acquisition circulation modules.

B. Koha users

Thousands of libraries are using Koha, including academic, public, school and special libraries, in Africa, Australia, Canada, USA France, India and, of course, New Zealand[5]. Along with a committed team of programmers its development is steered by a growing community of libraries collaborating to achieve their technology. Presently, Delhi public Library, Magarpetta city Library, Indian statistical institute and many more are using Koha[5].

C. Features of Koha

- ❖ A full featured modern integrated library system (ILS)[2]
- ❖ Simple, clear interface for librarians and members
- ❖ Web-based interface i.e., Koha is a platform-independent solution.
- ❖ Free/open source under the general public License(GPL)

- ❖ Customizable search[6]
- ❖ Full catalogue, circulation, acquisitions, library stock management
- ❖ Serial management module

D. KOHA Modules

Koha application contains several modules of various categories right from mandatory to optional, packed rich set of features. Some of the modules of koha are: Cataloguing, Circulation, Acquisition, Authorities, Serials, Reports, and Patrons etc[5].



Figure 1: Koha Login screen

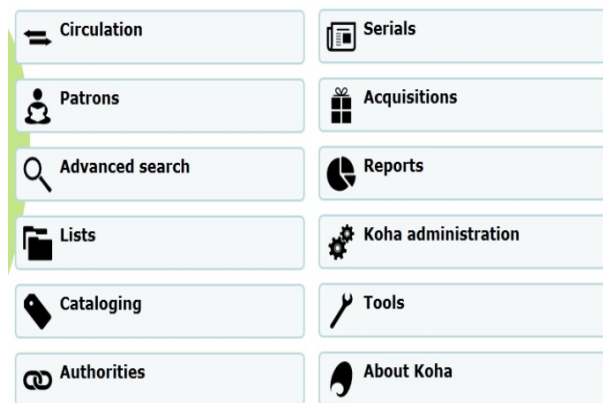


Figure 2: koha module

• **Cataloguing**

The cataloguing module is one of the principal strong points of koha. Several frameworks can be defined to do different cataloguing for monographs, E-resources, Periodicals etc. It can be displayed in MARC format, in simplified form

• **OPAC**

Koha’s OPAC is a very powerful module. It allows the user for a wider and detailed bibliographic search. The search can be done through different tags such as author, title, keyword, callnumber, accession number etc.

• **Circulation**

The circulation system maintains up to date membership record and the latest status of the collection meant for circulation.

- **Check out:** Many items can be checked out by an automated system and do not require any paper work. While issuing a book the respective user’s last name or member card

number is keyed in the place provided in circulation section. This takes to the issuing form which includes the item number box.

- **Check in :** Check in of the book is known as Returns in Koha, if any issued book is returned on or after due date, the item number is keyed in, which provides the details about the book as well as the member information
- **Document delivery:** The circulation desk is also involved with the delivery of documents and electronic resources

• **Acquisitions**

A library acquisition includes ordering, claiming, receiving, preservation and payment of all library materials. It also includes monitoring, coordinating, implementing and evaluating all collection-related activities, serial check in, control, organization and self preservation, providing management and financial reports and statistics, selecting and evaluating sources of supply, organizing gift and exchange activities etc. Koha supports all these process of acquisition.

• **Authorities**

In library and information science, authority control is the practice of creating and maintaining headings for bibliographic material in a catalogue. Authority control fulfills two important functions. First it enables cataloguers to disambiguate items with similar or identical headings. Second, authority control is used by cataloguers to collocate material that belong together although they present themselves differently

• **Patrons**

A library patron is someone who uses a library. Patron gets a library card, browses the available books, CDs, DVDs etc. and either selects some to check out or examines them while at the library. This module allows managing all transactions related to patrons. In order to have a patron a patron search, go to patrons module found on the main navigation bar. You can either enter part of patron’s name or library card number.

• **Serials**

This module is helping the librarians to handle the journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers etc. It is registering subscription with reviews and tracks the arrival of periodicals. Koha manages late issues, skipped issues, and claims with the suppliers. It also manages complex classifications, allowing the librarian to work with eleven different publication periods, with delayed publications, and with publication out of sequence. The state of collection can be displayed differently in the OPAC and the librarian interface.

• **Reports**

Koha reporting module includes for powerful reporting “wizards”; catalogue, patrons, circulations and acquisition. Each wizard gives us statistical data related to these areas. These data is up to date and gives factual information about the function of library. It also provides current status of serial circulation, statistical data on lost items, average loan time of checked out items etc.

D. Advantages&Disadvantages

- **Advantages**
 - Reliability
 - Better support
 - Innovation
 - Low cost[4]
- **Disadvantages**
 - Many libraries do not have the in-house expertise to support open-source software
 - Don't have the ability to train staff on the use of the new technologies
 - Open source alternatives weren't perceived as feature-rich enough to handle the complex needs of libraries

5. CONCLUSION

The invention and practice of open source software pay the way for a gigantic movement in information technology. It is nothing but koha, the open source library software, take initiative to spread it in the library management field. It was a humble starting of a great movement. So many libraries around the world accepted koha whole heartedly. Now, there are many open source library software available in E-market. What make koha different from others are its authenticity, functionality, novelty and wide acceptance.

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