

## **Implementation of Alexandria Library Management Software in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) Library, Anambra State**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examined the automation of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library using Alexandria Library Management Software. Specific objectives of the study include: to highlight the various features of Alexandria LMS, examine reasons for the successful deployment of the software in COOU Library, and to consider the strengths and limitations of the software. The strengths and limitations of the software were also discussed. The paper concluded by enjoining librarians yet to automate their operations to consider deploying Alexandria Library Management Software.*

**Keywords:** Alexandria, Automation, Implementation, Software, Librarians

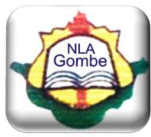
### **Introduction**

Information and Communication Technologies have triggered a paradigm shift in the process of information acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination. cursory observation Abdulsalami, Okezie, & Agbo, (2013) and Emasealu, 2019 shows that the use of computer and other information technologies have become almost fully integrated into all aspects of the university system. The library as an integral and active part of this system has undergone various stages as well as experienced a phenomenal development in the use of information technology for creating, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating information.

The 21st century information processing and dissemination terrain has been influenced positively by the internet and other information and communication technologies. This has introduced a more efficient way of implementing Ranganathan's law. Quick access to information takes premium in user satisfaction and has been the main essence of library services that informs users' preference of the automated over the traditional system of information handling. Manual or traditional processing of information has lots of limitations which take its toll on user satisfaction thereby negating the five laws of librarianship as propounded by Ranganathan (1957).

The Library, which is pivotal to the teaching and learning process, is dynamic and evolving. Described as a growing organism by Ranganathan (1957), the library has to be transformed not only in collections but also in meeting the changing nature of users' demands and needs. There is a clarion call on libraries in the modern society to embrace new ways of doing things as their role(Wenborn, 2018).

Library automation is the application of computers and utilisation of computer-based products and services in the performance of different library operations and functions and



providing various services and producing outputs. It implies a high degree of mechanisation/computerisation of various routine and repetitive tasks to be performed by human beings, thereby reducing human intervention to a great extent (Kemdarne, 2012). Library automation is also the application of ICTs to library operations and services (unesco.org, 2015). The automated library is internet-technology based. The rapid development of technology seen improvements in communication links and a lowering of costs in accessing the World Wide Web. The implication of this is that the Internet is now more widely available to more people. As a result, many establishments have capitalised on its potentials to reach a wider audience with their services (Ossai-Ugbah, 2010, Idiegbeyanose and Ilo, 2013). Automated libraries can also thus be used to reach all the potential library users without the library staff actually travelling out of the library. Suffice it to note here that the rate to which the automation process is completed however, varies between the developed and developing countries and, from one institution to another (Ezechukwu, & Adewole-Odeshi, 2018). Libraries irrespective of the types are automated using Library Management Softwares. Hence this work discusses the library management software used in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library.

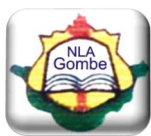
Automation of libraries and library information resource databases is usually achieved by using an application known as Library Management Software. The software is commonly used by libraries and librarians to be able to manage and access their library resources through a single, computer-based platform. Such applications make it easy for library staff to manage books and records (Emasealu, 2019). Self-service or web-based library management applications allow users to efficiently search online libraries for desired book or material and read it online. Thus, library management system can become best friend to every 21st century librarian.

Alexandria is library Management software. Other notable Library Management Softwares according to Obajemu, Osagie, Akinade, & Ekere, (2013).include;

- CDS/ISIS
- GLAS
- Integrated system or library Management system
- KOHA
- XLIB
- LIBERO
- Polaris
- VERSO
- Alexandria
- ConcourseS
- Book Collector
- Bibliotheca
- Library World
- LibLime Koha
- Follett Destiny Library Manager,

This study concentrates on Alexandria Library Management Software since it is the software used for the management of the Libraries in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) Library.

### **Automation in the Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) Library**



The automation of COOU library started in 2018 with the choice of Alexandria Library Management Software. The library was networked, staff were trained and retrospective conversion of data commenced in the library using a digitization machine called Atiz. The concentration was on the circulation and cataloguing module. The aim was to convert all the bibliographic records from manual to online using the software for access through OPAC. The project was simultaneously going on at Uli, Awka and Igbariam campuses of the university. This project experienced serious pitfalls in Igbariam Campus Library. The converted data were lost as a result of the server that crashed. This project was suspended in Igbariam campus since 2019. However, the Alexandria Library Management Software works smoothly in Uli and Awka Campuses' libraries.

### **Alexandria**

Alexandria is an integrated web-based library management software developed by Companion Corporation, United States in 1987. Alexandria library automation software solution is designed to fit the needs of libraries of any-size and desired configuration. Apart from managing all library routines, it is a fully integrated computer system that includes various modules. These modules include; acquisitions, cataloguing, indexing, patrons' registration, circulation, report generation, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and Web Public Access Catalogue (WebPAC). The integration of these modules eliminates duplication of data and waste of effort.

### **Features of Alexandria Library Management Software**

#### **Orders and Acquisitions Module**

This module contains the names and addresses of booksellers/vendors used by the library. It also serves to specify the full details of the bookseller with each order, so that a code number can be used on the order record. Items can easily be ordered for and the received items can automatically be added to the library inventory.

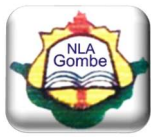
#### **Cataloguing Module**

Alexandria, through Item Management Window helps in locating and importing complete and up-to-standard MARC records of all items (books, periodicals, e-resources) by searching across hundreds of Z39.50 servers, or by specifying favourite sources, thus simplifying and standardizing cataloguing practices. The imported data are thereafter edited, bearing a customized barcode label before they are saved into the library catalogue. Alexandria creates, stores, and updates MARC records with the information entered on the Items Management window, thereby enabling library information management. The Items Management window consists of two distinct areas:

- i. The left-hand side of the Item Management window is the Item Title List and associated tools.
- ii. The larger, right-hand portion of the Item Management window is the Current Item Record pane where the selected item/title record is displayed, in full, along with related tools that help perform operations on said record.

#### **Patron Management Window**

The Patrons window contains information about the library users including their respective photographs. Information about each user can be created, viewed, modified and removed. The Patrons management window consists of two distinct areas:



- i. The left hand side of the Patrons management window belongs to the Patron Records List which is basically a list that contains the names of library users (i.e. patrons and librarians) that have been created and assigned a security group. It is also used for browsing patron and operator records and other related tools. Any of the users displayed within this field may be selected in order to modify their information or remove them completely.
- ii. The larger, right-hand portion of the Patron Management window consists of the Current Patron Record pane where the selected patron or librarian record is displayed, in full, along with associated tools that help perform operations on said record.

### **Circulation Module**

The circulation module of Alexandria performs all tasks involved in the circulation of library materials. These include check-in, check-out, inventory, overdue notices, holds, and reserves, processing fees, fines, payments, fine receipt and books renewals. Alexandria has powerful patron tools and utilities for registering patrons in simple steps, using easy import wizard, or auto import features. It can also automatically email overdue notices to patrons, hold fulfillment, and item renewal notices. The use of technological devices such as computers, barcode labels, scanners and its software in circulation helps in performing these routine operations easily and quickly.

### **Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) - Researcher Workstation**

The Online Public Access Catalogue which serves as bibliographic control tool is an electronic catalogue which provides access to library collections from the networked computer workstations within the library complex or through remote login by staff and students to the catalogue from their offices and hostels respectively. The system allows cataloguing details to be accessible through the internet anywhere around the world at any time (WebPAC). Researcher is Alexandria's default search interface for this purpose. Once a search has been performed, it provides the results of latest search in variety of changeable views along with an explanation of why no search results were returned.

### **Reports and Statistics Module**

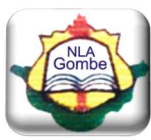
Alexandria through the Report Writer window allows generation of nearly endless variety of reports and statistics in cataloguing, acquisitions, serials, and circulation. Essentially, this window provides general templates that help build reports that meet the form, content, and organizational requirements. It also performs a comprehensive analysis of library's collection status, and usage reports in multiple and various formats.

### **Strengths of Alexandria LMS**

The following are the strengths of Alexandria LMS:

**Technical Support and Developers' Reputation** - The first thing the library considered was institutional support and secondly the reputation of the company that developed the software. One has to be skeptical about the software developed by individuals and newly established companies as there may be no continuity. Alexandria was developed by a reputable company and has been sustained for over 20 years. Technical support is made available through various media and their response is in real-time. The developers also take suggestions from clients, which result in the introduction of additional features that constitute a regular upgrade of the software.

**Cost** - Alexandria is a cheap, cross-platform library automation software considering the functions it performs. Also, the software is upgraded regularly without attracting extra costs.



**Flexible and User Friendly** - Alexandria's default search interface is intuitive, simple, fast and easy to use. This interface also allows you to search your collection using the advanced Boolean modifiers (And, Or, Not, and Through). It also allows customization of interface in terms of design and content to suit the user institution's peculiarities.

**MARC and Z39.50 Compliant** – The software is capable of producing, locating and retrieving complete and up-to-standard MARC records by searching across hundreds of Z39.50 servers, or by specifying favourite sources, thus simplifying and standardizing cataloguing practices. For easy migration in future it is important to adopt softwares that allow searching, retrieval and exchange of records across platforms. This is fully embedded in Alexandria.

**Concurrent Authentication** – Unlike some Library Management Softwares where licenses have to be purchased for each user in order to have access to the workstation, Alexandria allows simultaneous logins at different times and places with or without the same authentication details by several users.

**Compatible with Self-service kiosks and Security Devices** - Alexandria provides self-service kiosks that allow patrons to perform check-in and checkout transactions unassisted. This helps to reduce manpower and by implication the cost of hiring them. It also supports Library Security Devices such as Electromagnetic and Radio-Frequency Identification which are used to identify and track tags attached to materials from the library as well as other peripherals like printers, barcode scanners (wireless and wired), bluetooth etc.

#### **Limitations of Alexandria LMS**

No matter the sophistication of any software, some limitations will still be inevitable. For Alexandria LMS, the following are some of the observed limitations:

- i. **Indexing of Periodicals** - The software lacks the capacity to adequately capture articles and other details in periodicals.

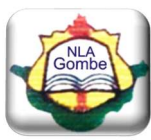
**Report Generation** – the software has the capacity to generate reports on the total number of collections (Including titles and copies). It is however difficult to generate reports based on specific subject areas.

#### **Reasons for Successful Deployment of Alexandria in COOU Library**

The deployment of Alexandria was a huge success in COOU library for the following reasons:

- i. **Adequate Funding** - The peculiarity of COOU University as a government-based institution created a good pivot for deployment of Alexandria software. As against the usually cited challenge of lack of funds in literature on automation of libraries, the library enjoys good financial backing from TETFUND.
- ii. **Regular Power Supply** – The University does not solely depend on public power source. There is a dedicated 500Kva generator attached to the library which serves as a back-up in the event of power outage.
- iii. **Necessary Infrastructure** – The library building, ICT infrastructures, furniture, electrical appliances and other modern working tools needed for successful deployment of Alexandria and continuity of operations were adequately provided for.
- iv. **Engagement of ICT Proficient Librarians** – ICT proficiency forms one of the major factors considered in the engagement of librarians and other library support staff. The librarians are always engaged in training and retraining exercise.





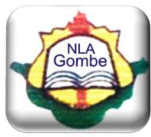
- iv. **Engagement of a System Analyst** – COOU library has a full time computer scientist engaged as a system analyst. He works hand in hand with the librarian in issues pertaining to automation.

## Conclusion

The importance of automation in a 21<sup>st</sup> century library cannot be overemphasized as it conforms to the best practices around the world. The hitherto herculean routine task of librarians becomes highly simplified when relevant technologies are deployed. In order to successfully maintain a fully automated library system, certain parameters must be put in place. These include adequate funding, uninterrupted power supply, necessary ICT infrastructures, and the engagement of ICT savvy librarians among others. Proper engagement of these parameters has been responsible for the success story of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library in the deployment of Alexandria Library Management Software.

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