

**KOHA OPEN SOURCE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE:
AN OVERVIEW**

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Abstract

This paper is focused on the management of libraries using KOHA Open Source Software (OSS). Koha is the first free software library automation package. In use worldwide, its development is steered by a growing community of users collaborating to achieve their technology goals. Koha's feature set continues to evolve and expand to meet the needs of its user base. Koha is a fully featured, scalable library management system. Development is sponsored by libraries of varying types and sizes, volunteers, and support companies worldwide.

Keywords: *KOHA, Open Source Software, Digital Library, Academic library, Library Management.*

Introduction

Koha is the first open source software for library management. The features available are gaining momentum popularity within short period of time. The open source software is free, it means it provide access to users to make changing in their source code as per the need. The users also have the freedom to redistribute the same with up gradation. This is create an opportunity to linux developer and learners to customize the existing source code. It is community based library management software where group of users make changes and distribute the same free of cost to others. KOHA open source software is useful for library management. The academic libraries spending huge amount on library automation with commercial library management software whereas, KOHA available free of cost.

Academic libraries are adopting the KOHA software because of their comprehensiveness in customization, but the installation of KOHA is not an easiest task to do. It is only possible through the LIBLive CD designed and developed by Dr.ARD Prasad if the users are unaware about the linux or programming languages. The communities are working together for continuous development of KOHA software.

KOHA open source software

Koha open source library management system is a new entrant into library automation marketplace in India. The work on Koha started in September 6, 1999 by Catipo Communications following a request from Harowhenua Library Trust, New Zealand. Harowhenua Library Trust implemented Koha in January 1, 2000 and the Trust released Koha under the most popular and flexible GNU General Public License for deriving support from the global community and ensuring future development of the system¹. The same year Koha was deployed in St. Joseph's College, Devagiri in the Indian state of Kerala. This is considered to be the first Koha installation in India. Thereafter, there have been a number of Koha installations in India and the group of active Koha users in India is growing. The annual conference of Koha developers and users called 'Kohacon' held in Pune, India in 2011 was a recent significant milestone.

Training and awareness can eliminate misconceptions of many library professionals regarding open source software. Professional organisations, library schools and prestigious libraries in India have organised Koha workshops. DELNET, NCSI, DRTC, Kerala Library Association, Cochin University, University of Kerala, University of Burdwan, Mahatma Gandhi University, NISCAIR and OSS Labs have organised Koha training. Many learning and installation aids have been developed for Koha training programmes. Koha Live CD is a helpful tool using which librarians can install Koha easily without the help of a Linux expert. DRTC, Bangalore developed a live CD (<http://sourceforge.net/projects/liblivecd/>) suitable for learning purpose and installation. Koha, DSpace and other applications are also included in the live CD. Another customised Koha live DVD developed by the principal author of this article is available for download at <https://sourceforge.net/projects/kohalivedvd/>. We now discuss in the use of Koha in two libraries, a major public library network and another prominent university library.

A general study to know the perceptions of LIS professionals towards open source software adoption in libraries says that OSS are rapidly gaining attention of LIS Professional community. OSS provides alternative, cheap and innovative technological solution to libraries. For this reason, OSS can be a great alternative to the expensive proprietary library software. LIS community has positive perceptions to OSS however its widespread adoption is still to happen².

Mukhopadhyay³ gives a clear picture of the development of library management systems over the years and emergence of open source software solutions for library management as alternatives to closed commercial products. Bhavsar⁴ conducted a survey among Indian library professionals to find out the satisfaction of Koha users. The main aim of the survey was to find out the practical problems faced by Indian librarians and many suggestions for future improvements were presented. Kushwah et. al.⁵ conducted a study on two popular proprietary library management systems; i.e. Libsys and SOUL and compared them with Koha.

Koha makes use of open source components like MySQL database, Apache web server, Perl programming language and Linux operating system. There is no need to invest additional amount for preparing technical platform for Koha installation. Proprietary library management systems need compatible commercial applications to run the system. In this situation, libraries have to spend more amount for buying database application, operating system and anti-virus programmes.

Installation and maintenance of Koha was difficult for library professionals because of its complex installation procedure. Koha support using community resources is free. Highly detailed user manuals, installation procedures, data migration assistance, active discussion forums and blogs are very helpful for library professionals who like to maintain Koha without using the help of commercial service providers. Majority of Koha users participated in this survey made use of community resources for Koha installation and maintenance. Very few Koha users approached commercial Koha service companies for Koha installation and maintenance. Assistance from commercial Koha service companies are very helpful in data migration from legacy systems, customisation, development and online hosting.

KOHA CD

Manual installation of Koha is time consuming and requires the expertise of a Linux administrator. Majority of the libraries installed Koha manually and 30.30% of libraries installed Koha with the help of Koha live CD. Many learning and installation aids for Koha are now available for the help of library professionals. Koha Live CDs are useful for installation and learning purpose. It assists the librarians to install Koha in their library without the help of a Linux expert. Installation process is simple and Koha is ready to use after the completion of installation from live CD. Availability of Koha live

CD can be one of the reasons that increased the popularity of Koha among library professionals in India.

KOHA Modules

Acquisition module is in transition process and lots of changes have been added to the latest version. Placing and receiving orders in a few steps is the advantage of acquisition module. Creating budget and proper allocation of funds will help to give control over library finance.

Serials management module does not connect with budget and it lacks article indexing feature. Due to these reasons, serials management module could find much acceptance among Koha users.

Cataloguing Koha makes use of MARC 21 and UNIMARC standard for cataloguing framework. It also attached Z39.50 standard for downloading the cataloguing details from remote library servers.

Circulation module of Koha was the most highly rated module. Circulation process in Koha is time saving and it helps to complete the circulation transactions with ease. Circulation module options are attached to the universal task bar and library staff can easily switch to check in or check out of documents during other works.

Handling of Indian languages in Koha is a promising feature for public libraries.

Conclusion

Implementation of Koha in reputed libraries in India has given enough publicity among library professionals. News regarding Koha implementation in Delhi Public Library, Mysore University, British Libraries and Connemara Public Library etc. have appeared in popular online discussion forums like LIS Forum and has come to the attention of library professionals. A few library science departments and institutions in India have already started teaching Koha.

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