

LESSON 2. LIBRARY HOUSE KEEPING ROUTINES: ACQUISITION AND ORDERING

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2.0. Objectives

In this unit you will be introduced to the concept of ordering and acquisition of resources with the aid of computer; major functions involved; type of files to be maintained etc. After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Explain the functions of ordering and acquisition section in automated environment;
 - Identify various files to maintained for effective acquisition system;
 - Benefits to be reaped from automation of library acquisition procedures.
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2.1. Introduction

Libraries are record intensive, as the information of records is needed for several library operations. Acquisition relates to the building up of library collection on the basis of which all the services are organized. Main objective of an acquisition system is to locate, manage and control funds allocated for the purpose. An automated acquisition system has to fulfill all the major functions of a manual system, in addition has to perform more in the development of a master database that will be the primary source to manipulate and produce different databases. Acquisition is a good place to start consideration of computerization of library processes, because it is the first of these operations. Many of the ordering and acquisition procedures are now computer-based. The ordering process is particularly suited to computerization. The primary benefit is to have access to the records by order number, by supplier, by date of order, by department, or bibliographically by author, title, subject, ISBN etc.

2.2. Need for automation of acquisition system

The decision to use an automated or manual acquisition system depends on several factors such as the size of the library, budget, and strength of the staff, their computer skills and training opportunities. Considering an automated system should cause a change in the existing system for efficiency in terms of saving of costs and staff time and improving services to the customers.

Libraries have automated acquisitions for a variety of reasons that include:

- Lowering unit costs,
- Improving service,
- Speeding the ordering-cataloging process,
- Accessing ordering and in-process information,

- Collecting and organizing acquisition data, and
- Linking with other systems both inside and outside the library.

2.3. Functions of automated acquisition system

As a minimum, automated acquisition systems should perform the same activities required in a manual acquisitions operation but with the added requirement that the system perform these operations more efficiently. While significant savings in staffing costs have not yet been shown, automated systems can achieve efficiency by making data transfer more accurate, by reducing costs through economy of scale, and by collecting new data or manipulating it in new ways. Although acquisitions procedures may vary depending on the library's mission and resources, all libraries have some goals in common. These include acquiring materials as quickly and economically as possible and minimizing the amount of paperwork, filing and follow-up needed. Some of the major programs of acquisition are request collection, order processing, remainder processing, receipt, query and report generation programs. Input of the system consists of records of new orders, items currently received, alterations and corrections to existing records in the order file, items developed or not available etc. Generally, the automated acquisition system has to fulfill the following functions:

- Duplicate checking;
- Preparation of order lists;
- Sending orders to book suppliers;
- Monitoring orders and follow up action;
- Verification with order file and invoices;
- Maintaining state of funds and budget control etc.

J.E.Rowley has listed the following functions of an ordering or acquisition system:

- To receive records of items to be required;
- To establish whether items requested are already in stock or on order;

- To print orders or otherwise order items;
- To check when orders are overdue and follow up overdue orders;
- To maintain a file of records of items on order;
- To note the arrival of ordered items and prepare for payment;
- To maintain book-fund statistics and accounts.
- Notify the receipt of items;
- Produce various listings of books on order or recently acquired.

Various files are required to carry out the above functions of acquisition system. A holding file is required to store catalogue of all library documents. Further, an order file, supplier file, requester file, fund file etc are to be maintained. The order file subsequently becomes the master file and can be manipulated for different purposes.

2.4. Ordering

Ordering procedure involves a variety of sub functions and the following paragraphs present a brief over view of those functions.

2.4.1. Order entry and checking

In a library, both customers/users and library staff may request materials on a regular basis. If you select many of the books from publishers' catalogs and prepublication announcements, much of the bibliographic information needed will be listed in the catalog. For customer requests, generally a the libraries use a formal request form so that all the pertinent information, including the name of the requester, his affiliation with the organization, the details of requested document and the nature of allocation of funds can be gathered from the beginning. The bibliographic information from this step is also used in placing the order and processing the book after receipt.

Once a request has been received, the library staff must verify whether the requested document is already available in the library, in any format, to avoid unnecessary duplication. If not available its details could be ascertained, usually by using an online database such as OCLC, a CD-ROM such as Books in Print Plus or a printed source such as *Books in Print*. To implement this, the automated system should be able to

- Search the online catalogue and retrieve necessary details
- Search the order file for a title and retrieve the order record
- Update the order record by adding the details of new request
- Download necessary bibliographic details from online databases/CD-ROM databases
- Copy the bibliographic details for additional copies of an existing title.
- Creation of materials-wanted records that includes essential information for ordering.

All requests for an order must be checked to ensure that the item is not already in the stock or on order and to find out the accuracy of bibliographic details of the records on order. Some of this checking can be performed by matching of items requested against computer files of existing stock or other bibliographic records.

2.4.2. Choosing an option for placing orders.

Orders could be placed by different methods. Whether manual or automated, three methods are generally accepted.

- **Ordering directly from a publisher** is often the least effective method for acquiring materials. It is usually the most expensive method, since vendors often offer better discounts, and it can be very time-consuming to track many different policies, schedules, shipments and invoices. There are some cases, however, when going to the publisher makes sense. E.g. Encyclopedias.
- **Ordering from vendors** rather than ordering directly from publishers is often a better choice for small libraries, since vendors offer better discounts and more services.
- **Purchasing materials at retail bookstores** requires a balance between cost and urgency. It may be faster to buy some popular books at a retail bookstore, but the price is likely to be higher than from a vendor and the specific requirements of documents may not be available.

Purchase order forms can be created for selected vendors.

2.4.3. Input of an automated Order system

The ordering system should prepare order lists with minimum effort by using common data elements and grouping the order to a common vendor/ publisher. The input of an ordering system that has to satisfy the above-mentioned functions must include: details of new orders; amendments or corrections to existing orders; booksellers / vendors reports. The next step is to prepare order lists. With the help of the computer, bibliographic records for new orders may be drawn either from file of MARC (Machine Readable Catalogue) records, from a file of existing items in the library, from a file of cooperative records, or from local inputting. Order record of each item typically includes:

Book No (ISBN)

Bibliographic details (Author, title, edition publisher etc)

No of copies ordered

Estimated price

Currency

Bookseller

Nature of book fund

Department code etc.

This is the main file, which becomes the master file. In addition a second file has to be maintained with names and addresses of booksellers used by the library and this file must also be open to alterations. The initial order file could be provisional until the senior staff verifies it and then its status becomes a 'confirmed' file. The system automatically updates the fund account records reflecting expenditure and balance etc in all transactions viz., ordered, received, cancelled, reordered etc.

2.4.4. Processing and transmission of orders: The process is initiated by adding orders to the order file; this prompts dispatch of orders to the supplier. Once the order entry and update process is completed, the system should be able to:

- Decode order data elements as bibliographic and vendor data values
- Transform the input data into actual orders to be transmitted to the correct vendor or other source

- Generate orders in printed form or for transmission via e-mail or direct link to the vendor using telecommunication facilities
- Transmission of these orders online or of-line
- Keep track of orders sent by printed form or online method
- Generate staff output/production reports regarding the number of orders placed, number of items received etc. periodically as required.

In ordering systems, batch processed operation systems are generally satisfactory. The initiative for online operation of ordering systems generally develops within an integrated online system. However online ordering may cause errors, so librarians must be cautious.

2.5. Processing

Processing of the orders involves important functions such as verification after receiving and processing for payment.

2.5.1. Received item processing

This function involves update of the order record to show the receipt of ordered items. At regular intervals the computer checks for the orders that remain unfulfilled. The system should be able to

- Retrieve the order record for the item received;
- Update the status of the item with the date of receipt and designate the item as 'received';
- Record information about condition of the book i.e. good or defective and if defective to mark as 'returned for replacement'; produce packing slips for the items to be returned;
- Update the corresponding invoice record reflecting the correct status of the order;
- Accommodate documents received as gift or complimentary or exchange;
- Produce Performa invoice indicating the items received, returned and accepted along with amounts for each vendor.

The output files from the ordering system consists of –

- Printed listings of the order file
- An accession register

- Accounts
- Recommendations for future acquisitions
- Statistics
- Book card
- Processing slips.

2.5.2. Invoice processing

The processing of invoices for received items will be the next step and for this purpose the acquisition module of an automated system should be capable of handling three situations:

- Items and invoice received at the same time
- Items received in advance
- Invoice received in advance.

At this stage, the system should be able to add invoice record and updated order record with receipt data

It has to calculate general discounts, postage, and handling charges. It has to update the fund record and reallocation of funds record; adding the invoice record to invoice file with necessary details; and finally to update the order and fund records.

Generally claims will be made for those items that are not received by the library. Some times the items might have been received but the invoices; in such cases claim must be made for invoice. Based on the current status of the items, claim notices will be prepared and sent to those concerned.

The library has every right to cancel a placed order in case of financial constraints or the book is not as per the order or not in good condition. The automated acquisition system should support such activities. It has to be provided with necessary access controls to cancel an order in total or as part. In such cases the system has to generate cancellation notices to the concerned vendors, calculate refund etc. the next step is to prepare and dispatch the payment notices to the vendors and accounting unit. Final, but most important activity of automated acquisition system to maintain accurate and up-to-date financial records system for further auditing and control of revenue and expenditure.

2.6. Financial accounting of acquisitions

Acquisition functions have large financial factors; the library needs to know what it has encumbered to whom, what it has spent and how much balances are available. Many libraries purchase from different fund accounts and must keep track of budget process in each one. For example, a university library may incur expenses from U.G.C.grants, library development grants, internal resources generated from publications, fines etc. and / or gratis received from endowments or philanthropists. The library managers have to keep track of these accounts.

- Some libraries allocate acquisition funds to departments and branch libraries without distributing funds to separate accounts. In such cases special book keeping of these 'allocated accounts' is required.
- Acquisition librarian needs to know the percentage of their orders and the balance amounts at every stage during the fiscal year. Hence the automated system should provide for double entry bookkeeping and detailed break down of accounts.
- All libraries have to make financial requests and reports to their parent institution in the format required by the institution. Further they have to maintain reports for internal purpose such as how much amount spent on purchase of books for a particular discipline or subject, specific type of material etc. Automatic acquisition system and financial spreadsheet programs should allow for reforming information in whatever format is needed.
- Another financial file in acquisition section is the currency file that gives details of foreign currency exchange rates that automatically calculate in correct rupee value and can be updated to reflect currency status as of the moment.

The more current accounting information is, the better decisions the acquisition staff can make. Some current integrated systems allow for real time accounting so that the order transactions, payment of invoices are displayed at any moment and the librarian can keep track on the encumbrance and expenditure figures.

2.7. Functional capabilities of an automated acquisition system

To achieve the set goals an automated acquisition system ought to possess certain functional capabilities to perform specified tasks. For the purpose the system has to maintain different types of databases viz.,

- External databases such as online and CD-ROM that helps as sources of information for selection and order preparation.
- Internal data files with unique identification number and designated data elements.
- Currency exchange rate file
- Authority file as in the case of Library Congress authority files that are used to record validate names and addresses during acquisition process.
- The current order file / order process file
- Invoice data file
- Finance data file
- Vendor file
- Department indent and allocation of funds file etc.

Keith C.Wright suggested the checklist for the acquisition module or system, which helps in the selection of a functional acquisition module in an integrated system. The checklist includes:

1. "Integration with other modules of the system.
2. Searching capability for records in online catalogue, on-order file, or other files.
3. Ability to place reserve on items in on-order file.
4. Ability to differentiate between types of orders: original order, re-orders, and gifts.
5. Accounting by sufficient number of different codes or types.
6. Electronic ordering from jobbers (vendors) or publishers.
7. Electronic ordering adheres to 39-49 Computerized Book Ordering.
8. Vendor files.
9. Transfer of funds between accounts.
10. Fulfillment statistics by jobber and publisher.
11. Duplicate checking in online catalogue and on-order file.

12. Reports on items on-order, back order, cancelled in summary form and by jobber (vendor) or publisher.
13. Item list of materials not received at specified intervals for possible cancellation.
14. Reports on acquisitions in a variety of formats – type of materials, sources, time between order and fulfillment, as well as cumulative statistics on these items”.

2.8. Summary

As libraries move towards increasing use of computer-based technologies, automated acquisitions became more popular. Though initially stand alone programs or modules made available for acquisition and account keeping, now more integrates systems are developed and used as the libraries are applying computer technologies in all areas of library operations. The emerging technologies offer different options to libraries for automation of their acquisitions and integrate the same with other operations like cataloguing and circulation etc. With the automating of acquisitions activities, it is possible now to provide:

- Library staff with data on the current status of collection development, acquisitions in transition and future proposals. They can have accurate, timely and complete records of orders, fiscal data, vendor names and addresses etc.
- Library users with information about information resources in the library, resources on order, and resources which could be made available through purchase, access through online systems or the approval process.
- Library management can get periodic reports on the activities and accounting of library acquisitions at any given time, which facilitates sound decision-making.

Thus the automation of acquisition functions minimizes data redundancy and human effort as the files created at order stage can be shared across an integrated automated library system.

2.9. Further Readings

1. Rowley, J.E. Computers For Libraries, 2nded. London, Clive Bingley, 1986.
2. Lovecy, Ian. Automating Library Procedures: a survivor's handbook. New Delhi, D.K.Agencies, 1984.
3. Wright, Keith C. Computer-related technologies in library operation. Hampshire, England, Gower, 1995.
4. Tedd, L.A. An introduction to computer based library systems. 2nd ed. New York, USA, John Wiley & sons, 1984.
5. G.K.Manjunath. Library Automation: Why and How URL: <http://www.igidr.ac.in/lib/paper1.htm>

2.10. Unit - end - questions

1. What are the functions of an ordering system?
2. Describe the checklist points useful in the selection of acquisition module.

2.11. Answers to unit-end-questions

1. To receive records of items to be required; To establish whether items requested are already in stock or on order; To print orders or otherwise order items; To check when orders are overdue and follow up overdue orders; To maintain a file of records of items on order; To note the arrival of ordered items and prepare for payment; To maintain book-fund statistics and accounts; Notify the receipt of items; Produce various listings of books on order or recently acquired.
2. Integration with other modules of the system; Searching capability for records in online catalogue, on-order file, or other files; Ability to place reserve on items in on-order file; Ability to differentiate between types of orders: original order, re-orders, and gifts; Accounting by sufficient number of different codes or types; Electronic ordering from jobbers (vendors) or publishers; Electronic ordering adheres to 39-49 Computerized Book Ordering; Vendor files; Transfer of funds between accounts; Fulfillment statistics by jobber and publisher; Duplicate checking in online catalogue and on-order file; Reports on items on-order, back order, cancelled in summary form and by jobber (vendor) or publisher; Item list of materials not received at specified intervals for possible cancellation; Reports on

acquisitions in a variety of formats – type of materials, sources, time between order and fulfillment, as well as cumulative statistics on these items.