

Web based Community Information Services in Public Libraries using ‘Koha’: Open Source Integrated Library System

J. Jaba Joselin¹ and P. Panneerselvam²

¹Research Scholar, Research and Development Centre, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

²Librarian, B. S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

E-Mail: jjjoselin@gmail.com pspanneerselvam@gmail.com

Abstract - Information acts as a crucial factor in the development of individuals and community. Community information is the information which is required by every human being in their day-to-day life for problem solving and decision making. In this ‘information age’, public libraries face severe challenges from ICT developments and changing user expectations. UNESCO Public Library Manifesto defines public library as the local centre of information which makes all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. Being the local gateways of knowledge, it becomes the duty of the Public Libraries to collect organize and disseminate all local information to the community it belonged to. This study explores Community Information Services in Public libraries and proposes providing web based community information services using Koha open source library system.

Keywords: Public Library, Community Information Services, Koha, Web Based Library Services, Information Services, MARC 21 Community Information Format

I. INTRODUCTION

Information explosion and the latest developments in the Information and Community Information Technology have made significant changes in the life of human beings. In the word of National Knowledge Commission (2007)¹, ‘Libraries have a recognized social function in making knowledge publicly available to all. They serve as local centres of information and learning, and are local gateways to national and global knowledge.’ It is need of the hour for Public Libraries to transform them as local information centres. Public Libraries must provide community based information services. Community Information can be rightly called as the survival information which is necessary for the day-to-day living of every human beings. Important community information includes information on education, employment, health, housing, family welfare, government schemes, transportation, legal protection, economic opportunity, and political rights etc. Public libraries are the most suitable platform to provide such community information. This paper studies providing web based community information services in public libraries using koha open-source Integrated Library Software.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the concepts of Community Information Services in Public Libraries.
2. To explore the Marc 21 Community information tags and their uses in Community information services.

3. To suggest web based Community Information Services using Koha Integrated Library Software.

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This paper investigates into community information services in public libraries and proposes web based community information services using koha. The scope of the study is limited for the public library system in India.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been done in the arena of community information services. In 1995, A. Anaba Alemna² in his study suggested creating separate community libraries as an alternative to public libraries, which are committed to provide only community based information only for rural development in Africa. In 2006, Parthasarathi Mukhopadhyay³ attempted to develop a software framework for public library centered and Web-enabled community information services using Greenstone Digital Library Software. In 2006, Sunil Kumar Satpathy⁴ has highlighted in his study that public library will be suitable organization for providing Community Information Services than any other public institutions.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to explore effective methods to provide web based community information services in public libraries. Marc21 community information tags and their uses in providing web based community information services were studied. Koha Open Source Integrated Library Software which is compatible with Marc21 was selected for implementation of web based community information services.

VI. COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Informed citizen are considered as asset to a democratic system of government. It is the duty of a welfare state to ensure free flow of information to its entire citizen. Public Libraries are designated to provide easy and quick access of information to all citizens without any kind of discrimination based on caste, religion and sex. British Library Association⁵ defines Community Information Services as ‘services which assist individuals and groups

with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services for those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their homes, their jobs, and their rights. UNESCO Public Library Manifesto⁶ assigns ‘Ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information’ as one of the twelve missions of public libraries. Community Information may be rightly named as problem-solving information as it helps the people to take right decision at the right time.

VII. CIS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public Libraries are intended to provide equal access to all sorts of information available from books as well as from a variety of other resources to common public. Rightly praised as ‘people’s university’, public library serves as a local gateway to knowledge and provides basic condition for lifelong learning and independent decision-making of the individual and social groups. Public libraries are the right places for disseminating community based information to a large number of people irrespective of age, sex, caste, religion and social status. Being closely linked with a community, the public libraries have the responsibility to provide information needed by the people belong to that community. Besides traditional services, public libraries should enable themselves to provide community based information services. The possible Community Information Services which can be provided through public libraries can be listed as agriculture, animal husbandry, consumer affairs, economic opportunity, events, education, employment, government schemes, health, hobbies, housing, family welfare, legal protection, programs, transportation, and political rights, recreation, security, senior citizen, social services etc.

VIII. KOHA: OPEN SOURCE INTEGRATED LIBRARY SYSTEM

Koha is an open source integrated library system which is used worldwide in libraries irrespective of sizes. It facilitates modules for acquisitions, circulation, cataloging, serials management, authority control, reporting, label printing etc. Being compatible with most of the Library Standards and protocols such as MARC 21, UNIMARC, z39.50, SRU/SW, SIP2, SIP/NCIP, it ensures interoperability between Koha and other systems and technologies⁷.

A. Installation Requirements for Koha

1. Linux Server (Eg. Ubuntu)
2. Koha software (<http://www.koha.org/>)
3. Apache web server (<http://www.apache.org>)
4. MySQL. Relational Database Management System (<http://www.mysql.com>)
5. Perl modules (<http://www.cpan.org>)

IX. REASONS FOR CHOOSING KOHA FOR WEB BASED CIS

Community Information Services in Public Libraries requires regular updating of information. Web based services will make the frequent updating process easy. For providing web based Community Information Services, public libraries need specialized software. Taking consideration of the budget provisions of public libraries, koha software can be best choice for providing web based community information services. The reasons may be listed as below;

1. Koha is an Open Source Software which is free for lifetime and saves public libraries from licensing and vendor issues.
2. Since koha is an integrated library software, community information resources can be easily integrated with other library resources.
3. Koha is a MARC 21 compatible software. Besides bibliographic records, MARC21 offers separate tags for Community Information also.
4. Koha interface is easily customizable.
5. Full Text search facility of Koha will be useful for retrieving accurate information easily.

X. MARC21 FORMAT FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION

MARC21 format facilitates community information such as programs and services, names and numbers relating agencies and organizations, dates, time and venues of meeting and events, contact name and address of people etc⁸. MARC21 format is based on ISO 2709 provides a list of data elements such as fields, indicators and subfields for several types of community information.

A. Important MARC21 Fields for Community Information

TABLE I IMPORTANT MARC21 FIELDS FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION

1XX -Headings names	X9X -Local group
3XX –Physical information (hours, etc.)	046 -Coded dates (duration/expiration or service/program)
5XX -Notes	270 -Addresses
8XX -Location and alternate graphics	308 -Hours
9XX -Local information fields	311 -Meeting rooms and facilities available
X00 -Personal name	312 -Equipment available
X10 -Corporate name	531 -Eligibility, fees, and procedures
X11 -Meeting name	551 -Budget
X30 -Controlled uniform title	574 -Transportation and directions
X48 -Chronological term	575 -Accommodations for the disabled
X50 -Subject term	576 -Services available
X51 -Geographic name	587 -Other information available

B. Processing of Community Information in Koha



Fig. 1 OPAC View of a Community Information

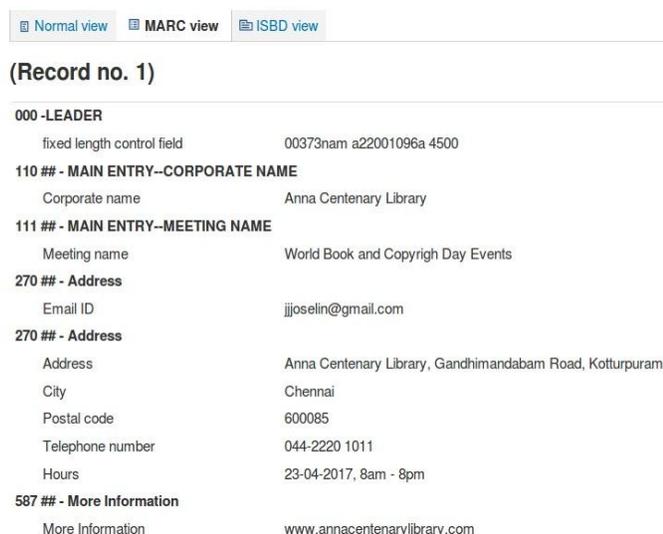


Fig. 2 MARC21 View of a Community Information

We need to frame a separate bibliographic frame work for cataloguing community information in koha. The community information can be catalogued same as cataloguing a bibliographic record into the koha. Users can search and retrieve required community information through koha Opac interface. Figure 1 shows the OPAC user view of an event category of Community Information and the figure 2 is the MARC21 format view of the same.

XII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Community information services should be made mandatory in all public libraries in India.
2. Integration of community and bibliographic information will be an effective approach in public libraries.
3. Being compatible with MARC21, Koha integrated library software will be suitable for providing combined community and bibliographic information services.

XII. CONCLUSION

In this fast changing world of Information and Communication Technology, where mobile phones and the internet become inevitable in the exchange of information, the role of public libraries has become more challenging than ever. It is the right time for Public Libraries to think beyond traditional library services and deliver ICT based information services. A policy for providing web-based community information services has to be developed national and state level. Public Libraries should be ready to work with public, private and voluntary organizations to provide community information services effectively.

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