Electronic Management Systems in University Libraries of Azerbaijan: an Overview

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Abstract

This research delves into the role of Library Management Systems (LMS) within Azerbaijani university libraries, aiming to assess their current state, challenges, and future prospects. Azerbaijan's higher education sector has evolved significantly in the past decade, prompting an adaptation of university libraries. This study investigates the integration of LMS and digital technologies within this context.

The study presents a comprehensive analysis of LMS implementation across multiple Azerbaijani universities, exploring functionalities, improvements in operations, resource accessibility, and user experience. It also identifies challenges, including budget limitations, staff training, and digital resource integration. Furthermore, the challenges and barriers Azerbaijan university libraries face in adopting and utilizing LMS are examined. Issues such as budget constraints, staff training, and the integration of digital resources are analyzed to provide a holistic perspective on the existing hurdles.

Based on these findings, the research outlines development prospects for LMS in Azerbaijani university libraries. It proposes strategies to overcome existing challenges and optimize LMS for enhanced resource management and user engagement. The significance of robust LMS implementation in advancing education and research within Azerbaijani universities is underscored.

Keywords: management systems, OPAC, library, world share, University libraries, OCLC

Електронні системи управління в університетських бібліотеках Азербайджану: огляд

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Анотація

У цьому дослідженні розглядається роль систем управління бібліотеками (LMS) в університетських бібліотеках Азербайджану з метою оцінки їх поточного стану, викликів і майбутніх перспектив. Сектор вищої освіти Азербайджану значно розвинувся за останнє десятиліття, що спонукало до адаптації університетських бібліотек. Це дослідження досліджує інтеграцію LMS і цифрових технологій у цьому контексті.

Дослідження представляє всебічний аналіз впровадження LMS у багатьох азербайджанських університетах, вивчаючи функціональні можливості, покращення в роботі, доступність ресурсів та досвід користувача. Він також визначає труднощі, зокрема бюджетні обмеження, навчання персоналу та інтеграцію цифрових ресурсів. Крім того, розглядаються проблеми та бар'єри, з якими стикаються університетські бібліотеки Азербайджану при прийнятті та використанні LMS. Такі проблеми, як бюджетні обмеження, навчання персоналу та інтеграція цифрових ресурсів, аналізуються, щоб отримати цілісну перспективу щодо існуючих перешкод.

На основі цих висновків дослідження окреслює перспективи розвитку LMS в університетських бібліотеках Азербайджану. Він пропонує стратегії подолання існуючих проблем і оптимізації LMS для покращеного управління ресурсами та залучення користувачів. Підкреслюється важливість надійного впровадження LMS для просування освіти та досліджень в азербайджанських університетах.

Ключові слова: системи управління, OPAC, бібліотека, світова частка, університетські бібліотеки, OCLC

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Introduction.

In higher education's dynamic and ever-evolving landscape, university libraries play a pivotal role in fostering knowledge dissemination, academic research, and intellectual growth. As learning institutions embrace digital transformation and modernize their services, Library Management Systems (LMS) have emerged as essential tools to streamline library operations, enhance user experiences, and connect libraries with global networks. In this context, we embark on a journey to explore the utilization of Library Management Systems within the university libraries of Azerbaijan, delving into the unique experiences of Ada University Library and UNEC University Library, each guided by its distinctive LMS. These libraries stand as beacons of progress, reflecting the evolving nature of library technology and its profound impact on education and research in the region. This research will unravel the intricacies of their respective systems, assess their effectiveness, and shed light on the transformative power of innovative library technologies in the modern academic landscape.

1. Library Management Systems (LMS).

LMSs are the backbone of modern libraries, enabling them to organize, access, and share their collections efficiently. In this context, we will explore the contrasting experiences of two prominent university libraries in Azerbaijan: Ada University Library, which utilizes OCLC's WorldShare Management System (WMS), and UNEC University Library, which relies on the Automated Library Information System of Azerbaijan (ALISA). These libraries are prime examples of how advanced LMS technologies have transformed the country’s library services landscape. (Willson, 2012)

2. Ada University Library and the WorldShare Management System (WMS).

University Library is a testament to contemporary library technology's transformational power. By adopting the WorldShare Management System (WMS), Ada University Library has significantly enhanced its cataloging workflows and overall library operations. Let's delve deeper into the critical aspects of WMS that have shaped the library's functions (OCLC, 2014)

Cataloging Excellence. Any library's cataloging system is the heart of any library. WMS empowers librarians at Ada University Library to catalog and classify materials with precision, utilizing standardized formats such as MARC records. This ensures the catalog's accuracy and consistency and facilitates seamless access to information for library patrons. (Caplan, 2012).

Efficient Circulation Management. Borrowing and returning library materials have never been smoother. WMS streamlines circulation management by enabling librarians to track due dates, enforce policies, and manage materials efficiently. Patrons experience a hassle-free borrowing process, contributing to a positive user experience.

Comprehensive Patron Management. With WMS, Ada University Library maintains comprehensive patron records, tracking borrowing history and managing user accounts. This personalized approach enhances user engagement and satisfaction while also supporting library operations.

Streamlined Acquisition and Ordering. WMS makes acquiring new library materials, including creating purchase orders and managing budgets more straightforward. This feature empowers librarians to expand their collections efficiently, keeping them up-to-date and diverse.

Effortless Serials Management. As Ada University Library subscribes to serial publications, WMS comes to the rescue by managing subscriptions, tracking issues, and providing access to electronic versions. This feature ensures that the library's periodical collection remains current and accessible to its patrons. (Persing, 2014).

Enhanced Search and Discovery. WMS includes a user-friendly search interface that enables patrons to find materials easily. The system's search and discovery tools provide a seamless and efficient library experience (Gurdish, 2018).

Resource Management. In an era of digital content and multimedia resources, WMS supports the management of these assets, ensuring that the library keeps pace with evolving formats and user preferences.

Data-Driven Decision-Making. Ada University Library staff can harness the power of reporting and analytics within WMS to assess usage patterns and make informed decisions about collection development and resource allocation.

Integration for Seamless Operations. WMS integrates seamlessly with other library-related systems, reducing silos of information and streamlining library operations for enhanced efficiency.

Data Security and Permissions. The system strongly emphasizes access control and permissions, safeguarding sensitive library data and ensuring that only authorized users can access certain functionalities (Breeding, 2014).

Customizability for Library-Specific Needs: WMS allows librarians to customize the system to meet the unique needs and preferences of Ada University Library.

3. The Automated Library Information System of Azerbaijan (ALISA).

In contrast to Ada University Library's utilization of WMS, UNEC University Library operates under the umbrella of the Automated Library Information System of Azerbaijan (ALISA). ALISA represents a nationwide effort to centralize and modernize library operations nationwide. Here are some key aspects of this innovative system:

Origins and Purpose. ALISA emerged under the auspices of the Culture and Tourism Ministry of Azerbaijan with the primary objective of addressing the lack of integration and standardization among diverse library systems in Azerbaijan. The overarching goal

was to create a centralized library information system to automate and simplify library processes while fostering integration with global library networks. (McHugh, 2015)

Two Main Components. ALISA consists of two main components: the public-facing "Unit Centralized Library portal" and the administrative and software component designed for internal use by library staff.

Development Platform. ALISA has been developed using cutting-edge technologies and the latest Oracle platform, ensuring robust performance and scalability. (Lippincott, 2019)

Modernization and Streamlining: ALISA represents a substantial modernization effort aimed at streamlining library operations in Azerbaijan, improving the user experience, and facilitating integration with international library systems. The system's web-based, standardized approach aligns the country's library services with global standards.

Reporting and Oversight. ALISA equips library management with reporting capabilities to assess and optimize internal processes. Oversight and control are vested in the Culture and Tourism Ministry, which can access reports and data from the system.

Global Integration. A key strategic objective of ALISA is to enable the Azerbaijani library system to integrate with library systems worldwide seamlessly. This ensures compatibility and connectivity with global library networks. (Dula, 2019)

Web-Based Accessibility. ALISA is a web-based system that utilizes the latest technologies, making it accessible via web browsers. Its user-friendly interface enhances the experience for library users.

Comprehensive Functionalities. ALISA is designed to automate all processes within national, private, university, and school libraries. It adheres to standard formats and protocols such as MARC21, ISO2709, UNICODE, and Z3950. (Hollerich, 2013)

Reader Empowerment. ALISA empowers readers to register online, order and reserve publications, and easily manage library transactions.

Pilot Project Success. ALISA's successful implementation as a pilot project in select central libraries in Baku districts, such as Khatai CLS, Narimanov CLS, and Sabail CLS, showcases its practical effectiveness. During this implementation, close collaboration with libraries and comprehensive support from the Ultra company developer was pivotal.

Library Network Integration. ALISA enables readers to utilize a single plastic card for all participating libraries, streamlining the ordering and monitoring of materials.

Specialized Library Equipment. The system integrates specialized equipment to return borrowed items, enhancing operational efficiency (Capllan, 2012).

Conclusions and Findings.

The study of Library Management Systems (LMS) through the divergent experiences of Ada University Library with WorldShare Management System (WMS) and UNEC University Library under the Automated Library Information System of Azerbaijan (ALISA) illuminates the transformative potential and nuanced impacts of modern library technologies in Azerbaijan.

Ada University Library's WMS Advantages. WMS at Ada University Library epitomizes how advanced LMS technologies revolutionize library operations. Its strengths lie in precise cataloging, efficient circulation management, patron-focused services, and streamlined acquisition, all bolstered by data-driven decision-making and seamless integration. The system ensures user-friendly access and prioritizes data security and adaptability to meet specific library needs.

ALISA's National Integration and Modernization. ALISA, a nationwide initiative, aims to centralize and modernize library systems across Azerbaijan. It addresses the lack of integration among diverse library systems and strives for standardization, aligning local libraries with global standards. Its web-based accessibility, reader empowerment, and successful pilot implementations underline its potential to revolutionize library experiences. The system automates processes, facilitates global integration, and offers comprehensive functionalities.

The contrasting experiences of Ada University Library and UNEC University Library showcase the diverse approaches in harnessing LMS technologies. While WMS emphasizes customization and in-depth operational capabilities within a specific institution, ALISA is a centralized, standardized system driving national library modernization. The study highlights the need for a tailored approach to suit diverse library environments, where a balance between local customization and standardized systems could optimize library services.

In essence, the contrasting experiences underscore the pivotal role of LMS in shaping library services. They portray the need for a dynamic approach to leveraging technology to meet the unique demands of library patrons and the broader academic community while aligning with global library standards. These findings present valuable insights into the evolution of library systems in Azerbaijan and potentially in similar contexts globally.

Library Management Systems have revolutionized library operations in Azerbaijan, with Ada University Library's use of OCLC's World Share Management System (WMS) and UNEC University Library's adoption of the Automated Library Information System of Azerbaijan (ALISA) serving as prime examples of this transformation. While WMS enhances cataloging workflows, streamlines circulation, and empowers library staff with data-driven insights, ALISA represents a nationwide effort to centralize and modernize library services, promoting integration with global library networks. These systems reflect the evolving landscape of library technology, offering tailored solutions to meet

the unique needs of libraries in Azerbaijan and beyond. The following research will provide a comprehensive assessment of the impact and effectiveness of these systems in the context of university libraries in Azerbaijan.

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