

ELECTRONIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES OF AZERBAIJAN: AN OVERVIEW

Djoumana nour Elhouda LEMOUNES
Baku state University, (Azerbaijan)

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Abstract

Library Management Systems (LMS) play a pivotal role in modernizing and enhancing the efficiency of library operations in higher education institutions. This research provides an overview and assessment of the utilization of Library Management Systems in the context of university libraries in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan, a country with a rich educational heritage, has witnessed significant advancements in its higher education sector over the past decade. As essential components of the academic ecosystem, university libraries have adapted to the changing landscape by integrating digital technologies and LMS into their daily operations. This study sheds light on the current state of LMS adoption, functionality, challenges, and future prospects within Azerbaijani university libraries.

The research encompasses a comprehensive analysis of LMS implementation in multiple universities across Azerbaijan. It explores these systems' key features and functionalities, ranging from cataloging and circulation to resource management and user services. Additionally, the study investigates how LMS has streamlined library

operations, improved accessibility to resources, and enhanced user experience within the university libraries.

Furthermore, the challenges and barriers faced by Azerbaijan university libraries 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.

In light of the findings, this research also outlines potential development prospects for LMS in Azerbaijani university libraries. It discusses strategies for overcoming current challenges and suggests optimizing LMS utilization for improved resource management and user engagement. The abstract concludes by emphasizing the significance of robust LMS implementation in enhancing the overall quality of education and research within Azerbaijani universities.

Ultimately, this research serves as a preliminary exploration into the world of Library Management Systems within the higher education landscape of Azerbaijan. It aims to initiate a broader dialogue on the role of technology in shaping the future of university libraries in the country and its implications for the academic community.

Keywords

management systems; OPAC; library; worldshare; University libraries.

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 continue to adopt 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.

I. Library Management Systems (LMS)

LMS 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 landscape of library services in the country.

II. 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 key aspects of WMS that have shaped the library's functions:[1] [2]

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.[3]

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. [4]

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: The acquisition of new library materials, including creating purchase orders and managing

budgets, is made more straightforward through WMS. This feature empowers librarians to expand their Page | 59collections 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. [5]

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 contribute to a seamless and efficient library experience. [6]

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. [7]

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.

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

III. 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.[20]

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. [27]

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 universal standards. [29]

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. [17]

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.[19]

Reader Empowerment: ALISA empowers readers to register online, order and reserve publications, and easily manage their 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 developer, Ultra Company, were pivotal.

Library Network Integration: ALISA enables readers to utilize a single plastic card for all participating libraries, streamlining the ordering and monitoring of materials.[9]

Specialized Library Equipment: The system integrates specialized equipment to return borrowed items, enhancing operational efficiency.

Conclusion:

Library Management Systems have revolutionized library operations in Azerbaijan, with Ada University Library's use of OCLC's WorldShare 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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