Chapter 3
Modernization of a Traditional Library

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ABSTRACT

Maulana Azad Library is considered one of the major libraries of the world, with a glorious past and promising future. It was established with the foundation of Madarsatul-Uloom Musalmanan at Aligarh in 1875, which became Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College in 1877 and became full-fledged Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in 1920. The Maulana Azad Library came into existence with the donation of personal collection of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh Muslim University in 1877. The library has very rich collection consisting of oriental and occidental printed and non-printed records. Various formats exist, such as: books, journals, manuscripts, government publications, Rrot graphs, audio-visual materials, phonodiscs, phonorecords, microfiche, pre-recorded cassettes, microfilms, compact discs, floppies, et cetera. Autographed letters, edicts of the kings and queens of the Mughal period, portraits of important personalities, coins, theses, dissertations, braille books, pamphlets, maps, charts, paintings etc. are available. The documents cover almost every discipline of knowledge with special reference to Islamic theology, history, literature, et cetera. A very good collection of books in oriental languages is also available in the Library. The library has started the automation process selecting Libsys software that is quite popular in central universities of India. The present chapter examines the automation process in different sections of the library.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sir Syed Ahmad founded the Madrasatul Uloom in a small city named Aligarh in India. The establishment of this Institute, which was later known as Mohammedan Anglo Oriental (MAO) College, marks one of the most important events in the educational and social history of modern India. Its establishment is considered as the first significant response of the Indian Muslims to the challenges of post-1857 era. It was an important catalyst in a process of social change, which allowed them to break cleanly from their medieval shackles. The objective of Sir Syed was to build a college in tune with the British educational system. He wanted this College to act as a bridge between the old and the new, the East and the West. While he fully appreciated the need and urgency of imparting instruction based on Western learning, he was not oblivious of the value of oriental learning and wanted to preserve and transmit to posterity the rich legacy of the past. Sir Syed contributed many essential elements to the development of the modern society of the subcontinent (Qureshi, 1989).

AMU occupies a distinct position among Indian Universities and its contribution to nation building is in no way inferior to the best among the lot. AMU is perhaps the only University in the country, which has high schools in its domain. It has as many as five high schools including one for the visually handicapped, and two senior secondary schools for boys and girls. With more than 30000 students, about 1400 teachers and non-teaching staff numbering some 6000 members on its rolls, it has 12 faculties comprising a wide spectrum of academic disciplines (91 departments, 5 institutions and 13 centres) and 16 halls of residence with 70 hostels. The University offers 289 courses per annum and has a campus spread over 467.6 hectares of land, attracting students from all over the world, particularly Africa, West Asia and the South East Asia. The languages taught include English, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Telgu, Tamil, Bengali, Malyalam, Marathi, Panjabi,

Kashmiri, French, Turkish, German and Russian. The medium of instruction is primarily English. Also, many prominent Muslim leaders, and Urdu writers and scholars of the subcontinent have graduated from AMU. Notably, the University has 12 Faculties namely:

1. Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
2. Faculty of Arts
3. Faculty of Commerce
4. Faculty of Engineering & Technology
5. Faculty of Law
6. Faculty of Life Sciences
7. Faculty of Management Studies & Research
8. Faculty of Medicine
9. Faculty of Science
10. Faculty of Social Sciences
11. Faculty of Theology
12. Faculty of Unani Medicine

Besides these many faculties, there is a University Polytechnic and an Interdisciplinary Biotechnology Unit in AMU (AMU,2008-09)

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A vast amount of literature is available on the field of 'Library Automation'. This literature is available in hundreds of books, thousands of journals' articles and on several websites. There has been so much surge of literature in the subject since the beginning that an exclusive journal named Journal of Library Automation has been published since late 1960s covering important issues and aspects of library automation. Notably; therefore, it was not possible to review all the available literature. An attempt has been, however, made, to review a reasonable amount of related literature.

Library Automation assured a great deal of importance in libraries in the mid-1960s. Since then, it has become a household word in librarianship. Library automation may be defined as the application of automatic and semi-automatic data

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