Never Give Up! From LAMP To Koha: A Case Of University Of Engineering & Technology, Taxila Library

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ABSTRACT

HEC emphasized on quality of education and want to develop higher education infrastructure in the country. This paper provides an analysis of UET Taxila library journey which developed over a period of last 23 years. It defines best practice as a presentation of route to produce more outcomes which means mode of doing things in specific organization as reference for good practices to others. Explains features which should have been encompass in the set meant for improving the services of the libraries.

The paper opted review of the current practice being applied in UET Taxila. For in-depth understanding and some historical facts, interviews were conducted of the past Chief Librarians which explains the journey through LAMP to KOHA.

Definition of Best Practices

Merriam webster online dictionary defines best practice as

"*A procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption*" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science (ODLIS) defines as "In the application of theory to real-life situations, procedures

that, when properly applied, consistently yield superior results and are therefore used as reference points in evaluating the effectiveness of alternative methods of accomplishing the same task. Best practices are identified by examining empirical evidence of success" (Reitz, 2018) Similarly, Oxford Learner Dictionary defines as "a way of doing something that is seen as a very good example of how it should be done and can be copied by other companies or organizations" (Dictionaries, 2018)

The Context:

In an academic library student and teachers are the customers who are part of the academic community. University of Engineering & Technology (UET), Taxila is one of the prestigious institute evolved in engineering education in the country. Central Library was established when it started working as constituent engineering college of UET Lahore. Currently Library served a population of 5000 plus, students, teachers and other staff.

With remarkable growth in students' registration in University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore dated back in 70's, a plan to establish additional campuses of the UET Lahore was considered. As a consequence of that, the University College of Engineering Taxila was established in 1975. For three years it worked at Sahiwal. In 1978 it was moved to its permanent location at Taxila. The College continued its working under the administrative control of the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore till October 1993. During this month it received its Status as an independent university under the University of Engineering and Technology Taxila Ordinance 1993. At present total enrollment of undergraduate and postgraduate students is above 5000 and working staff including faculty is over 1500 (University of Engineering & Technology, c2015a).

Currently there are 6 faculties incorporating 15 teaching departments which are:

(1) Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Department of Civil Engineering
- Department of Environmental Engineering
- Department of City & Regional Planning

(2) Faculty of Electronics and Electrical Engineering
- Department of Electrical Engineering
- Department of Electronics Engineering
- Department of Biomedical Engineering and Technology

(3) Faculty of Mechanical and **Aeronautical Engineering**
- Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Department of Metallurgy & Material Engineering
- Department of Energy Engineering

(4) Faculty of Telecommunication and Information Engineering
- Department of Computer Science
- Department of Computer Engineering
- Department of Software Engineering
- Department of Telecommunication Engineering

(5) Faculty of Industrial Engineering
- Department of Industrial Engineering

(6) Faculty of Basic Sciences and Humanities
- Department of Basic Sciences (University of Engineering & Technology, c2015b)

As far as academic programs are concern, university is imparting education from undergraduate level to PhD in various engineering disciplines across its main campus and sub-campus at Chakwal.

Undergraduate Programs at Main Campus Taxila

- Civil Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Computer Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Electronics Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Industrial Engineering
- Software Engineering
- Telecommunication Engineering
- Metallurgy and Materials Engineering
- Computer Science
- Biomedical Engineering and Technology

Master Degree Programs at Main Campus Taxila

- **Civil Engineering**
  - Structural Engineering
  - Water Resources & Irrigation Engineering
  - Transportation Engineering
  - Soil Mechanics & Foundation Engineering
- **Computer Engineering**
  - Digital Image Processing
  - Computer Engineering
- **Engineering Management**
- **Electrical Engineering**
  - Electrical Power Engineering
  - Control Engineering
  - Digital Techniques
- **Electronics Engineering**
  - Automation and Control
  - Biomedical Systems
  - Electronics System Design
  - Signal Processing
- **Mechanical Engineering**
  - Thermal System Engineering
  - Applied Mechanics & Design
  - Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering
  - Energy Engineering
- **Software Engineering**
- **Telecommunication Engineering**

Doctoral Programs at Main Campus Taxila

- o Civil Engineering
- o Computer Engineering
- o Electrical Engineering
- o Electronics Engineering
- o Mechanical Engineering
- o Telecommunication Engineering (University of Engineering & Technology, c2015c).

The Central Library:

The Central Library of the University plays a vital role in dissemination of knowledge, teaching, research, and extension services. It has a seating capacity for about 250 readers at its different halls, which provide congenial conditions for study. The reading halls remain open (2 shifts) from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm (Monday to Friday) and from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday and Sundays. The Library is well stocked with encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, standard specifications, yearbooks, almanacs, abstracts, indexes and a big reserve collection of text and general technical books

Stocks and Services:

The Library has around 70,000 volumes of books, 45000 volumes of bound serials, and scattered issues of scientific and technical serials on diverse fields. Besides engineering subjects considerable reading material on humanities, social sciences and Islamic Studies is available. The members can borrow books and other materials, (except serials, reference or reserved books) for specific periods. They can also reserve materials, which are out in circulation.

The Library houses a Book Bank, which lends textbooks to the undergraduates for long periods on a nominal rent. Books.

Digital Library:

To meet the information requirements of students, researchers of UET Taxila, Pakistan with the provision of quality scholarly information based electronic delivery Through Pakistan Educational Research Network (PERN). HEC has given the online access of journals and research papers to UET Taxila. Access to all these resources is free of cost from within the UET Taxila intranet for students and researchers of UET Taxila.

([University of Engineering & Technology, c2007a](#))

Current Infrastructure:

The Central Library is situated at the heart of the campus. It is right between the teaching departments, and hostels which makes it a center of attraction to all with four storey building. The Central Library UET Taxila, began its journey since the advent of when UET Taxila was a college and continued its growth with passage of time and became a center of knowledge to its faculty, students and staff. As of 2006 library was working in just 3 halls, one for book bank, one for circulation and the third was reference section. Total collection of library in 2001 was about 34000 with seating capacity of 50 70 students only. At that time there were only two library professionals having MLIS and there was no IT position at all in the library. In 2007 library moved to newly built designated four storey building, currently the total collection of library is around 70,000, seating capacity around 250, 5 permanent library professional positions, 6 IT positions, Video conference facility, IT LAB of 60 computers and a Language LAB equipped with 40 computers and audio visual equipment.

The Journey Begins:

There is a silence zone from 1975 to 2005 as far as automation process is concern. In 2001, Automation process of the central library started when Muhammad Anwar Ijaz, the then Secretary of PLA Federal Branch took the initiative and assigned the task to Mirza Wasim Baig, the Library and Research Officer from EME College NUST to trained 3 officials; Syed Mehmood Ali Zaidi, Mr. Muhammad Anwar and Muhammad Safdar of UET Taxila Library. Training was on how to use Library Automation and Management Program (LAMP). After the training certificates along with LAMP CD and the photocopy of LAMP's user manual was also given to UET Taxila Library.

Due to scarcity of IT staff, nothing was practically done from 2001 to 2005. In 2005, two computer operator positions were created and Mr. Qayyoum Khan and Ms. Shumaila was hired as computer operators. These two IT personnel actually started the process to catalogue the books in LAMP. It is interesting to note that, they both did not receive any training with library books data entry but they were self-motivated and self-learner, they initiated the work with the help and guidance from Syed Mehmood Ali Zaidi and Mr. Muhammad Anwar. Till 2007, there were just 4 to 5 Pentium computers in library and that was very miserable situation to start with the automation process.

In 2006, UET Taxila hired Mr. Bashir Ahmed as Cataloguer and Mr. Khurram Zeshan as Junior Programmer for Library in 2007/2008, in 2008, Mr. Muhammad Anwar, and the then in-charge of Central Library assigned the task to Bashir Ahmed to lead the automation process and make some recommendation to uplift the automation process. LAMP was consider in-sufficient to carry the automation process further, Library Information and Management System (LIMS) was also considered but it was found at that time that it will also be in-sufficient for a university library. There was a debate over Library Listserve i.e PakLag etc that there are too many bugs in KOHA, so at that time, keeping in mind the various issues; merits and demerits, it was decided to start with building an in-house automation system which should be online. For this purpose dedicated server was purchased keeping in view the requirements of that time.

The Central Library UET Taxila has launched its newly developed web based Library Automation System named as UET LIBAS which was accessible online. Project includes all library related modules including acquisition, circulation, cataloging etc. That was developed in ASP.NET with SQL Server 2000 and Crystal Reports. Launching ceremony was held in digital video conference hall, central library on Tuesday dated: 25/03/2009 at 11:00 AM. Prof. Aftab Ahmed, Chairman Library Committee was the chief guest of the ceremony. The following were present:
• Mr. Muhammad Anwar, Librarian
• Prof. Dr. Hashim Nisar, Chairman CIVIL Deptt. Member of the Library Committee
• Prof. Dr. Ahmed Khalil, Chairman ELECTRICLE. Member of the Library Committee
• Prof. Dr. Adeel Akram, Chairman Telecom Deptt.
• Eng. Shahbaz Pervaiz Chattha, Dir. Digital Library
• Library staff (University of Engineering & Technology, c2007b)

UET-LIBAS continued until 2013, meanwhile Jr. Programmer, Mr. Khurram Zeeshan found another position in Faislabad and in 2009 Mr. Bashir Ahmed found a position in IRC Islambad. Development process was stopped in 2012 due to unavailability of the staff but data entry process continued until 2013.

In 2013, energetic lady mam Nuzhat Yasmin took over the charge of Central Library, During a meeting (at that time the author was working as Librarian, in Swedish College of Engineering & Technology, Wah Cantt), The author suggested Mam to deploy KOHA for automation, by briefing her about the various aspects and features of the software, meanwhile she also arranged a presentation for senior faculty members of the university. In the same year, Mr. Irfan Aslam Mirza (late) also joined as Deputy Librarian in the university. He was also a very well learned person and he worked with distinguished personalities like Mr. Rafique Awan and Mr. Ata ur Rehman in University of Management & Technology, Lahore. He also urged to use KOHA and convince the authorities to not to go for proprietary Software due to continuing cost. In the same year Mam invited the author as Master Trainer for KOHA, on her request the author delivered one week hands-on training for UET Taxila Library staff. Trainees were hired to carry out the data entry process. Initially KOHA was deployed on core i-5 systems using live DVD provided by Total Library Solutions. At the same time, Mr. Irfan sb (late) also moved an approval to purchase state of the art server machine to formally run the automation and digitization process. Initial customization was also carried out by late Irfan Aslam sb. During the span of two years, 2 times data was crashed due to some mishandling by system update. In 2016 the library received its own new server machine but due to unavailability of UPS and allied equipment, it wasn't deployed till 2017

In 2016 The author joined the UET Taxila again as Senior Librarian after higher studies. Due to sever health conditions, Mr. Irfan Aslam sb (late) could not make it to carry long enough to see his dream come true. After Irfan Aslam sb, the author took over the charge of automation and IT services. In Sept. 2017, the author invited Mr. Ata-ur Rehman of Total Library Solution to deploy the server. The server was deployed successfully and all the data was transferred to the new server. In Nov/Dec. 2017 all the patrons were moved to KOHA and testing phase of circulation was started. At the same time brochures and standees' were prepared regarding how to use the new system.

Never Give Up: more to come

The end is not here yet, recently we have got approval of the project "Strengthening of Central Library" from the Vice Chancellor, UET Taxila which includes but not limited to:

1. RFID Library Management and Security System
2. More IT and Library positions
3. Target to achieve ISO certification

Funds for the above project are now been included in coming budget 2018/2019. More over website using WordPress (another open source software) and theme Fluida. 70% website is complete and hopefully in next few months it will be up on server. DSpace has also been deployed on sever and development have just been started to built digital repository for our students and teachers.

Lesson Learned:

1. Plan, Plan and continue with the plan. Plan well before time, planning is everything, plan well before your start. Take notes of every step taken in the planning process, before the execution of the plan, discuss it with seniors and experts in the field. Also take care of possible threats.

2. Take that software into consideration which have strong continuing support, our two initial software (LAMP and LIBAS) failed because of the breakdown in support
3. Its not a one man show! Do not start a project as one man army; do involve other people in the project and make them responsible.
4. Note down everything in a separate file or log, in case someone else may utilize when you are not here (left job etc)
5. Complete the project in phases
6. Do not involve in any kind of system or software update unless it is well tested by the community
7. Back up, back up and back up
8. Prepare two server machines, one actual and the other for experimenting before doing any thing on the actual server machines. Note down every steps taken on experimenting machine in order to avoid any miss hap.

Conclusion:

Automation and digitization is never ending process, which continue to grow. Open source software have strong support community which guides users free of cost. Keeping in view the success story of UET Taxila Library, it is highly recommended to use open source software even if you have limited resources. As someone said "aim at the moon, if you missed, you may hit a star". So never give up!

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