Relevance of KOHA ILS in Nepal in Terms of Satisfaction of Librarians

Rajendra Neupane

rajpane45@gmail.com

Abstract

Libraries in Nepal have implemented KOHA ILS for the automation of the library functions for more than a decade. However, KOHA ILS is not being used to its full potential. The main objective of this study was to test the suitability of KOHA ILS in Nepalese libraries. The primary source of data is used to assess the usability of KOHA ILS by librarians and the library users. This study has employed non-probability purposive sampling method. A total of 45 questionnaires were distributed to the librarians of various libraries which have implemented KOHA ILS. Out of them, 41 responses were collected. It is found that the librarians were aware of features of Koha. Most of them are satisfied with the features and performance of the software. However, only few of librarians are technically efficient for the installation and customization of software. Koha is found suitable for the Nepalese libraries but trainings and awareness programs are required.

Keywords- *Suitability, KOHA, Installation, Free and Open-Source Software, Customization*

1. Background

Today, there are more than fourteen major open-source ILS available in the field of library automation. However, KOHA was the first open-source ILS (released as open source in 2000), and it is now possibly the most feature-rich open-source ILS. KOHA came in existence in New Zealand's public library system. KOHA is a Maori word that means "unconditional gift". In

July 2000, KOHA's first version (1.0) was made available for download as open-source software. The most recent version of KOHA is version 23.05.05, which was released last year on 8 November 2023. KOHA is the first open-source LAMP-based fully featured Integrated Library System (ILS).

KOHA is designed to operate with the bare minimum of hardware resources. It is written in Perl programming language and runs on the Linux and Microsoft Windows operating systems in conjunction with the Apache Web server. It makes use of the popular MySQL open-source database management system. KOHA supports MARC21 and UNIMARC bibliographic records (KOHA Community, 2025)

The following are some of KOHA's most important features:

- Based on the Internet.
- z39.50 and copy cataloguing
- For professional cataloguers, MARC21 and UNIMARC
- Use the same tool to manage online and offline resources.
- New acquisitions RSS feed
- Send overdue and other notices to patrons by e-mail and/or text message.
- Create barcodes with your printer.
- A module for managing serials.
- For library stock management, a complete catalogue, circulation, and acquisitions system is available.
- OPAC system with a web interface
- A simple, clear and concise search interface for all users.
- Comprehensive and Simple acquisition options.

KOHA ILS Open-source integrated library system is an amazing technological development in library management system. The KOHA ILS community of developers for KOHA ILS open-source integrated library system has been providing strong support services. Use of KOHA ILS integrated library system in Nepal is in its infancy. The main reason behind it is lack of technical expertise among the librarians and the awareness on open-source software. The use of KOHA ILS has not passed even a decade. So far about 50 libraries in Nepal have been using KOHA

ILS. The following are the major libraries using KOHA ILS.

2.   Research questions

The problem towards which this study is directed is to find the answers to the following research question:

- What are the issues of the librarians and library users for using KOHA ILS?
- Whether KOHA ILS is appropriate for Nepali Libraries?

3.   Literature Review

Academic libraries that key into the movement of OSS and implement them appropriately stand to gain comparative advantage, while those that fail to take advantage of this opportunity may find their ICT development behind that of other libraries. Open-source software (OSS) has become an international phenomenon that allows researchers around the world to share knowledge and skills on daily basics without barriers (Kalu, Nzeh and Chidozie, 2021).

Mamoriya (2021) states, by using library automation software the work gets done easily and quickly. There is no error in library housekeeping operation and solve many issues like stock verification, bibliography, OPAC search operation easily by library automation software. Open-source software is Open bibliog, library management software, KOHA ILS, Avanti. Proprietary software is e-Granthalaya, SOUL, TLSS, and Libsys. By using any software handling library housekeeping and administrative work is very easy and reduces duplication. Many modules are available in software for library operation and each has its unique quality by which the work can be done easily.

The first Open-Source Integrated Library Management System (ILMS), KOHA ILS, includes many advanced features and covers acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, serial control, and online public access cataloguing. KOHA ILS supports global standards and protocols for libraries, ensuring compatibility with other library management systems. It supports international technologies and standards like MARC 21, RFID, z39.50, web 2.0, etc. All modules expected in a typical library management system are included in the software, which is completely customizable (Sharma & Tripathi, 2016).

KOHA ILS is the first free software library automation package. In use worldwide, its development is steered by a growing community of users collaborating to achieve their

technology goals. KOHA ILS's feature set continues to evolve and expand to meet the needs of its user base." "KOHA ILS is an open-source integrated library system, used worldwide by School College, university and special libraries. The name comes from a Mori term for a gift or donation" (Sharma, 2021).

The effectiveness of an open-source integrated library system influences its success and ease of use. KOHA is one of the most widely used open-source integrated library systems. KOHA ILS, a comprehensive library management system, has catered to academic libraries, end users, and librarians alike. This research indicates that the military libraries analyzed demonstrate outstanding usability metrics for KOHA ILS. The software's user experience has enhanced due to the personalization. In countries like Nepal, the KOHA ILS is recommended as a practical choice for automating libraries (Neupane, 2023).

4. Methodology

A non-probability purposive sampling method has been used in this research. A total of 45 librarians using Koha ILS in Nepal were asked various aspects of Koha using questionnaire. Among them 41 of them replied. The collected data has been analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution in the following section.

5. Findings

5.1 Insight of Librarians on KOHA ILS

Table 1 Perception of Librarians on KOHA ILS

Perception towards the use of KOHA ILS	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Customizable	39(95.12%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)
Free	35 (85.36%)	1 (2.4%)	5 (12.19%)
Updateable and upgradeable	34 (82.92%)	3 (7.3%)	4 (9.7%)
Can be integrated with other software	3 (0.73%)	34 (82.92%)	4 (9.7%)

From Table 1, it is apparent and clearly stated that 39 (95.12%) of the respondents agreed that KOHA ILS is Customizable while 1(2.4%) of the respondent disagree to the fact and 1(2.4%) were not sure this shows that the majority of respondents concurred that KOHA ILS is not customizable. Additionally, 35 (85.36%) of the respondents concur that using the KOHA is free. Only 1 (2.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, and 5 (12.19%) were unsure of their response. Similarly, 34 (82.92%) of the respondents agree that KOHA ILS is updateable and upgradeable. However, 3 (7.3%) of the respondents agreed that KOHA can be integrated with other software.

5.2 Librarians' Satisfaction with KOHA ILS

Table 2 Librarians' Satisfaction with KOHA ILS

Satisfaction with KOHA ILS software	Highly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Less satisfied
Are you satisfied with using KOHA ILS interface?	32 (78.04%)	6(14.63%)	3(7.31%)
Do you recommend the use of KOHA ILS to other library?	35 (85.36%)	1(2.43%)	5 (12.19%)
KOHA ILS works better than other library system ?	37 (78.45%)	2 (4.87%)	2 (4.87%)
Do prefer other types of software to KOHA ILS?	36 (87.8%)	4(9.75%)	1 (2.43%)
How satisfied are you with KOHA ILS?	35(85.36%)	4 (9.75%)	2 (4.87%)

Among the 41 respondents utilizing KOHA ILS, 32 (78.04%) expressed high satisfaction with the KOHA ILS interface, while 6 (14.63%) were moderately satisfied and 3 (7.32%) were less satisfied. Moreover, 35 (85.36%) of the participants would recommend it to other libraries, while 5 (12.19%) of the participants do not wish to recommend it to other libraries. In a related context, most participants concurred that KOHA ILS outperforms other library systems, with 37 (90.24%) in agreement, 2 (4.87%) in disagreement, and 2 (4.87%) uncertain. Similarly, 36 (87.8%) of the participants favor KOHA ILS

over other software, and 35 (85.36%) of the participants expressed high satisfaction with KOHA ILS, while 4 (9.75%) were moderately satisfied, and 2 (4.87%) were less satisfied. This shows that the majority of study participants were very satisfied with the utilization of the KOHA ILS library software.

5.3 User Friendliness of KOHA ILS

Table 3 User Friendliness of KOHA ILS

User Friendliness of KOHA ILS	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
KOHA ILS can be customized to make user friendly	39 (95.1 %)	2 (3.9%)	0(0%)
I can Install KOHA ILS myself.	22 (53.65%)	11 (26.82%)	8 (19.51%)
KOHA ILS makes library housekeeping simple	38 (95.12%)	2(3.9%)	0(0%)
KOHA ILS saves the time of user and the librarians.	39 (95.1 %)	2 (3.9%)	0(0%)

According to the preceding table 3 regarding the user-friendliness and ease of use of KOHA ILS, 39 (95.1%) of the participants in the study concurred that KOHA ILS is a complimentary library software with an original source code that can be altered by users to enhance its functionality for their needs. Two (3.9%) of the participants disagreed that KOHA ILS is a free library software with original source code that users can adjust to improve its functionality for their needs. Although none of the respondents were uncertain. Additionally, 22 (53.65%) of the participants in the study agreed that they are capable of installing KOHA ILS independently, whereas 11 (26.82%) disagreed with this statement, and 11 (19.51%) were uncertain about whether KOHA ILS is simple enough to install without needing technician assistance. Thirty-nine (95.12%) respondents concurred that KOHA ILS simplifies library housekeeping tasks significantly, while two (3.9%) disagreed with this statement. Similarly, 39 (95.1%) of the participants concurred that KOHA ILS has reduced the time for both users and librarians.

5.4 Challenges on Use of KOHA ILS

Table 4.4 Challenges on Use of KOHA ILS

Challenges of KOHA ILS software	Yes	No
Financial problems	33 (74.5%)	8(25.5%)
Technical Knowledge	32 (84.3%)	9 (21.95%)
Organizational barriers	33(80.48%)	8 19.51%)
Service providers' unavailability	25(60.97%)	16(39.02%)

Regarding the Challenges of use of KOHA ILS in Nepalese libraries, 33 (80.48%) of the respondents said it is Financial, 32 (78.04%) told it is Technical Knowledge wile 33(80.48%) and 25(60.97%) said it is Organizational barriers and service provider's unavailability respectively.

6. Discussion

KOHA ILS has been implemented in Nepalese libraries for a decade. However, its implementation has faced some functionality and administrative issues. Most of results show KOHA ILS interface is user friendly however the customization of interface and training on KOHA use is required. One of the most important issues in KOHA ILS is technical expertise of the librarians. Most important information resides in organizational barriers. Therefore, the technically sound library professionals is must before implementation, as this software is developed taking the reference of foreign libraries. The most crucial factor in determining suitability of the software, is user satisfaction. All library staff should be given adequate ICT training and equipped with required tools needed to render KOHA ILS services to library users.

7. Conclusion

Nepalese libraries have used Koha for more than one decade. Librarians are aware of features of the Koha. The performance and use of features are quite satisfactory. However, the technical

efficiency of the librarians is still doubtful. Koha is viable and suitable option for Nepalese libraries. To make it best ILS technically efficient librarians are need of the day.

References

Kalu, C. O., Nzeh, C. O. & Chidozie, O. (2021). The use of open-source technologies in effective library services: An overview. *Gloryland Journal of Library and Information Science*, 1(4), 215 – 244.

KOHA Community. (n.d). About. Official Website of KOHA ILS   Library Software. https://KOHA ILS -community.org/about/

Mamoriya, A. (2021). Open-Source Software and Proprietary Software for Library Automation. Journal of Advanced Research in Library and Information Science, 08(02), 1–3. https://doi.org/10.24321/2395.2288.202101

Neupane, R. (2023). Customization of KOHA Integrated Library System (ILS) Interface for Better Usability. Access: An International Journal of Nepal Library Association, 2(01), 245–256. https://doi.org/10.3126/access.v2i01.59004

Sharma, J. (2021). Library Professionals. Retrieved, https: libprof.in/my-blog-page- 1/f/best-free-open-source-library-management-software-KOHA ILS