Automating a National Network: The Jamaica Libraries Information Network (JAMLIN) Experience

By Nicholas Graham

Affiliation: National Library of Jamaica

Abstract:

Rising costs coupled with diminishing budgets has contributed to libraries world over having to contend with numerous challenges affecting service delivery. This phenomenon while not new to Caribbean Libraries has resulted in many cases of libraries not receiving the funding commensurate with their needs in order to ensure the delivery of high quality library services to their clientele. The result has been high expectations from users as well as governments even though the budgetary allocations have been reduced. Thankfully, with the advent of Open Access systems, Caribbean libraries are now able despite limited budgets able to implement these systems to facilitate access to various resources for their clientele. The National Library of Jamaica (NLJ) which is the coordinator for the Jamaica Libraries Information Network (JAMLIN) has recognised the challenges being faced by the library community in Jamaica especially within the context of inadequate budgetary allocations and has made attempts in the past to facilitate cost-effective solutions to the automation of the networks to improve service delivery. The first attempt at an open access solution, CDS/ISIS while adequate to some extent during its reign has not been able to keep pace with today's realities. Consequently, the NLJ after much deliberation embarked on a project to implement Koha Integrated Library Management System to the libraries within the network JAMLIN in order to fill this void. The purpose of this paper is to provide a contextual framework for Caribbean Libraries intending to implement Open Source Software Solutions, utilising the knowledge gained from the implementation of Koha in JAMLIN. The paper also seeks to highlight the issues and challenges associated with this implementation and to propose workable solutions to mitigate these challenges.