Stock Verification as a base for Effective Collection Development: 
A Case Study of SDMIMD, Mysore

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Introduction

The revolution of information and communication technology has kept the people 
in the information related activity, on their toes. ICT developments highlight the day-to-day 
practices and procedures of libraries with major structural changes in terms of their collection, 
organization and dissemination of information and knowledge. Today, when most library users 
preferring access information from the convenience of their desktops, laptops and mobiles, it is 
but natural that libraries move from onsite library services to web based library services. The 
major impact of these developments has been even greater on Integrated Library Systems 
(ILS), the technological backbone of the library operations and services (Breeding, 2008, 
2011a).

A good ILS maintains correct and current status of the library transactions, to support 
the good audit trial. The ILS effectiveness in Indian library context will be more if they extend 
the functions of circulation to stock verification or inventory control of the resources. Since 
the circulation module caters to the document delivery services of its patrons, the authors 
opines that providing options for suitable accountability of the collection should also be the 
responsibility of the circulation module. Hence the availability of stock verification function 
under the circulation module is appropriate in an ILS.

Cursory Look on Stock Verification

This case study about stock verification is carried out using Open source Integrated 
Library System (OSILS) – NewGenLib in a Business School (B-School). The case discusses 
about how collection evaluation process and the reports generated can supports collection 
development activities in library or Information center.

Libraries have adopted various methods to carry out the stock verification (usually 
conducted annually). The most commonly adopt methods are – cross verification with 
accession register; manual verification with orderly numerical listing of accession numbers; 
maintaining separate register with accession numbers in consecutive order; counting of 
collection and shelves; random sample stock verification; and, subject-wise verification with 
sampling technique, which uses shelf-list or register. All these not only make it cumbersome 
but also lead to waste of time and efforts (Sridhar, 1991). The use of computer with barcode 
technology or the Radio Frequency Identifiers (RFID) technology is more economical and 
faster methods.

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Guidelines and Recommendations for Stock Verification Process

The experience of authors in the stock verification process of other departments in educational institutes and in the library says that that compared to the magnitude of losses in other departments in an organization or institutions, the loss of library documents is meager. Loss like minor equipments and consumables in any organization is not treated with so much excitement as they treat in the loss of library documents. The authors has observed that the resources which discuss the norms and Government Orders on stock verification are available in plenty in the form of journal articles, web postings, conference / seminar resolutions, etc., which help the librarians to defend and defense the loss of books in library. But, literature which demonstrates process of stock verification, discussions and research are very few. Following are some of the recommendations made by the conferences, workshops, committees on the inevitable losses of the library documents. The recommendations are discussed in detail by Neeraj Kumar Churasia and Pankaj Chaurasia in their case study (2011). SDMIMD has used these resources to justify the loss of books and the writing off the same.

1) The ‘Father of Library Science’ Dr. S.R. Ranganathan states (1942) that ‘In an open access, some loss must be expected in spite of the greatest vigilance on the part of the staff. Hence, unless there are reasons to suspect foul play or wanton negligence on the part of the staff, the management must be prepared to write-off some books every year, say about one volume for every 2000 volumes issued for consultation or loan”


2) “Loss of 3 books per 500 issued books should be treated as negligible loss. Further it recommends to write-off an inevitable loss @ 2 for every 1000 books issued in an open access library”


3) “Four books per thousand issued should be treated as negligible loss”

Source: Recommendation by the UGC’s Workshop on formulating standards for college libraries, Khandala, March 5-7, 1979.

4) “Four books per 1000 issued be treated as inevitable loss in the open access system and this loss should be written-off by the any authority concerned”


5) “Loss of three volumes per one thousand volumes issued / consulted in a year may be taken as reasonable”

6) "The upper limit of price at Rs. 200/- per book for writing-off stipulated by GFR, GOI, which was made in 1983, which was made 17 years ago (Authors comment: Now it is almost 23 years) has to be altered in view of the steep rise in the cost of books. Considering the present level of book price, it is reasonable to raise the upper limit to Rs. 2000/- and Rs. 1000/- in the case of foreign books and Indian books respectively."


In some institutions the authorities have a peculiar way of looking at these policies and would like to interpret these differently, which many a times not in favour of librarians. They insist on production of concrete evidence/records about the policies, procedures and norms followed by other premier institutional libraries and universities. This calls for the uniform resolution and policy making at the higher level.

Stock Verification @ SDMIMD Library

SDM Institute for Management Development (SDMIMD) – a premier b-school situated in Mysore, has a collection in the area of Management and Allied subjects housed in its Library and Information Center. The collection comprises of books, journals / periodicals, project reports, company annual reports, contemporary reports, bound volumes, survey reports, CD/DVD collection, Audio-Video collection, online journal database, company financial database and other micro-documents. With the total collection of 23000+, the library is serving the teaching, learning and research activity of faculty, student and staff members. 700+ CD/DVD collection, 380 ebooks, electronic version of faculty publications, student project reports, subscribed databases are accessible through integrated OPAC.

The library was automated in 2006 using OSILS – NewGenLib. The automation project also included the job of barcode labeling for the entire physical collection. By experience we noticed that the automation has greatly reduced the duplication of work in administration and further it is more cost-effective in-terms of manpower, time and level of accuracy. The library has been doing its house-keeping activities like the acquisitions, circulation, serial control and cataloguing through NewGenLib only. In this article we intend to share our experience in undertaking annual stock verification process through this software.

The stock verification module in NewGenLib is equipped with following features:

- supports entry of records into inventory module through barcode and/or RFID
- supports loading of inventory data into the system for comparison against the database and the transaction files to identify missing items
- produce reports of missing items
- the reports produced on call number series during stock verification can pull-out the mis-shelved items (call no. series having noise of some other series) – with little query
execution.
- supports the ability to automatically calculate the overall value of the collection (say, for insurance purpose) using c VOL of the item details from acquisition records, replacement cost assignments and default price parameters
- supports the production of annual report on titles and volumes, collection value, listing of materials lost
- generates list of withdrawn items during a given period of time
- supports the reporting of total titles, total volumes in a particular collection

Further, the report generation module is well structured and supports the exporting of results to MS Excel. The software generates the reports on various resources which are – on shelf, checked-out, lost/written-off, damaged, bindery, withdrawn, missing, in-process and reference. Apart from the above said reports following are some of the additional reports produced by NewGenLib which are considered for collection evaluation and collection development decisions:

- reports pertaining to patron usage statistics, items checked out, items checked in and items renewed.
- statistics on library transactions and processes, including Library usage, holdings, budget usage in given period, missing list, withdrawn list, etc.
- The software links each report with the data at the time of the report generation

**Steps in Stock Verification using NewGenLib**

SDMIMD library conducts the stock verification annually, during the end of the academic year i.e., during April. The stock verification is carried out using the Barcode scanner of model Metrologic 7120 Orbit. After every 2000 number the data will be exported from the scanner to the NewGenLib server hosted on IBM xSeries 226. Stock verification process and steps involved in NewGenLib are illustrated with suitable screenshots below:
The results from the stock verification and the circulation desk are exported to MS Excel for further analysis. With the appropriate queries results are to be drawn. Following are the experience of the authors with the query results drawn. The data has helped in drawing the collection development policy at SDM Institute for Management Development (SDM IMD), Mysore.

- The report of the stock verification works acted as the base or guideline for qualitative improvements in collection building.
- The report provides the strength and weakness of the collection. Further it draws our attention towards the less focused collection for which the demand is noticed. This naturally helps in collection development on the identified area.
- The collection evaluation process helps us to discover the less-used, unused and outdated collection. This will greatly help in preparing the weeding-out list for submission to the authorities for approval.
- The reports of the stock verification when mapped with the checked-out and reservations it helped in listing the demands or requirements of resources from user community.
- Through stock verification a comprehensive listing of a library is done. It helps in presenting the collection statistics of SDM IMD Library.
- This exercise helps in calculating the overall value of the collection, which is the basic authenticated source to avail insurance coverage for the library collection. Further, it helps us to submit the price of the library collection with the exact depreciation.
- The mis-shelved or misplaced documents are identified and rectified during the collection evaluation process.
- The stock verification process supports the bindery preparation exercises.

The above exercise at SDM IMD clearly indicates that stock verification is essential process which helps the librarians/information manager to know the dynamics of information within the organization. It educates the decision makers about what kind of resources to be acquired, what are the gaps in provision of information sources, and what are the missing links in the information service chain. The quality and usability matrix is the most important factor while building the collection. Obviously, it is becomes a challenging task to scrutinize the existing collection and further develop it. Stock verification or collection evaluation helps in judging the library collection, services and resources in all respects.

The stock verification report and the blue-print of the collection development activities for the upcoming academic year with relative data were presented before the library committee. The loss or missing of documents was supported by the problems to have strict vigilance and the recommendations indicated in ‘Guidelines and recommendation of stock verification’ section. The approved stock verification report with permission to withdrawal of written-off items; remarks to be made on accession register and online catalogue; and,
disposal of damaged documents were taken. The decision of the library committee was further communicated to the Administration and Accounts section.

Conclusion

Library stock verification is considered, by some, as unnecessary evil which bring very little benefit to the users and library staff, but involves tedious work. However, in an automated environment the ease, at which reports for collection development and management can be drawn, makes the stock verification as a very useful annual routine. By experience we can say that the stock verification can create sufficient room to draw a perfect blueprint for collection development activities for an academic year and to plan and initiate the user required services. Book loss is one of the major issues that invariably discussed in the stock verification committees. The presence Government Order has lost its relevance with reference to the total number of books/ value of the books that could be waived off. There is an urgent need for revised Government order on the stock verification and guidelines to conduct the stock verification. The professional bodies and formal academic gathering like conferences, workshops and seminars have a vital role to play in framing the guidelines and recommendations which can support the librarians and information managers.

References


