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Department of Library and Information Science

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Date: 27-28 April, 2017

A Two Day National Level Conference on

Professionalism in Library and Information Services for User Empowerment: Opportunities and Challenges (PROFUSE 2017)

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PROFESSIONALISM IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR USER EMPOWERMENT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (PROFUSE 2017)

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Koha SMS Send Driver for eSMS Kerala Service: An Account of a Stakeholder

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ABSTRACT

Crowd sourcing is a convenient option to raise fund for Open Source Software development. Koha SMS Send driver for eSMS Kerala service developed and made available as Free Software with the financial support of State Central Library, Kerala. Mahatma Gandhi University Library could start SMS notifications from Koha with the help of eSMS Send driver. Small contributions from users can make big changes in the entire software community.

Keywords: Library automation, ILMS, FOSS, Koha, SMS, Crowdsourcing,

INTRODUCTION

The mobile phone is very popular among all segments of people in society. SMS notifications regarding library transactions is very convenient for library users. Transactional SMS subscription rate is now affordable for all type of institutions. Both commercial and noncommercial institutions are sending messages to customers mobiles phones. For example, messages receiving after the bill payments and banking transactions are considered as real-time confirmation. Timely messages regarding products/services are very helpful for customers. The number of mobile phone connections in India has crossed one billion. "The little device in Indians' pocket or purse has become their window to a world of information, education, livelihood, employment and even shopping and commerce,"(Rai, 2016).

SMS messages from libraries regarding the issue, return, renewal, acquisition and due reminders are very helpful for library users. Timely messages from libraries can help users to return/renew books on time and avoid fines.

Mahatma Gandhi University Library has integrated SMS notifications from Koha using eSMS service by Kerala State IT Mission. eSMS service is only available for departments and institutions under Kerala state. Integration of eSMS service into Koha enabled in Koha with the help of SMS driver developed by L2C2 Technologies. Funding for the development of SMS::Senfromd::IN::eSMS driver provided by State

Central Library, Thiruvananthapuram. The SMS driver licensed under Free Software license and any library under the control of Kerala state can enable SMS notifications from Koha.

Mahatma Gandhi University Library added eSMS service with Koha with the help of SMS Send driver developed by crowd sourcing. Library users are receiving timely notifications in mobile phones with the help of SMS Send driver released as Free Software.

KOHA IMPLEMENTATION AT MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Mahatma Gandhi University is a state university established in 1983 in Kerala. The library system consists of the central library, twenty-two departmental library and four study centre libraries. Two statutory departments and four study centre libraries are located away from the main campus.

The university Library possesses a collection of 57,350 books, 2,500 e-books, 2,050 theses and 7,500 bound volumes of journals. In addition to this, the library subscribes 253 current Indian (169) and Foreign (84) journals, 4 Online Databases and 4 Online Journal Archives(Mahatma Gandhi University, 2017).

The University Library has implemented Koha in September 2013. SOUL from INFLIBNET was the legacy library management system. Bibliographic, user and circulation data could successfully migrate to Koha. Koha hosted on a server computer located in the university central library. Branch libraries have been created in Koha for the management of departmental libraries. Union catalogue of the library is available through Koha Online Public Access Catalogue. Mahatma Gandhi University Library makes use all functional modules of Koha. RFID has integrated with Koha. Self-checkout kiosk and book drop box have made available for the convenience of library users.

USER NOTIFICATIONS FROM KOHA

Koha can send patron notifications as email and SMS. Library staff can prepare Koha to send messages in various contexts like the issue, return, reservation, overdue reminder etc. Messaging preferences available with Koha and user can customise context, content and frequency of notifications(Koha Community, 2017).

Libraries have to subscribe SMS from transactional SMS service provider. Transactional SMS gateway allows to send/receive SMS from computers to mobile devices.

SMS SEND DRIVER FOR ESMS KERALA SERVICE

Open Source software projects always open doors for community participation in development. Software community and public can contribute in the forms of manpower, money and facilities (e.g. server space for project websites). Many features of Koha is developed by receiving fund through crowdsourcing. Koha had no MARC 21 support in the initial stages of development. Nelsonville Public Library coordinated the efforts to develop MARC 21 feature for Koha(Athens County Public Libraries, 2002). In many instances, Koha users have extended their support to develop missing features and modules and give way to community use.

Various application software's make use of SMS to communicate with customers. The software sends and receives SMS via SMS driver and it communicates with the gateway. SMS driver act like SIM card

in the mobile phone(Gupta, 2017). Often SMS gateways provide guidelines for building driver or making available drivers in popular programming languages like PHP. Koha is written in PERL and no other SMS gateways have provided driver suitable for Koha.

L2C2 Technologies, an Indian Koha service provider has been developed an SMS driver to use with eSMS by Kerala State IT Mission. eSMS is an SMS gateway established by the Kerala State IT Mission for the use of Kerala government departments for providing departmental services over mobile phones(KSTIM, 2017). Initially, the driver was written for Kerala State Central Library and it is licensed under Free Software license. eSMS service available only for institutions under Kerala Government. Any Koha user in state-controlled institutions can subscribe eSMS and can integrate with the help of the eSMS driver. L2C2 Technologies has developed another SMS driver under Free Software license for Unicel SMS gateway. Unicel is a private transactional SMS service provider.

INTEGRATION OF eSMS WITH KOHA

eSMS account opening, installation of SMS driver, integration and configuration of message settings are the processes involved. eSMS service initially offers 5000 free SMS. Institutions can recharge various SMS packs. eSMS service offers bulk SMS subscription to Kerala State organisations in nominal rates.

L2C2 Technologies has given a very detailed documentation on how to install the SMS driver and integrate the eSMS account with Koha. In the first phase, SMS::Senfromd::IN::eSMS driver is downloaded from CPAN repository and installed successfully. Username and password of eSMS service is added in the Koha system preferences for SMS notifications. Message templates are created for SMS notifications. SMS notifications should not exceed 160 words. The library staff with Linux knowledge could successfully integrated SMS Send driver without any difficulty.

eSMS service provides a control panel for monitoring the delivery of SMS notifications. This control panel gives a detailed report of SMS consumption.

CONCLUSION

The primary feedback of the library users is that it is very helpful to receive SMS notifications. They are receive messages in advance to renew or return the books that have been borrowed. In the point of view of library staff, users can return or renew books in time, avoid fines and beneficial for other users who is waiting for the books.

Government organisations are very shy to contribute for the development of Open Source software due to its stringent rules and procedures. They can participate in the software development through crowdsourcing. The State Central Library, Thiruvananthapuram made a debut in crowdsourcing by supporting the development of SMS driver for eSMS. KELTRON (Kerala State Electronics Development Corporation Ltd) acted as the facilitator of the Koha implementation project. Crowdsourcing can attract money and manpower to Free Software projects for the enhancements and new features in the software. It eases the financial burden required for the software development among the user community. A small contribution from

Kerala State Central Library to develop Koha SMS Send driver has benefitted to many libraries in Kerala state.

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