Using Library Automation Software to Organize All of Your School’s Resources

By Shara Blackmore

A SCHOOL LIBRARY is more than a collection of books found within the library walls. It extends out into every area of the school, including the administration office, music department, gym and sports area, and each classroom.

Each office, department, and classroom has a variety of resources and items that all help to enrich student education.

All of these resources can be organized and catalogued in a library automation program, and be made available to the entire school or just to a specific department or classroom.

What is a library automation software program?

A library software program is a resource planning system for a collection or group of items. It provides a centralized system for all of the common library tasks, such as cataloguing, circulation, searching, and printing reports. Combining these tasks into one central program creates an efficient and time-saving system.
Benefits to Teachers and Classrooms

Each classroom has resources and items that are specific to the teacher, subject, and student. These resources can include any type of item, such as books, maps, visual teaching aids, art supplies, photographs, and many more.

These resources might be shared throughout the entire school or limited to a specific classroom. If the items are shared, they can be catalogued in the main library database with the location specified as to the classroom and physical location. This can help teachers enrich curriculum by accessing resources that otherwise might not have been available.

If the resources are not shared, they can be catalogued and be made available only to the specific teacher and students in the classroom. In order to effectively utilize the resource materials, they should be organized so that they are easily accessible for both the teacher and student.

The items can be assigned a location, category, subject, and a link to other related materials. After the item has been catalogued, it can be searched based on any information that has been entered.

Teachers can also enter each student into the software program and create a class list to maintain important information, such as address, grading, individual learning requirements, and so on.

And, if the resources are only going to be available within the classroom, the students can check out their items from the program, and it will help to keep track of who has what item and when it is due back.

Many software programs have the ability to have an online searching system. Using an online system means that students and teachers can search the collection from any computer with Internet access. This greatly enhances the ability to do research assignments, as it can be done at any time or location.

Benefits to Administration

The administration office can all have a variety of resources that can range from files, books, computer equipment, office supplies, and so on. As with classrooms, these resources may be shared with the school’s library or may just be for the principal and administration.

Often, the school principals will have their own collection of books and resources that might not be applicable to students and the rest of the school. The administrative staff can catalogue student files, policies, schedules, and any other type of item.

Having this information accessible in a centralized program will help keeping the office organized and efficient.

Benefits to Departments

Every school has many departments that have valuable resources and equipment. Each department can benefit from a library automation program by organizing and keeping track of this value.

The athletic department can catalogue and keep track of all of the sports equipment and schedules. Every item can be catalogued and assigned a location and a status.

For example, the volleyball net may need to be repaired at a certain date, the basketballs may need inflating, and so on. Each item...
can be given a status or category and can then be searched based on this criteria. This will help to keep sports equipment maintained and inventoried.

The music department is another area that can have a lot of valuable items. Instruments, sheet music, and CDs can all be catalogued into the software program and organized so that they can be easily found and accessed by teachers and students.

The replacement value and purchase price of each item can be entered and then tallied with reporting features, alleviating the necessity of trying to maintain a list manually.

The possibilities of a library automation program are really limitless, and can benefit not only the library, but also every department and area in the school.

Getting Started
Choosing a software program to use for your collection is an important decision. Keep the decision as easy as possible by defining what features and factors are important to you and your collection.

Some questions to consider include:
- What is your budget?
- How large is the collection and what is the future growth potential?
- What functions are most important to you?
- What computer equipment is available? What are the system requirements of the software program?
- Do you need a stand-alone computer or a shared network application?

Features to consider in a software program:
- Ease of use
- Affordability
- Flexibility to catalogue any type of resource
- Maximum number of items
- Internet capabilities with cataloguing and searching
- Available reports
- Maintenance and support availability and costs
- Searching tools, including keyword searching ability

A library automation software program can have many uses outside of the library walls. Every resource in a school is valuable to the education process.

A software program can help to keep every classroom, office, and department organized and efficient by keeping track of any type of resource and item. This, in turn, will help to create an ideal learning environment for students, making their academic experience the best it can be. CSP

Shara Blackmore is the customer support and administration manager at Jaywil Software, the developers of ResourceMate. For over 17 years, ResourceMate has helped organizations establish efficient libraries and collections with a cost-effective solution, www.resourcemate.com.