USE OF THE OFF-THE-SHELF AND IN-HOUSE SOFTWARE IN HOUSE KEEPING SYSTEMS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

by

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Over recent years, increasing attention has been given to software as libraries realise that without good software, their systems will not perform well. This study of automated housekeeping systems focused on housekeeping systems, software, and in-house and off-the-shelf software. Academic Libraries throughout Australia were used as a sample. Two case studies were conducted before and after the questionnaire survey.

Responses from 41 libraries revealed that:

- Few libraries have automated serials control;
- Most libraries have stand alone systems;
- The tendency is towards integrated systems;
- Good and bad quality software is available on the market;
- Programming expertise among library staff is still inadequate;
- Most libraries use the off-the-shelf software;
- Few libraries program in-house;
- Other libraries use both off-the-shelf and in-house software;
- Essential features such as MARC interface, authority maintenance, management reporting, reservations, inquiries about other systems, order reports, location, binding instructions, gaps, currency, etc., are not well catered for by some software packages.

Reasons for automating each system should be specified, essential features of each system spelt out, and written in a specifications document to be used as a checklist during evaluation and choice of software. Software considerations such as quality, maintenance and enhancement, support, and legal considerations should be made. Those with sufficient programming expertise should consider programming in-house.

The need for developing programming potential among library staff has been recommended. The setting up of a library-orientated national software development bureau for developing modular software has been suggested.