

Integrated Library System Software in Libraries

Cat White

Library Science Program, Middle Tennessee State University

LIBS 6030: Information Technology for Information Professionals

Dr. Frank Lambert

21 September 2025

Integrated Library System Software in Libraries

As libraries evolve to manage growing, diverse, and intricate digital and physical collections, the role of the Integrated Library System (ILS) has become more critical than ever. An ILS serves as the backbone of the library, managing its primary functions—such as cataloging and circulation—through a shared database. The continued discussion around such software within libraries consists of the decision to choose a commercial ILS software, which is a proprietary, purchased system maintained by a single vendor. In contrast to this decision, an open-source ILS is also a viable, free option. There are key reasons to integrate open-source software within the library setting. Three main factors include that the software is cost-effective, it enables librarians to make increased use of computer software, and the open-source software permits librarians to become more effective in their roles (Corbly, 2014). This paper will discuss the benefits and challenges of adopting a specific open source ILS and whether this software is the best course of action for libraries of all types.

Koha is a widely used open-source ILS that offers a range of modules to support libraries' diverse functions and workflows (Halder & Haldar, 2023). Koha is also the world's first free software library automation package, and its development is used to steer users in the right direction to meet their technology goals. At its core, Koha consists of several modules that cover essential library functions. One key benefit of using Koha is its cost-effectiveness. Being an open-source solution, this software eliminates the need for expensive proprietary licenses. Libraries can support Koha's features without incurring costs, making the software affordable for libraries of all sizes (Halder & Haldar, 2023). This particular advantage of open-source software frees up what would otherwise be licensing fees for the library. In return, the costs that are usually allocated can be used for another component within the library. Additionally, many smaller libraries face funding challenges because their budgets are directly correlated with the size of their population. Choosing free software, such as Koha, will minimize the stress of a limited budget within these libraries.

Another key feature includes comprehensive modules within the software. These modules include cataloging, circulation, acquisitions, serials, administration, reports, tools, and the online public access catalog (OPAC). Koha's core modules enable libraries to handle key functions and provide user-friendly access to their collections. A Koha user can efficiently navigate the system, perform tasks, and access relevant information, while library patrons can easily search for materials and place holds on their books (Halder & Haldar, 2023). It is essential to provide a user-friendly interface for patrons to manage their accounts and receive personalized library services. Patrons are vital to libraries because their engagement offers feedback for improving services, such as software. They are also crucial because they drive usage that justifies funding and strengthens the library's role as a community focus and powerful social center. In addition to the user-friendly software, librarians can utilize Koha's software to register new patrons, track patrons' activities, and easily integrate with other modules, ensuring consistent and relevant patron information throughout the system. The module also enables libraries to define patron categories or types, allowing them to manage access privileges, borrowing policies, and customized services tailored to specific patron types. Ensuring patrons can easily use the software is crucial to maintaining retention and streamlining all library services.

There are challenges to consider when adopting open-source software, such as Koha. The majority of studies identified a lack of technical skills as the most significant issue confronting the library management staff throughout Koha software implementation (Asim & Arif, 2025). There may be examples of inadequate professional development within specific libraries, which is a cause for concern when choosing open-source software. It is essential to prioritize and invest time in staff training, which will strengthen professional development within the library. Although Koha software is available at no cost, a limited budget can still result in disadvantages with the program. A budget is required for components such as IT infrastructure, hardware, and internet. An unreliable power supply or outdated hardware can hinder the smooth operation of Koha. Before the library attempts to install any software, regardless of its type or business unit, the user should always check with IT to obtain their views on the

proposed installation (Corbly, 2014). There must be careful and thoughtful consideration when considering Koha as a library's everyday software.

Once the chosen software is selected, proper guidelines and future evaluation techniques must be in place to ensure the software's maintenance. The first step is to establish a committee to evaluate the new ILS. This committee will include representatives from IT, administration, technical services, and specific patron groups. With diverse perspectives, the committee can conduct periodic organizational evaluations of the new software. Data will be collected both before and immediately after the software implementation to note any changes. This will allow for long-term tracking of changes and user satisfaction. A key step in this process is to conduct formal and comprehensive evaluations at specific time frames to track performance and address any challenges as they arise. To start, evaluations can be performed every three months to assess the data thoroughly, and then progress to yearly assessments based on the results.

Accessibility audits are crucial to evaluating the new software. This area will focus on ensuring the ILS is usable by diverse patrons with a wide range of abilities. In addition to the audits, conducting surveys of patrons with disabilities is necessary to guarantee the software is working for all users. Staff training will be required to retain information on accessibility features and best practices. Furthermore, staff will conduct workflow assessments for daily tasks, such as cataloging and circulation, to identify areas for efficiency improvements or areas where losses occur. This can evaluate the practicality of the software and if it is the right option for daily use in this library. The last key evaluation component is to confirm that the software is sustainable. The committee will assess the ILS's long-term sustainability, including the technical and operational aspects. Although open-source software does not include licensing fees, there will still be a need to analyze costs for maintenance, hosting, training, and integration with the ILS. Libraries must also confirm that the software is available and maintained for long-term use, in addition to receiving regular updates for new features and security enhancements.

In conclusion, an open-source Integrated Library System is not the best course of action for every library. This decision ultimately depends on the library's specific resources, size, and long-term goals.

Libraries must conduct thorough research and assessment to make informed decisions. However, Koha is an excellent option for flexible and inexpensive open-source software. Its open-source nature allows for collaboration and full customization, making it a popular choice among librarians worldwide (Halder & Halder, 2023). Librarians can manage their time more efficiently, utilize resources more effectively, and enhance the level of patron service throughout the organization.

References

Corbly, J. E. (2014). The Free Software Alternative: Freeware, Open-source software, and Libraries.

Information Technology & Libraries, 33(3), 65–75.

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/10.6017/ital.v33i3.5105>

Halder, S., & Haldar, S. (2023). A Brief Introduction to Koha ILS and its Modules. *Library Philosophy &*

Practice, 1–12.

Asim, M., & Arif, M. (2025). Adoption of Koha Integrated Library Software in University Libraries: A

Systematic Literature Review. *Serials Review*, 51(1/2), 54–64.

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/10.1080/00987913.2025.2529019>

LIBS 6030 Key Assessment: Reflection**1. What challenges did you encounter while you were working on this piece? How did you address them?**

Informational overload was a challenge for me with this assignment. I had trouble deciding what to include and what to exclude to create a succinct and understandable paper. I've found I work better with an initial layout rather than approaching the assignment as a whole. I'm also still learning about library science as I go, so it's enjoyable to continue learning about different aspects, but it can also be challenging at times.

2. How do you feel about your work on this assignment? What parts of your work did you like or dislike, and why?

I feel great about this assignment. I feel that I've improved since the past two assignments in this class, and I have really focused on ensuring that my APA citations are correct. I enjoyed the research aspect of the assignment because I'm still learning new characteristics of working in a library. I also appreciate learning new things, and technology is a subject I'm not as versed in in a library setting. I did not dislike anything about the assignment other than the fact that I have a hard time concentrating when writing.

3. What is the one thing you want people to notice about your work?

I want others to notice the effort put forth in this paper. I also want others to learn from this assignment, as it provides information on the topic of open-source software in libraries. If I were reading this from another person's perspective, I would want to gain insight and apply the information in a professional setting.

4. As you reflect upon your work on this assignment, what is one thing you would like to improve upon when applying this knowledge and/or skill in your professional practice?

Evaluation is a crucial aspect when working in the library. This example is related to software and freeware, but it's essential to remember the importance of evaluation. There should always be a constant evaluation of whether it pertains to technology, collections, and everyday tasks within

my professional practice. It's easy to become complacent with jobs, so it is nice to receive a reminder through an assignment to continue to evaluate yourself and how you can improve in your profession, too.

5. How does this assignment contribute to your understanding of librarianship as a profession?

This paper taught me how to apply all of the research and knowledge I gained from this assignment. I am confident about applying my knowledge to a real-life situation in a future library setting. Again, I've learn a lot about how technology correlates with librarianship, and I have gained a lot of knowledge to take away from this assignment and the class as a whole.