

Library Stock Management: A Case study of Stock Verification of Central Library, IIT Delhi

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ABSTRACT

Stock verification is one of the component of library management. The paper defines the concept of 'stock verification' and describes various policy issues, frequency with which the job of stock verification should be undertaken and norms for inevitable losses. Various methods of stock verification with its suitability and unsuitability and advantages of stock verification have also been described. Stock verification in libraries using the LibSys (Rel.6) software with particular reference to Central Library, IIT Delhi has been explained. The complete procedure, i.e., initiate stock verification, document verification and report generation through the LibSys software has been elaborated. The paper also describes the post stock verification steps with special reference to IIT Delhi Library system.

Introduction

In the previous time libraries were considered as being simply a warehouse of books. The books in the libraries were kept locked in almirahs and they were preserved and not issued; consequently the chances of their loss were very rare. As the libraries now provide open access service to make the holdings available to the users, the loss, damage, and misplacement of books is inevitable. To know and replace the lost books, and to maintain balance between various subjects, and to take adequate precautionary measures, it is necessary to do periodical inventory and accounting of the library collection. The term stock verification thus came into existence with regard to libraries. The modern technology has enabled automation and integration of the various processes of libraries and information centres to reduce or avoid human intervention and to increase the efficiency and speed (Dhiman, 2000).

Stock Verification (SV) - the term

The term stock verification is also known as 'stock taking', 'physical verification or checking', 'stock inspection', and inventory taking, etc. Stock verification is largely applicable for ascertaining the position of stores in government and commercial organizations. The term SV refers as being the process of checking as to what is in stock in relation to what it was. The emphasis is being put more on finding which items are missing than on how much is the loss calculated in rupees. It may be an insignificant aspect of librarianship as far as teachers,

research scholars and the library experts are concerned. Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines Stock verification as "Periodical examination, inventorying and valuation of all the stock goods in a shop, warehouse, etc." (Dhiman, 2000).

In the context of libraries, verification of stock is different from the verification of stores in private or government business organizations, so far as the purpose of the job and the difference in the meaning of 'Store' and 'Stock' are concerned. The collection in the libraries contains the various types of information sources.

The library is a public institution and these are subjected to accounting and checking, verification and reporting. The rule 99 in the chapter 8 of General Financial Rules (GFR) read with rule 116 make the difference between 'Store' and 'Library collection' much clearer "The position of library books, etc. is different from the other stores."

Advantages of Stock Verification

The stock verification has some major advantages as mentioned below:

1. Stock verification discloses the position of the loss of documents so that the replacement may be made in case of important document loss.
2. Stock verification provides adequate account of the percentage of inevitable loss.
3. Stock verification provides opportunities to weed-out long un-used, very old editions of books from the library.

4. Stock verification helps in reviewing the precautionary measures already taken in preventing loss or mutilation occurred. It helps in planning the method to provide adequate safeguards to check future losses.
5. Library users can browse entire collection because misplaced books are restored in their proper place and this result in the rectification of stock.
6. Periodic stock verification leads to the cleaning and dusting of books and thus prevents their deterioration.
7. Stock verification provides an opportunity to the staff members to acquaint themselves with the holdings of the library which results is the better reference service to the users.

Frequency Norms of Stock Verification

The holdings of the library may be checked at regular intervals. Library should conduct periodic stock verification in order to:

1. have an up-to-date record of library holdings;
2. have concrete data on rate of loss;
3. assess strengths and weaknesses in the collection.

Stock verification may be done at the end of the academic year or on a continuous basis throughout the year. Stock verification task should be planned to ensure its completion with the least interruption to the library services. For example, using a continuous inventory system entails closing off only one section of the library to circulation for a limited time while the rest of the library remains open for the users as usual. It may be observed that the size of collection is considered as the only basis for deciding frequency of stock verification in libraries is not sufficient consideration. Size of the library collection can only serve as an indicator of the total work load involved in the operation.

It is desirable but not necessary to conduct stock verification of the entire collection every year; however, stock verification schedule should be established and implemented as per the norms mentioned in the General Financial Rules (GFR).

Libraries of Govt. of India and its other organisations have to do a mandatory physical verification of all their holdings as per the following guidelines (GFR, GOI, OM-23, 1984):

- ◆ Complete annual physical verification of books should be done every year in the case of libraries having not more than 20,000 holdings and not fewer than two qualified library staff.
- ◆ Complete physical verification at intervals of not more than three years should be done in the case

of libraries having more than 20,000 but not more than 50,000 volumes. In case there is only one qualified staff.

- ◆ Sample physical verification at intervals of not more than five years may be done in the case of libraries having more than 50,000 volumes. If such sample verification reveals unusual or unreasonable shortage, complete verification shall be done.

So it can be observed that the frequency of stock verification depends upon the size of the stock, the human and material resources available for the exercise.

Methods of Stock Verification

Libraries traditionally perform the periodic stock verification by adopting any one of the methods enumerated as follows:

- i. By accession register;
- ii. By separate register with accession numbers in consecutive order;
- iii. By slips containing accession numbers;
- iv. By numerical counting of documents on the shelves;
- v. By shelf-register cards or shelf-list cards;
- vi. By sample stock verification;
- vii. By making stock verification as a continuous process; and
- viii. By using computers and library management softwares, and other automated methods.

In general, there may be three type of environments for stock verification of documents in the Library:

- a. **Manual library environments:** Without the help of computers, only staff involved.
- b. **Semi-automated library environments:** Partial use of computers.
- c. **Complete automated library environments:** Fully use of computers, Library Management Software, Barcode Technology, etc.

The manual methods are cumbersome, time-consuming, and more staff members are to be involved. Besides chances of errors is very high and sometime's libraries are closed partially, if not fully. As a compelling need, computers replaced the manual methods. But even with computerized stock verification, the accession numbers are to be keyed into the computers. When barcodes are used for this purpose, the data entry is automatic, errorless, and saving in time is ensured.

Norms for Inevitable Losses

Detection of losses may be called as one of the prime objective of stock verification. Norms for deciding inevitable loss may be laid on the size of library collection, and quantum of use of library material. In the

case of library, the material can be either used in the form of circulation (check-in and check-out of library documents) or consultation (Reading of documents in the library). Since the library collection is different from the 'Store' and the libraries are service institutions, it is more logical to make the quantum of use the basis. Following are some of the recommendations made by the conferences/workshops/committees for the inevitable losses of the documents in the libraries:

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan (1942)

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan in his book entitled "School and college Libraries" published in 1942, stated 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" (Ranganathan, 1942).

Library Committee of U.G.C. (1965)

In 1965, University Grants Commission has framed a library committee about "University and College Libraries". Report submitted by this committee states about the inevitable loss of documents as follows (U.G.C., 1965):

"Even the best of safeguard, the most human treatment possible and vigilance of the highest order, there will be some loss. The authorities of a library should be prepared for it. In British libraries, Loss of one volume for and issue of 1000 volume is now, considered tolerable. The fact is that loss due to miscreants will take place even at higher percentage of loss".

The committee also added that, "Loss of 3 books per 500 issued books should be treated as negligible loss."

The Ranganathan committee of UGC forcefully recommended to write-off an inevitable loss @ 2 for every 1000 books issued in an open access library.

U.G.C's Workshop from 5th to 7th March of 1979

UGC's Workshop on formulating standards for college libraries was held at Khandala from 5th to 7th March 1979. In this workshop, recommendations about loss of books are as follows :

- ◆ In consultation with the heads of department, weeding out of obsolete and unusable library material should be done on a regular basis;
- ◆ If missing books are not traced within a period of three years, they should be written off in consultation with library committee;
- ◆ Four books per thousand issued should be treated as negligible loss;
- ◆ The librarian and the library staff should not be

held responsible for the loss of books unless gross negligence is proved.

Government of India (1981)

The meeting in respect of losses of books in libraries due to open access system and weeding out of books was held in the chamber of special secretary of Govt. Education Dept. on 10th Feb 1981. In this meeting, it was accepted that due to open access system in libraries, there will be some inevitable loss, it is difficult to say that what is the limit of acceptable loss in open access system in a particular library. The Joint Director of College Education Department did however bind in a survey conducted by the department that in college libraries, the quantum of the losses of books varies from 6 to 18 books per 1000 books issued. Keeping in view this, it was resolved to recommend that as a unified policy, 4 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 (Grover, 1998).

Resolutions of the Seminar (18th Nov. 2000)

The Seminar on Collection management and loss of books in academic libraries was held on 18th Nov 2000 at Thiruvananthpuram. The resolutions of the seminar includes the following points :

- ◆ The practice of holding librarians responsible for the unavoidable loss of books in libraries is a factor that seriously hinders the realization of the basic objectives of the libraries i.e. putting books to the maximum use for the benefit of its members therefore this practice should be discouraged.
- ◆ The provision in the General financial Rules of the Govt. of India for treating three books for 1000 books circulated as a reasonable loss as a guideline to be observed by the colleges. However, the fixing of the upper limit of price at Rs. 200/- per book for writing off stipulated in the provision which was made 17 years ago in 1983 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.
- ◆ The responsibility for the loss of books exceeding the norms fixed in the General Financial Rules of the Govt. of India should be made operational only in situations where negligence on the part of the library staff has been established. The such cases, unlike the practice at present in which the chief librarian is made accountable, the entire concerned library staff should be held responsible.

Norms as per Govt. of India, General Financial Rules (GFR)-2005:

Weeding is as important activity in the selection and acquisition because it helps to keep the collection fresh, alive, current and relevant and therefore academic libraries should realize the importance of weeding policy to keep the library collection alive. Following norms should be adopted for Writing-off lost books as per GFR:

- ◆ Rule no. 116(2) (ii): “Loss of three volumes per one thousand volumes issued/consulted in a year may be taken as reasonable provided such loss can not be attributed to dishonesty or negligence on the part of Librarian. Loss of a book of the value exceeding Rs.200 (Rupees Two hundred) and the books of special nature and rarity shall invariably be investigated and consequential action taken. All such losses will however be written-off only by a competent authority. (GFR, GOI, OM -23, 1984).”
- ◆ “Loss of books up to 5 books per thousand books issued/ consulted can be considered reasonable.”

However in an open access library, annual loss of 3 volumes for every 1000 issued should be considered as a normal loss in normal circumstances as recommended by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan. In case of the losses go beyond it, all steps may be taken to find-out reasons thereof and necessary precautions or measures be taken to minimize the loss.

Stock Verification at Central Library, IIT Delhi

The Central Library, IIT Delhi has a strong collection consisting of more than three lakhs documents comprising of books, standards, specifications, theses, CD-ROM databases, bound volumes of journals and video CDs pertaining to physical sciences, engineering and technology, biotechnology, computer and information technology, social sciences and management. The Library has an active collection of 21,500 and 53 e-books under Text Book and Book Bank schemes to support undergraduate studies. The reference collection in the Library is maintained separately and is categorized into atlases, bibliographies, handbooks, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias and Technical data. The Library provides web-based access to more than 12000 electronic journals, 6 on-line databases and 2 CD-ROM databases and caters to the demand-based procurement of specialized documents such as patents, standards and specifications.

As per General Financial Rules (GFR): “Sample physical verification at intervals of not more than five years may be done in the case of libraries having more than 50,000 volumes. If such sample verification reveals

unusual or unreasonable shortage, complete verification shall be done”.

Keeping in view, the above automated stock verification procedure was adopted by the Central Library, IIT Delhi by employing barcode and LibSys (Rel.6) facilities so that stock verification could be performed easily with less manpower. Earlier, manual stocktaking was an exhausting exercise as each and every book’s detail had to be manually entered into the system or registers. Now with the introduction of new technology, it is very easy for the library staff to just place a scanner on the barcode; the scanner automatically passes the scanned information to the common database or server. Following process was involved for stock verification of documents in the Central Library, IIT Delhi:

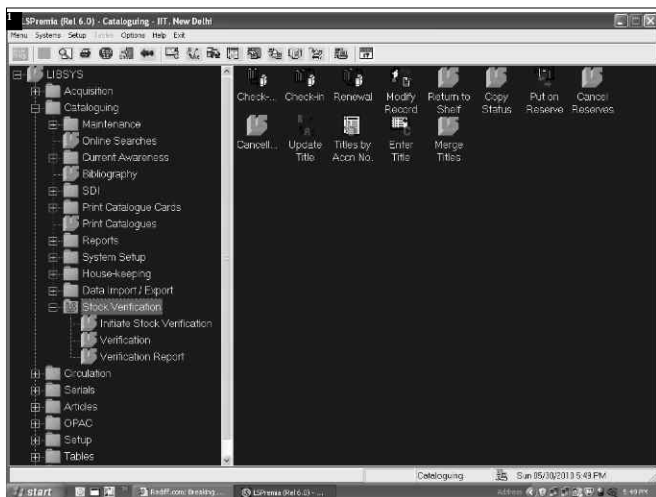
1. Barcode scanners are being used for data capturing - Scanning of barcode label (accession number) of documents.
2. Putting month and year stamp at the inside back cover to ensure that the document was physically verified.
3. Returned documents during the stock verification period were also verified before shelving.
4. Besides, identification of damaged and wornout documents for repair, binding of obsolete volumes, and rearrangement and cleaning can also be done simultaneously.
5. Once the data capturing was over, the verification and generation of report with LibSys could also be done in a short period of time.

The barcode technology using LibSys software played a significant role in the automated systems in spite of having some limitations of the technology. This technology is an appropriate technology for the management of learning resources and library services. Stock verification has become easier by using the hand held barcode scanners. The accession numbers in the form of the barcode can be scanned and matched with the document or information resources database. The information about missing resources can be easily accessed. Weeding-out resources and updating of records also becomes simpler through this process. This is how barcode technology helps to verify the stock of the library systematically, quickly and accurately.

Stock Verification Using LibSys Software

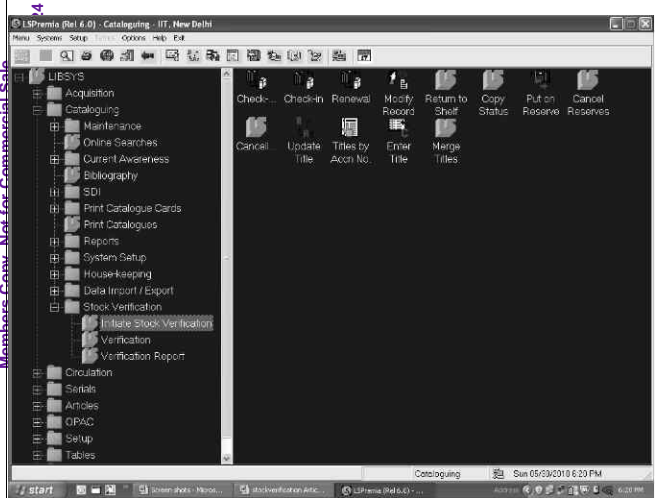
LibSys provides for inventory or stock verification of documents by entering or wanting accession numbers of documents present in the library. Following functions are related to stock verification:

- i. **Initiate Stock Verification**
- ii. **Verification of Records**
- iii. **Verification of Reports**



i. Initiate Stock Verification

This function sets the system for the big exercise on inventory entails. Select this function from the menu and click OK. Confirm by clicking OK again. This function should be run only once during the cycle of stock verification.



ii. Verification of Records

On selection of this function, the system accepts accession numbers one by one, registering in the database and the presence of the item on the shelf. On entering an accession number and clicking OK, the system shows brief details of the title along with its current status.

- ◆ File option? (Put p for using file)
- ◆ File name (Specify the file name by which you want to verify the stock, that file should be available in work files directory)

Following buttons appear:

Modify Quit Process

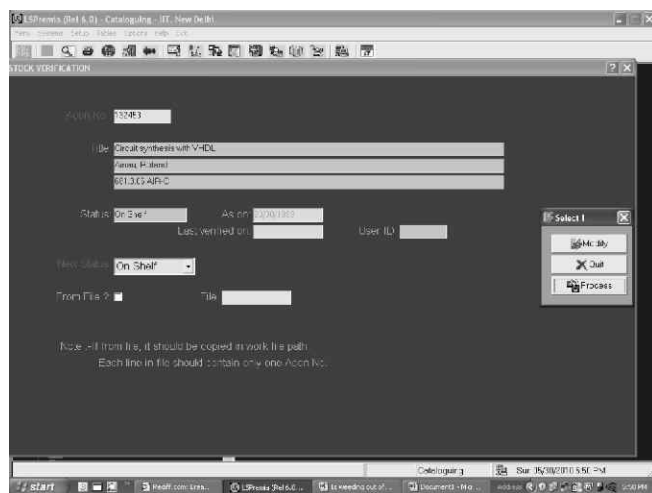
Select 'Modify' to change the status of the book (Default is 'on shelf') to either of the following :

- ◆ Damaged

- ◆ Withdrawn The 'Quit' option will accept another Accession no. The 'Process' option will register the presence of the book on the shelf.

There is also a facility to accept the list of Accession nos. in a file, where each line contains only one accession no. This is useful for grouping titles having the same status; for e.g. "Withdrawn Books". In such a case, use the File option. The file of accession nos. is developed off-line and is saved in a file. This is used as the input-file when the system asks for the file name.

On entering the above information and pressing Enter, the system will start registering accession nos. for verification in the database.

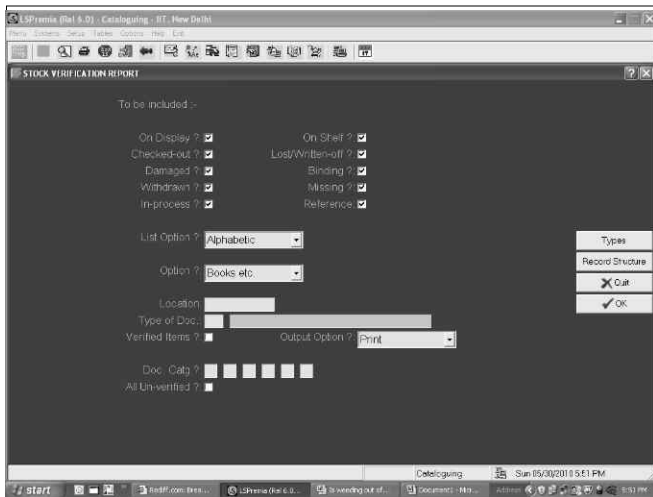


iii. Verification of Reports

The system provides a list of all the books either alphabetically or by Accession no. or Class no. There is a facility to include the status against each title.

- ◆ On Display
- ◆ On Shelf
- ◆ Checked-out
- ◆ Lost/Written-off
- ◆ Damaged
- ◆ Bindery
- ◆ Withdrawn
- ◆ Missing
- ◆ In-process
- ◆ Reference

Reports may also be generated separately for any of the above groups. One may also select any one or more groups to be included in one report. There is also an option to specify 'Location', in case the verification reports are needed for specific collections.



After generation of stock verification report through LibSys Software following steps has been followed by the Central Library, IIT Delhi :

- i. Approval of stock verification report by Competent Authority
- ii. Withdrawal of written-off items
- iii. Remarks in the accession register
- iv. Remarks in the library catalogue/online catalogue
- v. Remarks in the shelf-list record
- vi. Disposal of damaged documents
- vii. Information to the Accounts Section
- viii. Information to the Teaching departments/centers
- ix. Information to the Book Selection Committee
- x. Improving safety arrangements

The Stock verification has been neatly justified and summarized by Smith in following words :

“The desire to give the be best possible library service and the public relation angle so inextricably tried to good service were the most important reasons for taking an inventory.. . keeping the catalogue an accurate index of the entire book collection was considered of utmost importance in giving good library service. This includes catching books that were improperly catalogued as well as withdrawing catalogue cards for missing books...fruitless searching for books can become more costly in the long run than an inventory would be.”

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