# Serial Control

**Content**

**0. Objective**

The objective of this module is to impart knowledge on the following aspects of Serials Control;

- Definition and purpose of automated serial control
- Advantages of computerized serials control subsystem
- Get a thorough insight into the operations involved in automated serials management in a library
- All tasks involved in serials control including to selection, subscription, payment, check in, reminder, claiming, binding and article indexing, etc.
- Implications of computer operations in serials control
- Creation and maintenance of master databases
- Electronic journal management system and
- Advantages of computerized serials control system

**1. Introduction**

Serials management, an important module of integrated library management system (ILMS) and part of library operations, has become increasingly complex over the years. Serials control is considered as one of the most complicated library function that is labour intensive and demands high degree of attention for accuracy and details. Managing the serials is considered as one of the most challenging task by the librarian, because of complexity in procedures at different stages of selection of titles, obtaining approval for new titles, renewals, placing orders, invoice processing, maintaining check-in details, claiming non-receipts of issues of journal, etc. Serial management also has issues such as merger and acquisition of publisher and titles of journals, splitting of titles, renaming and also discontinuation. Moreover, journals vary in formats and in frequency of publication. However journals are increasing appearing in electronic formats.

During early 1960, libraries started with automation of cataloguing, circulation, acquisition and implementation of OPAC. In 1990 the serials automation started but there were doubts whether it was worthwhile to spend the effort and funds required to convert manual system into automated system that might not accommodate all requirements of the serials acquisition and management processing. Finally, Internet made a revolutionary impact on libraries leading to, innovative transformation of automated library operations and services. There is no longer any doubt about advantages of serials automation although serials control systems are mainly designed to support services based on efficiency in acquisition, collection development and public services.

**2. Definitions**

Harolds (1987) defines, serial as any publication bearing either chronological or numerical designation issued in successive parts appearing at intervals (usually regular ones) and as a rule intended to be continued indefinitely.

According to AACR2, 2002 Revision (AACR2R), serial is a publication in any medium:

- Issued in a succession of discrete parts;

- Generally bearing numerical or chronological designations; and
- Having no predetermined conclusion.

Badaru (2012) defines serial publications as print or non-print information sources issued in successive parts both regularly or irregularly, numbered and intended for indefinite period of time. Library of Congress defines serials as print or non-print publications issued in parts, usually bearing issue numbers and/or dates. International Centre of International Standard Serial Number defines serial publication as unfinished set of documents, published successively under the same title, for an undetermined period of time.

## 3. Purpose of Serials Control System

Serial control system variably called as serial control (in SOUL 2.0), Serials (in LIBSYS 7) and Serials Management (in NewGenLib) is one of the most important and complex modules of any Integrated Library Management Software (ILMS). The purpose of a good automated serials control system may be summarized as follows:

- To have effective and efficient control over subscription, renewal and cancellation of serials;
- To record and maintain current as well as serials holdings data accurately;
- To provide accurate information about funds required and committed as subscription to serials;
- To provide necessary management information reports, whenever required;
- To reduce labour and time consuming work involved in manual serials control systems; and
- To have a good control over receipt of individual issues of journals, reminder for non-receipt of journal titles, binding and related activities.

## 4. Advantages of Computerized Serials Control Subsystem

Serials management is possibly the most complex process in a library. It involves a lot of time bound routine activities that require accuracy and precision. In special libraries, periodicals are the most important resources and take the lion's share from the library budget. The optimum utilization of these resources demands application of ICT as a management tool.

The advantages of automated serials control subsystem are:

- It improves the speed and accuracy in serials control activities
- It can generate various reports in required formats for MIS activities
- It ensures timely reminders generation and better binding control
- It offers easy creation and maintenance of article indexing database and thereby helps in providing a number of user services on demand in many forms.
- It facilitates online access to the serials database from anywhere, anytime in any format
- It predicts the arrival of journal issues and generates schedules for receiving journal issues
- It helps in the export and import of cataloguing data for serials received by the library

- In an integrated serials control module, the master database supplies most of the bibliographical, financial and administrative data at the time of data entry. This approach ensures standardization of entries and also eliminates data redundancy and
- It supports generation of a variety of information products and user services in the desired form and formats.

## 5. Functions of Automated Serials Control

Serial control consists of a number of activities and services often performed manually. The basic functions and activities remain the same as in automated environment. Some of the major functions that can be expected of an automated serials system are mentioned below;

- Handling new subscriptions
- Handling renewal of subscriptions
- Cancellation of subscription
- Budget control
- Department/unit-wise budget
- Invoice processing
- Invoice for individual issues, or for annual (calendar/non-calendar) subscription or prorate subscription
- Creation and maintenance of master database
- Recording the receipt of journal issues
- Generating receipts/reminder for expected missing issues
- Managing (sending claims for) missing issues
- Sending reminders
- Dealing with "special editions", supplements, and indexes
- Dealing with name changes of publication, publisher and merged titles
- Splitting of journals
- Binding control
- Accessioning bound volumes
- Barcoding of accession numbers
- Report generation
- Listing titles of the periodicals received (alphabetical and subject wise)
- Providing hyperlink tp the URL of e-version of journals
- Editing & updating of records
- Searching by title, publisher, distributor, sorting by date or volume/issue number
- Option for Web-OPAC
- Table of contents and other personalized information services
- Article indexing
- Indexing of journal articles by author, title, and subject keywords.
- Import and export bibliographic data of serials from one format to another
- Union list and union catalogue

## 6. Administrative Requirements for Automated Serials System

Administrative requirements of serial set-up are essential pre-requisite and security parameter that need to be defined before one can use serials module. These administrative requirements include vendor management, budget, frequency, delivery mode, binding and collection type, etc.

### 6.1 Creation and Maintenance of Master Database

Modern ILMSs are based on relational data model. Each module of these packages centers around on a master database. Any number of additions, modifications and deletions are possible in the master database and these changes are automatically reflected in all the sub-modules under that module. Serials control module also follows the same architecture, where in records created in the master database are available to all the sub-modules under serial control. It reduces data entry work and ensures standardization. Generally, master database in serial control includes following master entries:

a) **Title Master:** In this file, bibliographical details of new serial titles are entered after the selection and approval process. This file also includes details of all the existing serials on the basis of some standard bibliographic format. Any number of additions and deletions in the title master file is possible through appropriate options.

b) **Country Master**: This file contains names of countries and their corresponding codes for entering details of country of publication in sub-modules of serials control, Country code is generally based on ISO-3166 where each country is represented by two unique characters e.g. the code for India is as per ISO-3166 standards.

c) **Language Master:** This file contains entries for languages and their three digit codes as per the ISDS manual.

d) **Supplier/Publisher/Binder Master**: This master file contains details of all local and foreign subscription agents, publishers of serials and binders along with their corresponding codes. These codes are generally created locally.

e) **Subject Master:** This master file holds lists of subject descriptors and is available in various sub-modules for entering subject group(s) of serials. This master also includes class numbers, corresponding to subjects covered.

f) **Frequency Master**: Arrival schedule for check-in of serial is generated based on the information provided in publication frequency master. Therefore, it is necessary to codify various types of frequencies of journals subscribed by the library. Automated master frequency database will help to monitor receipt and non receipt of journal issues by sending reminders.

g) **Budget Master:** This file enables creation of income and expenditure heads, various sub heads and allocation of funds for serials acquisition. The module also allows transferring funds from one expenditure head to another head depending on the expenditures as per requirements. Serials budget includes entries for budget head, sub-head, period, account name and code, dates, opening balance, amount spent, credit note amount, closing balance, etc.

h) **Currency Master:** This file contains currency description, codes and exchange rates of foreign currencies in terms of Indian Rupees. The conversion is calculated automatically based on data given in this file. Currency conversion rate can be updated on the basis of GOC/bank rates in the master file and is reflected in invoice process.

i) **Delivery Mode Master:** Publishers and vendors arrange supply of serials by different modes of delivery such as air mail, shipment/postal, hand delivery, etc. Mode of delivery can

be used to set lead time for expected date of issues of journals, keep the track of their receipt. Reminder can be sent automatically once the lead period is over.

**j) Physical Media Master**: Serials are available in different types of media which are defined in master file. These physical media can be selected for creation of bibliographic record. The physical media will help user to navigate required title in different forms of resources. It may be textual document, CD-ROM, magnetic tape, online, DVD-ROM, etc. This file includes description and corresponding codes for different physical media.

**k) Binding type Master:** Individual parts or issues of journals are bound volume-wise at the end of year or subscription period. Binding of back volumes of journals is a regular work of serials control section of a library. This file contains different modes of binding (e.g., standard, leather binding, cloth and rexin binding etc.) and their corresponding codes.

**l) Report Master:** This file includes formats for every type of letter required for the generation of outputs such as order letter, cancellation of order letter, reminder letter and claim letter formats. The terms and conditions formulated by the library may be included in the order letter format.

## 7. Subscription and Acquisition

The module contains an option that incorporates various details about subscription to particular journal. The information required to subscribe a journal is entered through this option. Once these details are entered into the system, list of titles of journals is generated which is then sent to the competent authority for approval.

Serial control system revolves around the tasks of making new subscription, renewal, and cancellation of subscription. In order to handle the acquisition work efficiently the system should maintain in-process file and a vendor file. The in-process file may contain the bibliographic and order data, as well as invoice data, if required.

The system should be able to produce automatic subscription and renewal alerts. Acquisitions through gifts and exchanges should also be supported by the system. The system should provide support for generation of orders, cancellation and re-order, if required.

Acquisition of serials/periodical in a library is different from book ordering system. In contrast to books, the libraries subscribe to periodicals regularly year after year against advance payment.

This group of activities involves the following basic jobs:

1) Selection of serials for new subscription
2) Renewal or discontinuation of existing journals/serials
3) Selection of delivery mode
4) Selection of subscription mode
5) Formulation of terms & conditions of supply
6) Selection of vendors
7) Approval from authority
8) Ordering and renewal
9) Payment
10) Receipt of bound volumes

11) Reminder generation
12) Adjustment of advance payment for non-receipt of journal issues
13) Preparation of lists of subscribed journals, new arrivals and serials holdings.

## 8. Circulation of Periodicals

As a general principle, journals/periodicals are not issued like books. However, to meet specific and essential requirements in special libraries, bound volumes or loose issues of periodicals may be issued only for short period of time, overnight or for a day. This restriction is necessary to avoid gaps in journal volumes or issues as missing issues or lost issues cannot be replaced easily. So for such short-term issue/return, the ILMS should have the provision of issue/return and the option for "on-premise" issue is also available during the office hours or overnight issue may also be allowed. Otherwise, the librarian must get the software suitably customized to get this facility incorporated in the ILMS.

## 9. Article Indexing

Article indexing is done to facilitate article level access to the content that appears in each issue of a serial subscribed by a library. A standard data input format is used for entering details of every article that appears in a given issue of journal. Such format can be the one prescribed for MARC, CCF, etc. Integrated Library Management Softwares (ILMSs) usually have a module or sub module for building article index database. Usually article indexing becomes necessary when externally published indexing and abstracting services do not cover the core journals in a given discipline.

In absence of external indexing services, libraries can consider article indexing using ILMS. The first step of article indexing is to determine the bibliographic format of articles to be entered into the system. The input in format article indexing should include some mandatory data elements that are essential to provide basic details of an article. A library must follow a subject thesaurus for the standardization of keywords or descriptors. A number of computer generated services like current awareness list, subject bibliographies, author bibliographies, recent arrival list etc. can be provided to users on the basis of article indexed in the database.

## 10. Check-in

One of the most important features of a serials control system is its check-in capability since it is a highly repetitive operation, it must be fast and friendly to be useful to the library staff.

There are two basic methods in which the system can be devised to check-in serials. They are by editing holdings statement and by prompting for expected issues. In the first method, the operator has to input the check-in data into the system such as volume number, issues number and additional information such as accompanied materials or supplements. While, this method is very flexible, it can be inconvenient and time consuming. In the second method, the system can predict the expected issue. If the predicted issue matches with the one in hand which is to be checked-in, with minimum number of keystrokes, the issue can be checked-in. However, this method is possible only for those serials which have predictable pattern of publication and the expected issue can be predicted based on some frequency cycle.

If the checked-in issue is not the one expected but is a later one, the system, should automatically mark the gap. On the other hand, if the checked-in issue is not the expected one but earlier one, the system should be able to find out whether the issue details correspond to

missing (gap) or whether it is a duplicate issue. In either case, the system should be able to update suitable file/records with minimum intervention of operation.

A good system supports the check-in of multiple copies of an issue on a single check-in transaction even when these copies are accommodated in separate copy records. In the interest of efficiency, the system should also support check-in of special issues, combined issues, supplements, "come with" issues and so on.

## 11. Claims

The most frequently faced problem in serials management is the non-receipt of issues of a journal in time. In manual system, it is difficult and time-consuming process to identify the non-receipt of journals and for sending claim notices for missing issues. With automation, identification and claims for such issues becomes easy and takes much less staff time to accomplish the task.

The system should automatically identify the issues that should be claimed. Some claims may be automatic and may cause the system to trigger generation of claim notices without or with minimum staff intervention. Other claims will be semi-automatic, in the sense that they require staff review prior to generation of claim notice. Certain situations demand for forced claim i.e., claiming for an issue through operator initiation. The system should have facility to handle all the three situations mentioned above.

The system should be able to automatically identify and produce claim notices for relevant issues on:

- failure to receive a new order within a library in a specified period;
- failure to receive the next issue within the expected time frame;
- receipt of an issue later than the expected time frame;
- receipt of fewer number of copies in case the library is subscribing for multiple copies.

The system should generate follow-up claim. The criteria for generating such claims may be one suitable to the individual library's practice. Although the system may support issuance of any number of claims, generally a maximum limit is fixed since the probability of receiving the issue after that limit is low.

## 12. Computerized Binding Management

Binding management is particularly important in serials control system. It is a common practice in libraries to bind the completed volumes for archival storage. An automated system should be able to indicate when an item is ready to be sent for binding. It is very helpful feature to assist in work scheduling and to spread the binding workload evenly throughout the year. The system might support a variety of approaches for determining, readiness for binding including:

- upon full receipt of a specified number of issues;
- upon receipt of the final issue in a specified level of enumeration hierarchy; and
- At regular intervals as specified by the library.

The system should be able to provide on-demand lists of serials ready for binding.

The binding sub-module includes following functions:

- *Binding set selection*: This step involves the work of selecting the relevant issues meant to be sent for binding. The selection follows entering of volume and issue number, binding type, colour and embossing type by using drop down menu.

- *Order process:* In this step the software has to generate order letter giving details of the types of binding, no. of volumes for each type of binding, expected date of delivery, payment, etc.

- *Receiving:* This function includes receiving of bound volumes as per binding order, checking of the quality of binding and accessioning of bound volumes. It also has provision to enter receipt date, classification number, location, etc. and to send reminders for faults in completing the binding jobs and delivering.

- *Payment:* Payment work starts with invoice processing for binding, generates payment release note or order and finally record all the details of payment (e.g. cheque/DD number, date, amount, budget head, payment acknowledgement receipt number and date, etc.).

- *Reminder:* It is meant for generating reminder letters to be sent to the binders in case of any delay in receiving the bound volumes. Binding sub-module should generate list of overdue items.

## 13. E-Journal Management

With the advent of e-journals in the 1990s, the serials management in libraries has created new challenges to the serial managers. Electronic journals are changing rapidly like other e-resources and such their management has to cope up with these changing practices. Although the basic subscription and renewal management are nearly similar in case of print as well as electronic journals management, there are different sets of management strategies and tasks required for e-journals. Electronic resources collections differ from more traditional print collections due to technology, pricing structure, bundling of journals in various subject collections, negotiation of prices and terms and conditions, contract negotiation, and access issues that are inherent in the resources procurement and maintenance.

These tasks, typically associated with electronic journals, can be grouped in the following six categories associated with the life cycle of electronic journals. The typical e-journals life cycle, as proposed by Oliver Pesch involves the following steps:

- Acquisition of e-journals
- Accessibility of e-journals
- Administration
- Support
- Evaluation
- Renewal

**FIGURE 1. E-journal Lifecycle**
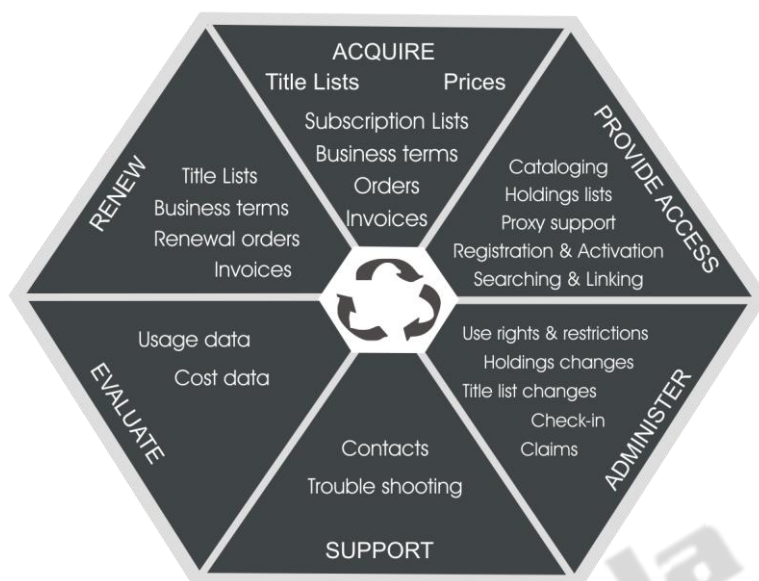


***Acquisition of e-Journals:*** The acquisition of e-journals starts with identification of e-resources and enabling the trial access. After enabling the trial access the library needs to invite quotations and negotiate a suitable price, which may be for a single or selected title or a bundle of titles for a given subject collection or the entire e-journals by a publisher as a whole. The pricing models for e-journals are also quite complicated as compare to the print journals. The pricing model can be traditional access model (ownership through contract), access through "pay-per-view" model, access to content through yearly subscription or free online access with print subscription, etc. The selected e-journals are ordered and invoiced with enabling the access by the publisher for subscribing institution.

***Accessibility of e-Journals:*** After subscription of e-journals, the publisher provides its access to only authorized users of a library through secure mechanisms like username and password, IP filtering, proxy servers, etc. The library needs to monitor and maintain seamless access to e-journals through on-campus or off-campus access mechanisms. The library also needs to create bibliographic records of subscribed electronic journals in the local catalogue to enable their searching and linking. The MARC records can be created for small collections in-house or can be obtained from the publishers directly for large collections of subscribed e-journals. Libraries can also opt for an A-Z services for maintaining the title lists. The list of journals is provided as per KBART standard by most of the publishers.

***Administration:*** The library needs to sign license agreement for subscribed e-journals. Important terms in license agreement, such as subscription period, access mechanism (IP address / proxy access), titles made accessible, back files made accessible, annual price increase, inter-library loan terms, provision for archival access, post-termination access or maintenance fees, etc. should be examined and evaluated. The library need to keep the title lists updated and weed out the list of records from the catalogue for which the subscription has been expired for convenience of the users.

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*Support:* Since the access to e-journals is available directly from the publishers website, there may be external causes like IP change, network failure or change of password, etc which may disrupt access to e-journals. The library needs to effectively monitor and manage such issues for smooth access of e-journals.

*Evaluation:* The evaluation of e-journals is quite different from the print journals since use of e-journals can be counted at different points of accessing the e-journals. The use of e-journals can be counted based on the number of hits from the A-Z link manager or from the usage data provided by the publisher. The usage statistics management is one of the important aspects in e-journals management. Use of SUSHI standard for automated harvesting of usage helps in gathering the usage (download counts of articles). The download statistics can give justifications for renewal of e-resources for later years. The analysis of COUNTER report for access denials can also give a suggestive list of journals for consideration of subscription in later years.

*Renewal:* Renewal of e-journals is a component of acquisition process wherein resources were selected and evaluated for renewal of subscription in consecutive further year.

## 13.1 E- Journal Management Softwares

For effective management of E-journals, there are several proprietary and open source software available. The major proprietary software in this field are Proquest's 360 Resource Manager, Innovative's ERM, TDNet Core ERM, Swetswise Electronic Resource Management etc. There are also several software available which provide support for specific task in the ERM workflow, like a link resolver for openURL linking and creating A-to-Z listing, a tool for management of COUNTER usage statistics and support in decision making or evaluation.

There are also some open source software available which may provide support for automation of the complete workflow of e-journals or specific tasks. The list of few open source e-journals management tools are as follows:

**CUFTS:** CUFTS is an open source ERM developed and maintained by Simon Fraser University (SFU) Library which provides basic electronic resource management services, allowing your library to centralize all of the details about your electronic collections, including licensing terms, renewal dates, contacts, and more. CUFTS ERM also features a renewal notification system, reminding you of approaching deadlines and an A-Z list of your electronic resources. It also provides a openURL linking module named GODOT for article level linking. This software is written in perl and uses postgreSQL for managing the data.

**CORAL:** CORAL, developed by University of Notre Dame, Hesburgh Libraries, is an Electronic Resources Management System consisting of interoperable modules designed around the core components of managing electronic resources. It consist of 4 modules, Resources, Licensing, Organizations, Usage Reports for management of various tasks of ERM workflow. CORAL is written in php and uses MySQL as the backend database.

**E-Matrix:** E-Matrix is a open source ERM developed by NC State University library which provide functionality in the area of Licensing, Access, Collection Evaluation, Reporting, and Name Authority.

**ERMes:** ERMes Electronic Resource Management (ERM) Software is developed by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The software is based on Microsoft Access and provides features to manage databases subscription dates, contacts, COUNTER statistics management, etc.

## 13. 2 Some General Facilities

Most of the ILMS software provides the following facilities to users;

- Facility to plug in to a serails databse such as Ulrich Periodical Directory  directly
- Provide URL link for subscribed e-journals to access resources from the publisher website/server
- Capability  of  software for getting usage statistics of e-journals
- Hyperlink the e-journal titles  through WEBOPAC
- Easily download the data/articles in required format for printing
- Journals are more useful in electronic form due to enhanced search capabilities.
- Economy of storage, the increase in cost for keeping printed material makes electronic forms more attractive from an economic viewpoint
- E-journals can be viewed when the library is not open if they have access to a network terminal. Also, invoicing and claiming in e-format. It also, offers speed of delivery, eliminates printing, and saves money in terms of postage costs for libraries; and
- Ability to provide linkage from library web page to table of content of journal within the databases.

## 14. Reports

A well designed system provides a variety of reports required for day-to day, as well as occasional work/decision making process. The system should provide both statistical as well as management reports. Serials control module helps to generate various customized reports on demand of users from the following sub modules;

*i) Suggestion Reports:* One can generate report by selecting appropriate options like, list of new titles, list of approved/ non approved/in process titles, budget wise, department wise, date wise, vendor/publishers and requester wise, etc. as the case may be.

*ii) Subscription Report:* Module has provision for generating various types of subscription report according to status ie. new titles for order, list of titles for renewal, order subscription overdue, titles ordered, titles cancelled, generate order (letter) and order status by selecting an appropriate required options.

*iii) Payment Report:* Module enables to generate report by budget head, department, suppliers/publishers, currency, title payment status, payment history, payment refund, membership and all correspondence letters to the accounts and vendors/publishers, invoice register, etc.

*iv) Check-in Report:* One can generate various report namely issues received, not received issues, missing issues and status wise issues by filtering the list by using various options like titles, subject wise, publishers wise, date wise, etc.

*v) Binding Report:* Module enables to generate reports on various aspect of binding work carried in the library like set preparation, list of order processed, bound volume received, invoice process, list of bound volumes accessioned, etc.

*vi) Master Title Report:* ILMS Serials module has provision to take out report using any of the following options to generate the report under each head:

- Alphabetical
- Location
- Departments
- Subscription
- Publisher
- Supplier
- Budget Head
- Frequency
- Delivery mode
- Classification number
- Language
- Subject
- Receipt mode
- Physical mode
- Physical media
- Status

*vii) Title History Report*: Module helps to keep tract and generate the reports of list of title changed, title split, title merged, publication status and holding, etc.

However, most of the ILMS are providing list of articles Indexed and list of online journals subscribed, which can be generated using required options as mentioned below:

- Table of contents service of a group of journals (as per user selection)
- Compilation of subject bibliographies
- CAS services in online and offline mode
- Altering services on specific topics (online/off-line) and
- Compilation of abstracts bulletin on any given topic.

## 15. Summary

The module covers objectives of serials control with basic concept and definition. It also highlights importance of administrative requirements for automated serials control for creation of master databases and its functional logical link with other operational modules. More emphases are given to operational ICT application techniques and tools. Also describes the process of automated function of serial control like subscription, payments, check in, reminders, binding process, title history, article indexing, e-journal management and advantages of computerized serials control subsystem. Modules coves generation of various reports related to the sub modules.

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