Online Public Access Catalogue (Opac) Users in Academic Libraries: A Case Study

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Abstract

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is one of the services introduced along with library automation which is playing an important role in retrieving bibliographic details of publications in the library. The questionnaire based survey conducted at the library. 150 samples of the questionnaire is distributed randomly between the staff and students of Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, out of which 132 completed and valid questionnaires (88.00%) are received for analysis. The data received from the respondents through the questionnaires is analyzed. This paper examines the use and functional lapses in operation of OPAC in the academic libraries in Madurai and presented the results here. This provides original data from library end users in Madurai Kamaraj University experience whiles using OPAC.

Key words: OPAC; Online public access catalogue; Library automation; Academic libraries.

Introduction

The emergence of an online catalogue has improved the access to the bibliographic data and slowly replaced the card catalogue in all types of libraries. That is popularly called Online Public Access Catalogue or OPAC. Today, a great number of libraries have automated their technical operations and services implementing this technology to fulfil their user's requirements. OPAC is one of these technologies facilitate access to any of the information restricted in the documentation for an item in the library. The librarians endeavor to equip the library with right kind of collections and other reading materials to satisfy the requirements of the users. The Library is a trinity made up of different types of publications, readers, and staff so it will not function without any one of these components. OPAC is a device of change in today's libraries as it helps users search for library resources and to find out the availability of such documents in the library at a given point in time.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study**:**

- To find out the category of the OPAC users
- To know the Reason for using OPAC
- To find out the types of Search Information finding on OPAC
- To know the overall satisfaction level in using OPAC

Materials and Methods

To fulfill the above objectives of the study, a survey method is conducted using a well-structured questionnaire. In a total 150 questionnaires are distributed to faculty and students. Out of which, 132 filled questionnaires are received. The collected data are classified and analyzed by using statistical methods.

Review of Literature

Sadler (2009) conducted a study on 'Project blacklight: a next generation library catalog at a first generation University'. This study highlights the open source online public access catalogue (OPAC) software known as Blacklight. It includes a discussion of the reasons why the University of Virginia decided to create the Blacklight project, rationale behind design decisions, an overview of the technologies used and some example of interface design and object behaviors. This study found that the Black light project is not yet complete, but initial usability testing is favorable.

Adenike, Omoike, and Oke T. Akin. (2014) carried out a study to investigate the effects and constraints of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in Nigerian Libraries. A case study of Kenneth Dike Library and University of Lagos Library. The result of the study reveals that 52 (31.70%) of respondents stated that they learnt how to use the OPAC from a friend, while 16 of (9.8%) claimed that they learnt how to use OPAC during library orientation and 150 of the respondents agree that OPAC is faster than the manual catalogue. Madhu Sudhan & Aggarwal (2014) examine the various features and components of web-based Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of IIT libraries in India with the help of a specially designed evaluation checklist.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows that 150 questionnaires are distributed to the students and the faculty members of Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai and the responses received from them are 132 (88%). Among the total responses 98 (89%) are students and 34 (85%) are faculty members.

Table 1: Distribution of questionnaires and responses received

S. No.	Types of users	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of responses received	Percentage of responses
1	Faculty	40	34	85
2	Students	110	98	89
	Total	150	132	88

Table 2: Gender wise visit to library

Gender	Faculties	Students	Total	Percentage
Male	16	37	53	40.15
Female	18	61	79	59.85
Total	34	98	132	100.00

Table 2 indicates the gender wise distribution of respondents. Out of 132 respondents, 53 (40.15%) respondents are male and 79 (59.85%) of respondents are female.

Table 3: Frequency of library visit to use OPAC

Frequency	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Daily	84	63.64
Weekly	19	14.39
Fortnightly	10	7.58
Monthly	14	10.60
Occasionally	5	3.79

Table 3 shows that the majority of the users 84 (63.64%) are visiting the library daily, more than a quarter 19 (14.39%) are visiting once in a week, about 10 (7.58%) are fortnightly, 14 (10.60%) visiting library once in a month and remaining of them 5 (3.79%) are occasional visitors of the library. It was found that the majority of the users are having sufficient knowledge to operate the computers to use in digital library also.

Table 4: Search patter of using OPAC

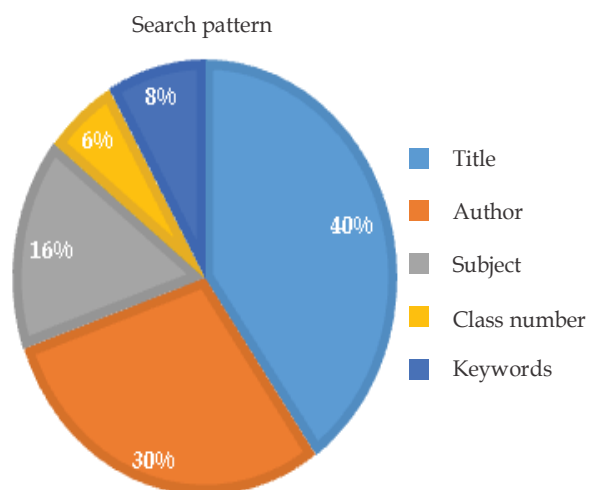| Search pattern	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Title	53	40.15
Author	39	29.55
Subject	21	15.91
Class Number	8	6.06
Keywords	11	8.33
Total	132	100.00

Search pattern

Fig. 1:

The above Table 4 reveals that less than half of the users 53 (40.15%) searched for required information through title, about a second by author

39 (29.55%), over a third by subject 21 (15.91%), about 8 by class number (6.06%) and remaining 11 by keywords (8.33%). It is clear that search by title is more popular to access to information from OPAC over other approaches.

Table 5: Reason for using OPAC

Purpose of using OPAC	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
To find out the location of the books in the library	57	43.18
To know the availability of the books in the library	43	32.58
To know the new arrivals	19	14.39
Time consuming	13	9.85
Total	132	100.00

It is observed from the Table 5 that 57 users (43.18%) consulted the OPAC for finding the location of the books in the library. Over a 43 (32.58%) of the users searched the OPAC for knowing the availability of the books in the library, 19 (14.39%) referred to know the new arrivals of the books and the remaining 13 (9.85%) of respondents using OPAC for time consuming. In general people use OPAC in locating the books in the libraries but here this was not the main reason so future researchers should work further and find out those reasons.

Table 6: Seeking assistance to search OPAC

Type of seeking assistance	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Faculties	23	17.42
Friends	67	50.76
Library staff	42	31.82
Total	132	100.00
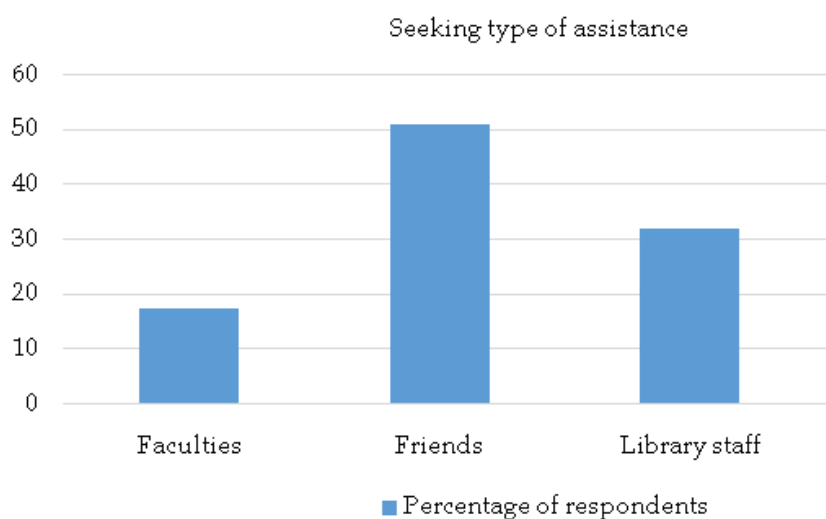
It is noticed from table 6 that the majority of the respondents 67 (50.76%) are seeking assistance for using OPAC through friends, at the same time, 42 (31.82%) of respondents are using OPAC through the help of library staff members and the remaining 23 of them (17.42%) are using OPAC with the help of their faculty members for searching the books.

Table 7: Satisfaction level in using OPAC

Level of satisfaction	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Fully satisfied	72	54.54
Satisfied	42	31.82
Partially satisfied	18	13.64
Total	132	100.00

It is noticed from Table 7 that the majority of the respondents 72 (54.54%) are fully satisfied in searching OPAC, at the same time, over a 42 (31.82%) of respondents are neutral in satisfied level, and the remaining 18 of them (13.64%) are partially satisfied in searching OPAC.

Findings

- Out of 132 respondents, 53 (40.15%) respondents are male and 79 (59.85%) of respondents are female are using library OPAC facilities.

- It is observed that 84 (63.64%) of the respondents are using OPAC daily which is highest one and 5 (3.79%) of respondents are using OPAC occasionally.

- It is clearly observed that 53 (40.15%) of respondents are using title pattern to search the

Fig. 2: Seeking assistance to search OPAC

details followed by 39 (29.55%) of respondents are using authorand the least of 8 (6.06%) of respondents are using class number patter for using OPAC.

Recommendations

- Regular library orientation and training programmes should be conducted every semester for freshers in using the OPACs.

- Necessary steps have to be taken to attract more number of readers to the library regularly.

- Librarians and staff encourage the students to use OPAC facilities in their university premises.

- All the teaching and non-teaching library staff should be appropriately skilled on OPAC and its services, so that they could build up skills and make assistance if any user fined problems while using OPAC in the library.

Conclusion

OPAC is an instrument of change in today's libraries. Automated library system in general and specifically online catalogues will continue to be productive and enhance the usage of library collections. All the respondents are willing to undergo training in operating OPAC however, a small percentage are not satisfied with the design of the system. The respondents are getting assistance from the library staff in operating OPAC however; more training is required on regular intervals. Librarians must continue to play the role of an "Agents of Change" in the use of online catalogues.

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