

Use of Online Public Access Catalogues: A Case study

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Abstract

IT applications have brought changes in information storage, access and dissemination. OPAC is one of the basic services provided by libraries. The present study throws light on use of OPAC by the students of Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Ludhiana. A questionnaire based survey on use of OPAC was conducted. The paper discusses various aspects of OPAC use such as frequency of use, ease of use, satisfaction regarding use of OPAC etc.

Keywords: Computerized Catalogue, Information Retrieval, Information Searching, OPAC, Online Public Access Catalogue

1. Introduction

Information technology has brought about significant changes in all walks of life, and libraries are no exception to it. IT has a significant impact on the functions and services of today's libraries. IT applications have brought about major changes in information storage, access and dissemination. Internet is enabling access to a wide variety of information to users at their desktops. The library catalogue is the most important information search tool of any library. In every modern library OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) is available to its users. Access to OPAC can be provided through intranet or Internet. Such OPACs may be searched from the terminal within the library or even remotely. Library staff should periodically examine comfort and satisfaction level of their users with regard to use of OPAC in order to improve this facility.

2. An overview of Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU) Library

The University Library is central to the academic, research and extension activities of GADVASU. The Library has

fully automated its operations using LSEase (Libsys) Library Management Software. GADVASU Library provides the facility of OPAC not only inside the library but throughout the campus via intranet¹.

3. Review of Literature

Norden & Lawrence studied the transactions over 30 months at the public use terminals of the Ohio State University Libraries' prototype online catalog to find out the frequently used search options by academic library patrons².

Morupisi & Mooko in their study entitled 'Using the Online Public Access Catalogue at the University of Botswana' found that respondents have difficulties with using appropriate search terms, spelling, and even make typographical errors while searching OPAC³.

Novotny & Cahoy conducted a usability study at Penn State University to explore how students search the library's online catalog after they have received library instruction. Authors found that library instruction could have a positive effect on online catalogue search behaviour of users⁴.

Markey in a study entitled 'The Online Library Catalog: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained' described 1980s as the golden age of the online catalog, because

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library users depended on it almost exclusively for finding information on the topics that interested them⁵.

Elahe et al. conducted a study entitled ‘User perceptions of online public library catalogues’ to know the type of interaction features that users prefer to have in an OPAC. The findings of the study revealed that regardless of users’ Information Technology (IT) backgrounds, their functionality expectations of OPACs are the same as users are expecting OPACs to facilitate easier ways to achieve their tasks. However, based on users’ previous experiences with OPACs, their requirements with respect to specific features may change⁶.

Mi and Weng in their study entitled ‘Revitalizing the library OPAC: Interlace, Searching, and Display Challenges’ revealed that the future of academic libraries relies on effective OPACs. Revitalizing the library OPAC is one of the most pressing tasks that must be accomplished⁷.

4. Objective of the Study

- To study the users’ awareness level, frequency and purpose of using OPAC.
- To know the search strategies adopted by users for accessing information through OPAC.
- To know the users’ level of satisfaction regarding the use of OPAC.

5. Scope of the Study

The scope of the present study is limited to the post-graduate students and research scholars of the GADVASU University. A random sample of 120 students and research scholars of different disciplines was taken for the study.

6. Methodology

A questionnaire, designed to gather primary data, was distributed among post-graduate students and research scholars of GADVASU. Copies of questionnaire were randomly distributed to 120 students and research scholars of GADVASU. A total of 88 out of 120 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire giving overall response rate of 73.33%. The questionnaire sought information on the use of OPAC, search strategies used, problem faced etc.

Table 1 presents data on the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic detail

Gender			
Sr. No.	Gender	No.	Percentage
1	Male	55	62.5
2	Female	33	37.5
Category of students			
Sr. No.	Category	No.	Percentage
1	Research Scholar	18	20.45
2	PG Student	70	79.55

7. Analysis

7.1 Awareness of OPAC

All the post-graduate students and research scholars were aware of OPAC facility provided by the library and over half of them made use of the OPAC every day.

Table 2. Frequency of OPAC use

Sr. No.	Category	No.	Percentage
1	Daily	45	51.14
2	Once in a week	15	17.05
3	Twice in a week	9	10.23
4	Once in a month	7	07.95
5	Twice in a month	4	04.54
6	Occasionally	5	05.68
7	Rarely	3	03.41
8	Never	-	-

Table 3. OPAC learning methods

Sr. No.	Learning Methods	No.	Percentage
1	From library staff	62	70.45
2	From Friends	15	17.05
3	Through library orientation programme	7	07.96
4	By yourself	4	04.54
5	Any other	--	--

It is clear from the table that a majority of the users (62) (70.45%) learned the use of OPAC from the library staff followed by 15 (17.05 %) from friends. A few 7 (7.96%) learned OPAC through orientation programme and rest by themselves.

Table 4. Purpose of using OPAC

Sr. No.	Purpose	No.	Percentage
1	To find books	35	39.77
2	To find journals	61	69.31
3	To find theses	25	28.41
4	To find bibliographical details	7	07.96
5	To check the number of copies of a book in the library	4	04.54
6	To check borrower's information	5	05.68
7	To check the availability of required document in the library	4	04.54
8	Any other	-	-

(Multiple responses allowed)

It is clear from the table that most of the respondents use OPAC to find journals 61(69.31%), followed by books 35(39.77%) and theses 25(28.41%). Only a few respondents used OPAC to check the availability of required document and number of copies of book in the library.

Table 5. Search strategies used for accessing information through OPAC

Sr. No.	Search Strategies	No.	Percentage
1	Title search	48	54.55
2	Author search	37	42.05
3	Subject search	15	17.05
4	Keyword search	16	18.18
5	ISBN search	15	17.05

(Multiple responses allowed)

This table shows the search strategies used by users to find the relevant document from OPAC. More than half of the users 48 (54.55) searched using title of the required document, followed by author search 37 (42.05%). More than a third of the users employed subject terms / keywords for searching OPACs.

Table 6. Assistance required from library staff for using OPAC

Sr. No.	Assistance required	No.	Percentage
1	Always	3	3.41
2	Usually	4	4.54
3	Occasionally	3	3.41
4	Rarely	8	9.09
5	Never	70	79.55

It is clear from the table that most of the users can independently use the OPAC. Majority of them (79.55%) never needed any assistance from library staff to use OPAC. Only a few users needed staff assistance to use OPAC.

Table 7. Training/ Orientation required to use OPAC

Sr. No.	Training needed	No.	Percentage
1	Yes	7	7.96
2	No	81	92.04

Most of the users (92.04%) are well aware of OPAC system and are independent users. They did not feel the need for orientation in the use of OPAC; only a few suggested that there is a need for training/orientation in use of OPAC.

Table 8. Satisfaction level in use of OPAC

Sr. No.	Satisfaction level	No.	Percentage
1	Fully satisfied	70	79.55
2	Partially satisfied	17	19.32
3	Dissatisfied	1	01.13
4	Very dissatisfied	-	-

It is important to check the satisfaction level of the users regarding use of service provided by the library so that quality of service can be improved by following certain remedial measures. This table shows that majority of the users 70 (79.55%) are fully satisfied with use of OPAC followed by 17 (19.32%) users who are partially satisfied. Only 1 (1.13%) user is dissatisfied with OPAC service.

Table 9. Programs helpful to promote the use of OPAC

Sr. No.	Programs	No.	Percentage
1	Training/Orientation	28	31.82
2	Lecture/ Talks	17	19.32
3	Demonstrations	48	54.55
4	Any other	-	-

(Multiple responses allowed)

It is clear from the table that majority of the users 48 (54.54%) were in favour of demonstration, followed by training (31.82%) and only 19.32% for lecture method for promoting the use of OPAC.

8. Conclusion

OPAC is an important service provided by libraries, which helps the users to know the availability of documents in the library. It is clear from this study that all the students are aware of the OPAC and majority of them learned its use from the library staff. Most of them used OPAC to find journals followed by books. Most of the respondents prefer to use titles for searching. Majority of

the respondents were in favour of demonstration method for promoting the use of OPAC. Study concludes that demonstration regarding use of OPAC should be given to the users when some change is there so that user may not find any difficulty in its use.

9. References

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