Online public access catalogue usage by library and information science undergraduates of the University of Benin, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study investigated the usage of online public access catalogue by undergraduates of the library and information science, University of Benin, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the research were to find out the purpose of OPAC use by the undergraduates; the extent of utilization of OPAC; undergraduates’ satisfaction with the use of OPAC and the constraints associated with use of OPAC. In carrying out this study, four research questions were revised. Descriptive survey design was utilized for the study. The population for the study was 270 undergraduates in the Departments of Library and Information Science, University of Benin, Nigeria. The total enumeration sampling techniques were used for this study. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire with the title “Utilization of Online Public Access Catalogue Questionnaire (UOPACQ)”. The data obtained were analysed, using frequency and percentage. Findings from the study revealed that majority of the undergraduates make use of OPAC to identify the location of library resources using author, title and subject. The extent of usage of OPAC by the undergraduates was low. The LISundergraduates were fully satisfied with the present OPAC facility in the library. Inadequate computers and constant power failure are some of the constraints militating against the effective use of OPAC. The study recommended amongst other that workshop, orientation and seminar should be organised by the library on the use of OPAC. This is in order to create awareness and enable the undergraduates gain the needed ICT skills to use OPAC maximally when searching for information resources. Also, the library should provide more computers and terminals for accessing OPAC within the library premises.

Keyword: Online public access catalogue (OPAC), library usage, Benin City, library and information science

Introduction
Libraries today are more self-confident in their activities especially with the introduction of online public access catalogue (OPAC) which has brought about an innovative way in the techniques and methods of having access and retrieval information resources that a library has acquired to serve its patrons. In the same manner, it has also changed the different ways of providing and accessing library services offered to users. Yusuf and Iwu (2010) is of the view that "OPAC is a device of change in today's libraries as it gives assistances to library users when searching for library information resources and also to find out the availability and accessibility of such resources in the library at a given point in time.

The library is supposed to provide a place for undergraduates to carry out their research work and advance their information retrieval and search skills (Atanda & Ugwulebo, 2017). Libraries’ Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC) is one of the highly noticeable and visible end user search tools which offer undergraduates the opportunity to consult
current information sources than ever (Fabunmi & Asubiojo, 2013).

The online public access catalogue (OPAC) has revolutionized traditional accessibility to resources in academic libraries. It is an interface of information retrieval system which assist information searchers to access the information resources of a library using several access points (Fabunmi & Asubiojo, 2013). Wikipedia (2012) defined OPAC as an online database of resources held by a library or many libraries which provide a platform for users to search and locate books and other materials physically available in the library.

Online public access catalogue (OPAC) may be defined as a database of bibliographic records describing the holdings of a library. It allows patrons or users of the library to search document or information resources by authors, titles, subject and keywords from a terminal and also allows downloading, printing, or exporting of records via different electronic means (Ogbole & Morayo, 2017).

According to Ogbole and Morayo (2017), OPACs first emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s and have gone through several cycles of change and development all geared towards improvement. The library OPAC as an automated catalogue system was developed as a tool to locate those library information resources that had been organized, acquired and preserved by the library itself.

Aina (2004) stated that online public access catalogue (OPAC) is the most modern form of library catalogue, whereby bibliographic records of all the library collections are stored in the computer memory or server. As a means of ensuring that information materials are available and accessible, libraries provide catalogues to display what is available in the library and where they can be obtained.

Undergraduates will continue to baffle with OPAC interface when they come before the OPAC desk as it looks strange to many of them. This is because the library’s OPAC may have a different graphic user interface from the rest of the library websites and may look different and interact differently with users. This can be confusing to the undergraduates when they are trying to search for resources. The undergraduate may have to search many different places to access databases, indexes, digital repositories, and the OPAC (Ogbole & Morayo, 2017). Thus, this study seeks to investigate the usage of online public access catalogue by undergraduates of the library and information science, University of Benin, Nigeria.

**Literature review**

Several studies have been carried out on the usage of OPAC. The studies by Yusuf and Iwu (2010) indicated that sixty-one point nine (61.9%) of the undergraduates use OPAC to access library materials. They attribute this positive development to the result of compulsory orientation programmes organized by the library for the first year students of Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. Although the study shows that only ten point zero percent (10.0%) of faculty respondents use the OPAC. This may be as a result of lack of awareness of OPAC service or skill to use it.

The study of Rout (2018) revealed that OPAC usage rate is quite low among the library users of Odisha. However, the users who use OPAC most frequently conduct title and author searches. Some of the problems observed from the study are difficulty in query formation, maximum time search failure, no scope for spelling correction, inadequate instruction in the OPAC software, OPAC not functioning properly and lack of proper guidance from the library staff. Hence, the study suggested that improvement of OPAC
functionality and proper utilization of OPAC.

Thanuskodi (2012) investigated the online public access catalogue usage by the undergraduate students, research scholars and faculty of Annamalai University Library. The results of the study show that only one third of the respondents used OPAC frequently. The study also found that majority of users consulted OPAC to know the availability and location of the requisite documents.

Mulla and Chandrashekara (2009) indicated that eighty-one point sixty-one percent (81.61%) of one thousand three hundred and thirty-eight (1,338) of their respondents use OPAC to search for library resources while forty point two percent (40.02%) of library users at Devi Ahilya University consult library staff to access materials they need in the library; twenty point sixty percent (20.60%) consult card catalogue and twenty-four point ninety-one percent (24.91%) consult their peers. This result shows that a good number of users at Devi Ahilya University cannot search for materials they need to solve their information problems independently.

Fabunmi and Asubiojo (2013) investigated the awareness and use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) by students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. The study concluded that majority of the undergraduates used manual catalogues to access library resources due to lack of awareness, skills to use OPAC and problems encountered during usage. Hence, the study recommended that the library should create more awareness and effective education for undergraduates at different levels to ensure maximum utilization of library information resources.

Kumar and Vohra (2011) examined the use of online public access catalogue by the users at Guru Nanak Dev University Library, Amritsar (Punjab) and observed that majority of the respondents sixty-eight point seven percent (68.7%) were not aware of OPAC, twenty point five percent (12.5%) identified lack of assistance from library staff and slow speed. On the purpose of using OPAC, majority of the respondents six three point two percent (63.2%) indicated that they make use of OPAC to know the availability of resources. The study suggested that the library users should be made familiar with the use and operation of the OPAC by providing training.

Onuoha, Umahi and Bamidele (2013) investigated the use of online public access catalogue among final year students in Redeemer’s University and University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed poor OPAC utilization among the respondents. However, the undergraduates were moderately satisfied with the use of the OPAC but faced challenges such as lack of orientation on OPAC use, inadequate computer supplies and erratic power supply.

Tella (2019) investigated the use of the online public access catalogue (OPAC) among undergraduates in selected universities in Nigeria. The results revealed that the majority of undergraduates used the OPAC on a weekly basis while the majority of respondents fifty-seven point five percent (57.5%) spent fewer hours (between 0-3) using the OPAC. Places of accessing the OPAC identified include the school library, respondents’ homes, cyber cafés and lecture rooms. The major uses of OPAC by the undergraduates are to locate books and other materials; and to find non-print materials.

Kumar (2017) investigated the use of online public access catalogue in Guru Nanak Dev University library. The study revealed that twenty-six point ninety-nine percent (26.99%) of the undergraduates use the OPAC fortnightly and twenty-two point eighty-four percent (22.84%) use it weekly. Sixty-one point fifty-nine percent
(61.59%) use the OPAC to locate resources on the shelves and fifty-eight point forty-eight percent (58.48%) to know if a particular book is available on the shelves or not, thirty-seven point seventy-one percent (37.71%) to know the bibliographical details, 31.14%. 91% respondents used the title search approach and 83.04% used the author search approach. On the problem faced by the respondents while using the OPAC, 74.39% identified lack of proper guidance about OPAC, followed by 67.47% who stated lack of awareness.

Clifford and Zaccus (2015) investigated users’ attitude towards the use of library catalogue in Kennet Dike library, University of Ibadan and Osun State University library, Osogbo. The study revealed that most of the undergraduates are yet to be conscious of the existence of the online public access catalogue, do not understand its operations and infrequently use the service despite the huge investment of resources.

Mohammed and Temboge (2019) investigated the awareness and use of library catalogue for accessing information resources by users of Federal University of Kashere Library. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the undergraduates were aware of library catalogue existence; they were more informed about card catalogue usage than OPAC for retrieving information resources. Poor computer skills hindering navigation when searching OPAC and inability to locate materials on the shelves were the challenges affecting the use of catalogue as an information retrieval tools.

Gohain and Saikia (2013), studied the use and users’ satisfaction on online public access catalogue (OPAC) services among undergraduates of school of Engineering in Tezpur University. The findings of the study revealed that satisfaction level of B.Tech students of school of engineering were quite encouraging and they were very much satisfied with the performance and quality of OPAC services.

Kumar and Singh (2017) investigated the use of OPAC in the University Library of Guru Gobind Singh Inderparshtha University, Delhi, the study revealed 54.4% of the users were fully satisfied with the present OPAC facility in the library.

**Statement of the problem**

Online public access allows patrons or users of the library to search document or information resources by authors, titles, subject and keywords from a terminal and also allows downloading, printing, or exporting of records via different electronic means at their convenience. (Fabunmi & Asubiojo, 2013; Ogbole & Morayo, 2017). However, it has been observed in most literature such as the ones of Rout (2018) and Fabunmi and Asubiojo (2013) that undergraduates do not make effective and efficient use of the library’s OPAC. Personal observation by the researcher also indicated the same situation in the University of Benin, Nigeria. This phenomenon may not be unconnected to the of lack of orientation on library usage. It is against this backdrop that this research work intendstoinvestigatethe usage of online public access catalogue by library and information science undergraduates of the university of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

**Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to investigate the usage of online public access catalogue by undergraduates of the library and information science University of Benin. The specific objectives are to:

1. determine the purpose of OPAC use by LIS undergraduates;
2. determine the extent of usage of OPAC by the LIS undergraduates;
3. find out the LIS undergraduates’ satisfaction with the use of OPAC;
4. ascertain the constraints associated with use of OPAC by the LIS undergraduates;

**Research questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the purposes of OPAC use by the LIS undergraduates?
2. What is the extent of usage of OPAC by the LIS undergraduates?
3. What is the LIS undergraduates’ satisfaction with the use of OPAC?
4. What are the constraints associated with use of OPAC by the LIS undergraduates?

**Methods**

This study employed a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was two hundred and Seventy Thousand (270) LIS undergraduates. It comprises of 200, 300 and 400 level undergraduates of library and information science, University of Benin. The online questionnaire using the Google forms was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was sent to the respective class WhatsApp groups of the LIS undergraduates. Two hundred and fifty-one (251) undergraduates responded. The total enumerative sampling technique was adopted for this study. Frequencies and percentage was used to analyse the data.

**Findings**

The findings of the study are presented according to the research questions.

**Research question 1:** What are the purposes of OPAC use by the LIS undergraduates?

Table 1 data are used to answer this question.

Table 1 shows that majority 55 (21.9%) use OPAC to identify the location of requisite resources using author, title and subject. This was followed by 51 (20.3%) who stated that the use of OPAC saves my time, energy and money.

**Research question 2:** What is the extent of usage of OPAC by the undergraduates?

Research question 2 is answered with the content of Table 2. Table 2 reveals that majority 104 (41.4%) of the respondents use OPAC to a little extent. This was followed by 68 (27.1%) of the respondents who make use of it to a large extent.

**Research question 3:** What is the LIS undergraduates’ satisfaction with the use of OPAC?

This question is answered with the data in Table 3. Table 3 shows the LIS undergraduates’ satisfaction with the use of OPAC. Majority 201 (80.1%) of the respondents stated that OPAC provide hyperlink from the university website. This was followed 193 (76.8%) who mentioned that they get assistance from the librarians when making use of OPAC.

**Research question 4:** What are the constraints associated with use of OPAC by the LIS undergraduates?

Research question 4 is answered with data in Table 4. Table 4 shows the constraints associated with the use of OPAC. Majority 201 (80.1%) of the respondents stated inadequate computers. This was followed by 198 (78.9%) who identified constant power failure as some of the constraints militating against the effective use of OPAC.
Table 1: Purposes of OPAC use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obtaining books from other libraries</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know the availability of requisite resources</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPAC saves my time, energy and money</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>checking of new additions to library collections</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessing materials for assignment/homework</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place online book reservation</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify the location of requisite resources using author, title and subject</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Extent of usage of OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of usage of OPAC</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large extent</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate extent</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little extent</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Satisfaction with the usage of OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with the usage of OPAC</th>
<th>A No.</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>D No.</th>
<th>D %</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPAC helps in fast retrieval of information resources</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPAC helps in fast retrieval of information resources on shelf</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPAC provides hyperlink from the university website</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians assistance in the use of OPAC</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction on OPAC</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Constraints associated with use of OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>A No.</th>
<th>A %</th>
<th>D No.</th>
<th>D %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network fluctuation</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of skills to use OPAC independently</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate OPAC terminals or workstations</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity in framing query</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant power failure</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of orientation for undergraduates</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of proper guidance from the library staff</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate computers</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion
The study indicated that majority of the respondents use OPAC to identify the location of requisite resources using author, title and subject. This implies that the use of OPAC in libraries helps to facilitate the use of library resources. This study is in conformity with Kumar and Vohra (2011) whose study revealed that majority of the respondents indicated that they make use of OPAC to know the availability of resources in the library.

The study revealed that majority of the respondents use OPAC to a little extent. This implies that the undergraduates do not use OPAC regularly. This may be as a result of the fact they lack the necessary skills to use OPAC independently. This finding is in agreement with Onuoha, Umahi and Bamidele (2013) whose study revealed poor OPAC utilization among selected university libraries in Ogun State.

The study indicated that majority of the respondents stated that OPAC provide hyperlink from the university website. This was followed by those who mentioned that they get assistance from the librarians when making use of OPAC. This implies that the LIS undergraduates were satisfied with OPAC facilities in the library. This finding is in agreement with the study of Kumar and Singh (2017) whose study revealed that 54.4% of the users of their library were fully satisfied with the present OPAC facility in the library.

The study revealed that majority of the respondents stated that inadequate computers and constant power failure are some of the problems militating against the usage of OPAC.

Conclusion
This study has revealed that OPAC is a very useful and vital tool in libraries as it is used to identify the location of requisite resources using author, title and subject. It also saves time, energy and money and it is also used to place reservation among others. However, it was revealed that majority of the LIS undergraduates utilize it to a little extent. Inadequate computers and constant power failure were some of the constraints militating against the effective use of OPAC.

The following are recommended in the light of the results of the study:
1. Workshop, orientation and seminar should be organised by the library on the use of OPAC. This is in order to create awareness and enable the undergraduates gain the needed skills to use OPAC maximally when searching for information resources.
2. The library should provide more computers and terminals for accessing OPAC within the library premises.
3. Academic libraries should consider alternative sources of power supply because of the erratic nature of power supply in Nigeria as this would also help ensuring that the OPAC can be utilised at all times.

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