

Use and satisfaction with online public access catalogue in selected university libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research work examined the use of online public access catalogue (OPAC) among final year students in Redeemer's University and University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria. The objectives were to ascertain the extent to which students utilize the OPAC, ascertain the level of satisfaction with OPAC utilization and identify challenges faced while using the OPAC. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The study population was made up of 2,650 students in the 4th year of study. Stratified random sampling technique was used for sample selection. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequency and percentage counts. Findings from the study revealed poor OPAC utilization among the respondents. It did, however, show that respondents' 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. Based on the findings, recommendations were made for university libraries to ensure that students are adequately trained to make maximum use of the OPAC. In addition, the management of the studied universities should endeavour to provide more computers to assist students' use of the OPAC while considering alternative sources of power supply to support the erratic nature of power supply in Nigeria.

Key Words: Online public access catalogue (OPAC); Information retrieval; University libraries.

Introduction

The library has always been known as the heart of academic activities in institutions of learning; it is in this regard that Gbadamosi & Omotayo (1995) describe it as an essential tool in learning at any level of our development right from infancy till death. No institution of higher learning can be successful without a library especially as programmes of study offered within the university would not be accredited without a well equipped library for the provision of adequate information resources in those areas of discipline. In providing a conducive atmosphere for research and studies, the university library provides well stocked current research materials and trained personnel to organize available information materials and assist faculty and students in the retrieval and use of these resources. Information retrieval itself has become more complex especially in the face of information overload.

As a means of meeting up with the challenges 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. Aina (2004), therefore, states that online public access catalogue (OPAC) is the most modern form of library catalogue, whereby bibliographic records of all the documents in a collection are stored in the computer memory disk. According to the author, it is efficient and while possessing all the advantages over other forms of catalogue. No wonder then that a growing number of libraries in Nigeria are changing from traditional card catalogues to computerized catalogues. While this is a welcome development, it is important to occasionally assess the effectiveness of the OPAC especially from the users' point of view. This is necessary considering the uniqueness of each university library and the fact that periodic assessment will provide a realistic picture of OPAC performance; therefore, aiding managerial decisions on issues affecting the library catalogue.

Statement of the problem.

Information retrieval has been a major cause of concern in all libraries and information centers; as such, libraries have developed different methods for accessing their collections. While most university libraries have moved from card catalogue to OPAC, literature reveals that even with the use of the OPAC, information retrieval still proves problematic and results are not always satisfactory. Where such is the case, users would spend more than the time required in searching for information materials and end up not getting what they want, even when such materials exist in the library's collections. It is in the light of this, that the present study investigates the effectiveness of OPAC at Redeemer's University (RUN) and Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria (UNAAB).

Objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to determine the effectiveness of OPAC in Information retrieval. The specific objectives are to:

1. determine the extent to which students utilize the OPAC;
2. ascertain the level of satisfaction with OPAC use;
3. identify the challenges faced by students when using the OPAC.

Scope of the study

The scope of this study was limited to two universities in Ogun state, namely; Redeemer's University and University of agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB). The study also made use of students in the 400 level of study. The choice of using 400 level students was based on the fact, that most programmes at the undergraduate level run for four years and as such most of the students would be in their final year of study and currently engaged in researching for their final year projects except for those enrolled in a five years programme.

Review of literature

The OPAC was developed in late 1970s and since then have become widely accepted as the contemporary form of catalogue in the developed world (Feather & Sturges, 2003). Since their advent, vast number of bibliographic records has been converted into computer format, using the Machine-Readable Cataloguing (MARC) format. Reitz (2004) explains that OPAC is a database composed of bibliographic records describing the books and other materials owned by a library or library system accessible via public terminals or work stations usually concentrated near the reference desk to make it easy for a user to request the assistance of a trained reference librarian. Madu (2004) perceives the OPAC as a system that allows the user to quickly and effectively search the computer-held files of the library/libraries. The OPAC typically offers the facilities to check borrower records, access research resources and reading materials, and read library news bulletins and so on. In the view of Sanni & Idiodi (2004) the OPAC has enhanced catalogue procedures in libraries, thereby making its retrieval more effective.

Many researchers have carried out studies related to OPAC use. Kumar & Vohra (2011) examined OPAC usage by the students and faculty of Panjab University Library, Chandigarh. Findings from the study revealed that out of 190 respondents 79 used the OPAC very frequently/frequently. Majority of the respondents (111) used the OPAC occasionally, rarely or were not even aware of it. Problems associated with OPAC usage or non – usage were found to be associated with lack of knowledge; complicated or confusing to use; no out / null retrieval; lack of assistance from library staff; slow speed and lack of computer systems. On the aspect of satisfaction with OPAC usage, only 151 out of 190 respondents indicated their satisfaction level. While 39 were fully satisfied/satisfied; 53 were moderately satisfied and 59 were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Adedibu (2008) studies catalogue use by Science students at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State. Findings from that study revealed that the users of the OPAC represented a small portion with 33 respondents (7.9%). Salaam (2000) studies Users' reaction to an On Line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in a Nigerian Agricultural University Library, Abeokuta. The study, however, revealed that users of Nimbe Adedipe Library appreciate the services provided through the OPAC. A study by Ogunniyi & Efosa (2010) on catalogue use by students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo concluded that the problem of catalogue use is associated with lack of knowledge on how to use the library catalogue as indicated by majority of the respondents 211(52.7%). Fabunmi & Asubiojo (2013) in a more recent study on Awareness and Use of Online Public Access Catalogue by Students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria found out that 68.7 % of the study respondents were aware of the OPAC services. Only 19.8% used OPAC to access library resources. About 51.9% undergraduate and 16.2% postgraduate students did not use OPAC at all. Most of the respondents complained of the irregular power supply, network failure and shortage of computer systems designated for OPAC as inhibiting factors against the use of OPAC.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The study population was made up of 2,650 students in the 4th year (400 level students) registered for 2012/2013 academic session from University of Agriculture Abeokuta (UNAAB) as well as Redeemers University (RUN). Stratified random technique was used to select 10% from the total population thereby giving a total sample size of 265 (65 and 200 students from RUN and UNAAB respectively). The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Use and satisfaction with Online Public Access Catalogue (USOPAC). Frequency and percentage counts were used for data analysis.

Presentation of findings

Research question one: What is the extent to which students utilize the OPAC?

Table 1: Extent of OPAC utilization

Variables	RUN		UNAAB	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
To a large extent	2	3.08	13	6.5
To a moderate extent	11	16.92	53	26.5
To a little extent	3	4.62	35	17.5
Not at all	49	75.38	99	49.5

N=65 (RUN)

N=200(UNAAB)

Findings in table 1 reveal poor OPAC utilization among respondents from RUN. Majority of the respondents (75.38%) indicated that they do not use the OPAC at all. Only 11 (16.92%) affirmed using it to a moderate extent. The result was not different from that obtained from UNAAB as almost half of the study respondents 99 (49.55%) confirmed that they do not use the OPAC at all. Only 53 (26.5%) confirmed using it to a moderate extent.

Research question two: What is the level of satisfaction with OPAC use?

Table 2: Extent of satisfaction with OPAC

Variables	RUN		UNAAB	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
To a large extent	16	24.62	45	22.5
To a moderate extent	29	44.62	66	33
To a little extent	12	18.46	38	19
Not at all	8	12.31	51	25.5

N=65 (RUN)

N=200(UNAAB)

From table 2, it is quite obvious that respondents do derive some level of satisfaction with the use of OPAC. From RUN, 45 (69.24%) indicates large/moderate extent of satisfaction with the use of OPAC. Among respondents from UNAAB, 111(55.5%) equally indicated large/moderate levels of satisfaction with the use of OPAC. Few respondents on both sides were of the opinion that they do not derive any satisfaction from the use of the OPAC.

Research question three: What are the challenges faced by students when using the OPAC?

Table 3a: Challenges faced using the OPAC at RUN

Challenges	SA	%	A	%	NS	%	D	%	SD	%
Inadequate computers	9	13.8	37	56.9	13	20	4	6.1	2	3.0
Lack of orientation for students	13	20	32	49.2	12	18.4	4	6.1	4	6.1
Unstable power supply	9	13.8	37	50.7	17	26.1	5	7.6	1	1.5
Inadequate ICT skilled workers in the library	6	9.2	32	49.2	17	26.1	7	10.8	3	4.6
Network fluctuation	6	9.2	31	47.6	20	30.7	2	3.0	6	9.2

N=65

*Key: SA (strongly agree); A (agree); NS (not sure); D (disagree); SD (strongly disagree)

Table 3a reveals the challenges faced by the respondents when using the OPAC at RUN. It is obvious that the problem faced when using the OPAC is mostly associated with computer supply as inadequate computer ranked the list of problems with 46 (70.72%) affirming it. Following closely is lack of student orientation which was indicated as a problem by 45 (69.23%) who either agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA). The least problem was indicated as network fluctuation as only 37 (56.92%) either agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA) that it was a problem.

Table 3b Challenges on the use of OPAC in UNAAB

Challenges	S A	%	A	%	N S	%	D	%	SD	%
Lack of orientation for students	78	39	61	30.5	34	17	14	7	13	6.5
Unstable power supply	69	34.5	64	32	46	23	14	7	7	3.5
Inadequate computers	52	26	79	39.5	35	17.5	16	8	18	9
Inadequate ICT skilled workers in the library	39	19.5	85	42.5	50	25	17	8.5	9	4.5
Network fluctuation	48	24	71	35.5	47	23.5	13	6.5	21	10.5

N=200

*Key: SA (strongly agree); A (agree); NS (not sure); D (disagree); SD (strongly disagree)

From table 3b, findings revealed that majority of the respondents saw lack of students' orientation as the major problem facing the use of OPAC as indicated by 139 (69.5%) who agreed (A)/strongly agreed (SA). Unstable power supply followed closely as indicated by 133 (66.5%) who also affirmed positively. The least problem with using the OPAC was however indicated as network fluctuation. This was confirmed by 119 (59.5%) who agreed (A) / strongly agreed (SA).

Discussion of findings

Findings indicated poor OPAC utilization at both RUN and UNAAB. The findings are in agreement with Fabunmi & Asubiojo (2013) whose study on OPAC use by students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife found out that though many students were aware of the OPAC, few actually made use of it. It was equally in agreement with the findings of Kumar & Vohra (2011) who examined OPAC usage by the students and faculty of Panjab University Library, Chandigarh and found out that 51.9% of undergraduate students did not use OPAC at all.

The study found that respondents were mostly satisfied with the OPAC to a large / moderate extent. The finding in this case was surprising considering that majority of the respondents had initially indicated that they do not use the OPAC. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that students can solicit the help of library assistants or even personal friends to use the OPAC on their behalf when looking for information materials in the library. The finding was, however, in agreement with the findings of Kumar & Vohra (2011); Salaam (2000) whose study revealed that majority of the respondents were satisfied with their use of the OPAC.

Findings from the study revealed that the respondents do face challenges while using the OPAC. At RUN, the challenge was mostly associated with computer supply and lack of orientation for students. The finding was not completely different from UNAAB where respondents faced problems associated mostly with orientation and unstable power supply. The findings corroborate that of Ogunniyi & Efosa (2010) whose study concluded that the problem of catalogue use is associated with lack of knowledge on how to use the library catalogue. The finding also support the work of Fabunmi & Asubiojo (2013) who affirmed irregular power supply, network failure and shortage of computer systems as factors inhibiting the use of OPAC.

Conclusion and recommendations

Information retrieval continues to be an important issue for libraries and information services considering the volume of information and diverse users they have to deal with. It is, therefore, not out of place for libraries to continually assess OPAC use and satisfaction in order to get a realistic picture of its performance while also seeking measures for improvement. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- 1 University libraries should endeavour to have OPACs designed in simple ways that would ensure less complexities, in order to encourage use.
- 2 University libraries should ensure that students are adequately trained to make maximum use of the OPAC as most challenges associated with the use of the OPAC often have to do with lack of knowledge on how to utilise it.
- 3 Considering the fact that inadequate computer supply was identified as a challenge in both RUN and UNAAB, the management of both universities should endeavour to provide more computers to assist students' use of the OPAC.
- 4 It is also necessary for university libraries to consider alternative sources of power supply considering 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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