

OPAC AS DOCUMENT RETRIEVAL TOOL: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

Uzma Qadri, Research Scholar,
Department of Library and Information Science,
University of Kashmir.
Uzmaqadri10@gmail.com

Abstract

The application of the information and communication technology has changed the entire environment of the library including cataloguing. Today, a number of libraries are providing Online Public Access Cataloguing service to their users to find out their documents and the *Allama Iqbal Library*, University of Kashmir isn't an exception. The main purpose of the study is to measure the faculty wise use of OPAC by the P G students of University of Kashmir. To accomplish the purpose of the study, survey method was adopted and questionnaire was used as data collection tool. The questionnaire was distributed among 260 students selecting 10 students from each department in the month of May 2012. However, only 241 students returned the filled questionnaire with response rate of 92.69 %. The results revealed that 60% of the respondents use OPAC to search the library collection whereas 40% don't use it at all. The students who use OPAC cite many features like time saving; fast response; remote access etc. and the students don't use OPAC mostly due to awareness problem. This study found that most of the student learn to operate OPAC from themselves followed by friends/colleagues and library staff. The students search the library material mostly through subject, author and title approach. At the end, the fruitful suggestions are provided for greater use of OPAC.

Introduction

The application of the information and communication technology has changed the entire environment of the library including cataloguing. The first article discussing the possibility of an automated catalogue, written by Don Swanson, was published in 1964 (Su, 1994). The trend has changed from card catalogue where the documents were searched through endless drawers to the computerised catalogue that helps patrons in easy retrieval of documents. The computerised catalogue was gradually made accessible on networks outside the four walls of the library and was termed as On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Online Public Access Catalogue has brought revolution in the document retrieval system in libraries. Later on, OPAC was made available and accessible through the Internet and the Web popularly known as Web OPAC. According to Hussain and Ansari (2006), "Web OPAC is an OPAC, which is provided on the web and with the help of Internet anybody can access it from anywhere".

Today, a number of libraries are providing OPAC service to their users to find out their documents and the *Allama Iqbal Library*, University of Kashmir isn't an exception. The Kashmir University Library was established in 1949 to cater to the academic and research needs of the academic community of the Jammu and Kashmir State. In 1984, it was renamed as IQBAL LIBRARY and ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY in July 2002. The *Allama Iqbal Library is the first ISO 9001:2008 certified university library*. The *Allama Iqbal Library* along with its network of libraries is the largest library system in the J&K state. The library collection includes- 6, 31,217 books, 56,513(approx.) journals (back volumes), 415 manuscripts, 1,442 theses & dissertations, 22 microfilms, 1,800 digitized books and 515 microfiche. The library is also subscribing one of the leading portal service of India known as J-Gate service where under the contents pages, abstract and full text articles (wherever available), appearing in more than eight thousand five hundred reputed scholarly Journals in sciences and social services are made available to the users on-line. Earlier, the library used *Software for University Libraries (SOUL)* to automate its operations. However, the library has recently shifted to *VIRTUA* software from the Virginia Tech Library System. To retrieve a relevant document from the huge collection, the library provides OPAC facilities for the users. The users can search documents through OPAC by author, title, subject, publisher, call number and journal title (<http://ail.uok.edu.in/>).

Literature Review

A number of studies have been carried out in various universities to measure the use of OPAC by the academic community. **Ansari and Amita (2008)** conducted a survey to determine the applicability and utility of OPACs in five libraries of New Delhi and the results revealed that a high percentage of respondents are utilizing the OPAC as a search tool for retrieving documents. **Mackoy (1998)** found that some of the Nigerian libraries, particularly university libraries have introduced On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) services that have increased the proportion of subject searches performed by library users as well as increase in catalogue use (**Cited in Nwezeh, 2010**). **Kumar and Vohra (2011)** conducted a questionnaire-based survey on use of OPAC by users of A.C. Joshi Library, University of Punjab and the results depicted that a significant number of users search information regarding the library material through OPAC despite encountering problems. **Mullah and Chandrashekara (2009)** conducted survey to determine the effective use of online public access catalogue (OPAC) at the libraries of engineering colleges in Karnataka and the results showed that mostly users didn't make much use of OPAC mostly because of lack of

awareness and some of them didn't find the software user friendly. **Wildemuth and O'Neil (1995)** found that the most common search element was the title (94%), followed by the publication date, especially for journals (70%) and the author (50%). **Rueda, Senso and Anegon (2007)** conducted a study about OPAC in the University of Granada and the results depict that library users have a strong preference for searching by title (49percent), followed by searches by author (37 percent), and finally by subject search (14 percent). **Babu and Naidu (2011)** revealed that less than half of the users (42.7%) searched for required information through author, about a third by title (32%) and over a quarter by subject (26%). It is clear that search by author is more popular to access to information from OPAC over other approaches. **Hunter (1991)** found that almost 14% of title searches failed because of the inclusion of an initial article and 15% of author searches failed because the first name was entered first. **Babu and Naidu (2011)** found that the majority of the respondents (63.7%) are either satisfied or highly satisfied in searching OPAC. At the same time, over a fifth (22%) of respondents is neutral, and the remaining one seventh of them (14.7%) is not satisfied in searching OPAC. **Kumar and Vohra (2011)** showed that 97.2 per cent of respondents expressed *lack of knowledge*, 72.2 per cent expressed *complication in use*, 38.8 per cent expressed *no output/null retrieval*, 63.8 per cent express *lack of on-screen help*, 38.8 per cent expressed *lack of assistance from library staff* and 30.5 per cent expressed *slow speed*'. Similarly, the present study is an attempt to assess the utility of OPAC by academic community of Allam Iqbal Library, University of Kashmir.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to measure the faculty wise use of OPAC by the P G students of University of Kashmir.

Scope of the study

The study was conducted in the University of Kashmir, J&K state, India. The study was confined to the P.G Students of the Faculty of Applied Sciences & Technology, Biological Sciences, Physical & Material Sciences and Social Sciences consisted of 26 departments.

Methodology

To accomplish the purpose of the study, survey method was adopted and questionnaire was used as data collection tool. The questionnaire was distributed among 260 students selecting 10 students from each department in the month of May 2012. However, only 241 students returned the filled questionnaire and the response rate was 92.69 %

Data Analysis**i) Library visit****Table 1: Frequency of Library Visit**

Faculty	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Applied Sciences & Technology	22/50 (44.00)	16/50 (32.00)	12/50 (24.00)	00/50 (0.00)
Biological Sciences	19/57 (33.33)	26/57 (45.61)	12/57 (21.05)	00/57 (0.00)
Physical & Material Sciences	21/60 (35.00)	22/60 (36.66)	17/60 (28.33)	00/60 (0.00)
Social Sciences	27/74 (36.48)	36/74 (48.64)	10/74 (13.51)	01/74 (1.35)
Total	89/241 (36.92)	100/241 (41.49)	51/241 (21.16)	01/241 (0.41)

Note: Figures in parenthesis is percentage

Majority of the students (41.49%) visit the library occasionally followed by frequently (36.92%). Among selected faculties, the students of Applied Sciences & Technology visit library more than others.

ii) Purpose of library visit

The main purpose of library visit is to borrow books (73.33%) followed by consult reference sources (21.67%) irrespective of faculty differences. The faculty wise data also shows that Applied Sciences & Technology also visit library to work in a peaceful place (28.00%) mostly followed by Biological Sciences (21.05%).

Table 2: Purpose of Library Visit

Faculty	Applied Sciences & Technology	Biological Sciences	Physical & Material Sciences	Social Sciences	Total
Borrow books	31/50 (62.00)	46/57 (80.70)	46/70 (65.71)	53/73 (72.60)	176/240 (73.33)

Consult reference sources	13/50 (26.00)	12/57 (21.05)	12/70 (17.14)	15/73 (20.55)	52/240 (21.67)
Consult print journals	02/50 (04.00)	09/57 (15.78)	06/70 (8.57)	01/73 (01.37)	18/240 (07.50)
Read newspapers and magazines	08/50 (16.00)	06/57 (10.53)	09/70 (12.86)	09/73 (12.33)	32/240 (13.33)
Work in a peaceful place	14/50 (28.00)	12/57 (21.05)	08/70 (11.43)	06/73 (08.22)	40/240 (16.67)
Others	02/50 (04.00)	03/57 (5.27)	03/70 (04.29)	03/73 (04.11)	14/240 (05.83)

Note: i) Figures in parenthesis is percentage ii) Multiple options were allowed

iii) Use of search tools

It is observed that 74.58% of students search the library materials by searching the shelves themselves followed by 60% through OPAC. Furthermore, OPAC is mostly used by the faculties of Applied Sciences and Technology (64%) and Social Sciences (63.01%) than any other faculties.

Table3: Search tools used

Faculty	Applied Sciences & Technology	Biological Sciences	Physical & Material Sciences	Social Sciences	Total
Catalogue Card	05/50 (10.00)	02/57 (03.51)	01/60 (01.67)	04/73 (05.48)	12/240 (05.00)
Search the shelves myself	35/50 (70.00)	47/57 (82.46)	44/60 (73.33)	53/73 (72.60)	179/240 (74.58)
Ask the library staff	06/50 (12.00)	08/57 (14.04)	02/60 (03.33)	07/73 (09.59)	23/240 (09.58)
Through OPAC	32/50 (64.00)	33/57 (57.89)	33/60 (55.00)	46/73 (63.01)	144/240 (60.00)
Others	02/50 (04.00)	02/57 (03.51)	02/60 (03.33)	03/73 (04.11)	12/240 (05.00)

Note: i) Figures in parenthesis show percentage ii) Multiple options were allowed

iv). Use of OPAC

Table 4: Use of OPAC

Faculty	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Applied Sciences & Technology	08/50 (16.00)	08/50 (16.00)	16/50 (32.00)	18/50 (36.00)
Biological Sciences	06/57 (10.53)	14/57 (24.56)	13/57 (22.81)	24/57 (42.11)
Physical & Material Sciences	08/60 (13.33)	15/60 (25.00)	10/60 (16.67)	27/60 (45.00)
Social Sciences	06/73 (08.22)	24/73 (32.88)	16/73 (21.92)	27/73 (36.99)
Total	28/240 (11.67)	61/240 (25.42)	55/240 (22.92)	96/240 (40.00)

Note: Figures in parenthesis is percentage

Most of the students (60%) use OPAC in which 25.42% use it occasionally, 22.92% rarely and 11.67% frequently whereas 40% of the students don't use it at all. The students of Social Sciences and Physical & Material Sciences use OPAC more frequently than Biological Sciences Applied Sciences & Technology students.

v). Reasons for not using OPAC

The students are not using OPAC due to lack of awareness (75%) problem followed by technical knowhow (14.58%). Lack of awareness is more common among the students of Physical & Material Sciences (85.19%) and Biological Sciences (83.33%).

Table 5: Reasons for not using OPAC

Faculty	Lack of awareness	Network problems	Lack of technical know how	Others
Applied Sciences & Technology	10/18 (55.56)	01/18 (05.56)	05/18 (27.78)	02/18 (11.11)
Biological Sciences	20/24 (83.33)	01/24 (04.17)	02/24 (08.33)	01/24 (04.17)
Physical & Material Sciences	23/27 (85.19)	00/27 (0.00)	03/27 (11.11)	01/27 (03.70)
Social Sciences	19/27 (70.37)	02/27 (07.41)	04/27 (14.81)	02/27 (07.41)
Total	72/96 (75.00)	04/96 (04.17)	14/96 (14.58)	06/96 (06.25)

Note: i) Figures in parenthesis is percentage ii) Multiple options were allowed

vi). OPAC features

As per as OPAC features are concerned, 69.44% of students believe that OPAC has highly saved their time where as 42.36% of students have the opinion that OPAC helps them in providing fast response. Majority of Applied Sciences & Technology (81.25%) and Physical & Material Sciences (72.73%) students consider that OPAC save their time followed by Biological Science (66.67%) and Social Sciences (60.87%).

Table 6: OPAC Features

Faculty	Applied Sciences & Technology	Biological Sciences	Physical & Material Sciences	Social Sciences	Total
Remote access	01/32 (03.12)	01/33 (03.03)	02/33 (06.06)	06/46 (13.04)	10/144 (06.94)
Fast response	13/32 (40.63)	16/33 (48.48)	16/33 (48.48)	16/46 (34.78)	61/144 (42.36)
Time saving	26/32	22/33	24/33	28/46	100/144

	(81.25)	(66.67)	(72.73)	(60.87)	(69.44)
Interactive	00/32 (0.00)	03/33 (09.09)	03/33 (09.09)	01/46 (02.17)	07/144 (04.86%)
Others	00/32 (0.00)	00/33 (0.00)	00/33 (0.00)	00/46 (0.00)	00/144 (0.00)

Note: i) Figures in parenthesis is percentage ii) Multiple options were allowed

vii). OPAC learning method

The result shows that maximum number of students (41.67%) learn to make use of OPAC from their friends/colleagues whereas 29.86% learnt by themselves. The 20.83% of students also report that library staff provides them assistance for the better use of OPAC. Most of the Physical & Material Sciences (48.48%) and Applied Sciences & Technology (31.25%) students learn about the OPAC by themselves while as maximum number of students of Social Sciences (56.52%) and Applied Sciences & Technology (40.63%) is taught about it by their friends/colleagues. Besides, students of Biological Sciences (48.48%) and Physical & Material Sciences (21.21%) take assistance from library staff mostly for its use.

Table 7: Learning Methods

Faculty	Applied Sciences & Technology	Biological Sciences	Physical & Material Sciences	Social Sciences	Total
Myself	10/32 (31.25)	04/33 (12.12)	16/33 (48.48)	13/46 (28.26)	43/144 (29.86)
library staff	04/32 (12.50)	16/33 (48.48)	07/33 (21.21)	03/46 (06.52)	30/144 (20.83)
friends/colleagues	13/32 (40.63)	11/33 (33.33)	10/33 (30.30)	26/46 (56.52)	60/144 (41.67)
Online Tutorials	04/32 (12.50)	01/33 (03.03)	00/33 (0.00)	02/46 (04.35)	07/144 (04.86)
teachers/guides	01/32 (03.13)	01/33 (03.03)	00/33 (0.00)	02/46 (04.35)	04/144 (02.78)

Note: Figures in parenthesis is percentage

viii). Access places

Most of the students access OPAC in the university library (96.53%) followed in respective departments (08.33%). Cent percent (100%) Biological Sciences and 96.97 % Physical & Material Sciences students make use of OPAC in the library. Moreover majority of students from Social Sciences (13%) and Biological Sciences (06.06%) access OPAC also from their homes.

Table 8: OPAC Access Places

Faculty	Applied Sciences & Technology	Biological Sciences	Physical & Material Sciences	Social Sciences	Total
Library	31/32 (96.88)	33/33 (100)	32/33 (96.97)	43/46 (93.48)	139/144 (96.53)
Department	02/32 (06.25)	03/33 (09.09)	04/33 (12.12)	03/46 (06.52)	12/144 (08.33)
Cyber Café	01/32 (03.13)	00/33 (0.00)	01/33 (03.03)	02/46 (04.35)	04/144 (02.78)
Home	01/32 (03.13)	02/33 (06.06)	00/33 (0.00)	06/46 (13.00)	09/144 (06.25)

Note: i) Figures in parenthesis is percentage ii) Multiple options were allowed

ix). Access points/options

The most common search strategy adopted by the students is by author (54.86%) while as 48.61% is searching the documents by title and 47.92% by subject. Most of the students from Applied Sciences & Technology (59.36%) and Physical & Material Sciences (51.5%) are searching the documents through subject approach followed by Biological Sciences (45.45) and Social Sciences (39.13). The document seeking through author approach is most common in Physical & Material Sciences (66.67%) and Social Sciences (56.53%) followed by Biological Sciences (48.48) and Applied Sciences & Technology (46.89%). Similarly, maximum number of students from Social Sciences (50%), Physical & Material Sciences (48.48) and Biological Sciences (48.48) followed by Applied Sciences & Technology (46.89%) are using title approach for finding library material.

Table 9: OPAC Access Options

Faculty	Applied Sciences & Technology	Biological Sciences	Physical & Material Sciences	Social Sciences	Total
By subject	19/32 (59.36)	15/33 (45.45)	17/33 (51.5%)	18/46 (39.13)	69/144 (47.92)
By author	15/32 (46.89)	16/33 (48.48)	22/33 (66.67)	26/46 (56.52)	79/144 (54.86)
By title	15/32 (46.89)	16/33 (48.48)	16/33 (48.48)	23/46 (50.00)	70/144 (48.61)
By publisher	02/32 (06.25)	01/33 (03.03)	02/33 (06.06)	01/46 (02.17)	06/144 (04.17)

Note: i) Figures in parenthesis is percentage ii) Multiple options were allowed

Discussion

The present study examined the utility of OPAC among the four faculties of University of Kashmir. The results revealed that 60% of the respondents use OPAC to search the library collection whereas 40% don't use it at all. The students cite many features for using OPAC like time saving; fast response; remote access etc. and the students don't use OPAC mostly due to awareness problem. The orientation programmes should be conducted to aware and train users in using OPAC. This study found that most of the student learn to operate OPAC from themselves followed by friends/colleagues and library staff. A library professional should be deputed at the OPAC counter to help users in retrieving documents from the library. In addition, the help module should be available on the screen to guide users. The students search the library material mostly through subject, author and title approach. The OPAC should accommodate spell check mechanism, suggested spellings, proper relevance ranking and case sensitive help. To deal with the problem of "No results found". "Try again" and "Did you mean?" suggestions should also be accommodated in OPAC. The efforts should also be taken to convert the Web OPAC into social OPAC by introducing Web 2.0 technologies (such as RSS and alerts) to improve the search capacities.

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