

A Survey on use of Opac by the Research Scholars in the Libraries of Engineering Colleges of Karnataka

K.R.Mulla¹ and Dr. M. Chandrashekara²

Abstract

Presents a trend analysis of OPAC. Discusses the use of OPAC by the research scholars in the libraries of Engineering Colleges of Karnataka. It outlines the benefits derived by the research scholars from OPAC. Further states that the different approaches to OPAC by the scholars. Gives the opinion and suggestions. Concludes that OPAC is not only an instrument of change in today's libraries, it is also ever changeable.

Keywords: OPAC, libraries, research scholars, engineering colleges, Karnataka

1. Introduction

Knowledge is growing continuous and the modern age of science and technology producing it very rapidly. The generated knowledge is recorded and made available in various graphical forms like books, periodicals, microfilms, photograph records, etc., which form the resources of library. In other words, the resources of modern library are records of human thought and experience in the form of books, periodicals etc., all designed for use. One of the primary functions of a library is, to make these resources available to its users.

The Library and Information Science profession has undergone a sea change during the past three decades, especially due to the impact of information technology. In the context of cataloguing, the card catalogue which

was confined within the walls of the individual libraries, gradually began to be replaced by online catalogues accessible to any user within the library as replaced by online catalogues accessible to any user within the library as well as outside it through terminals linked to regional, national even international telecommunication networks, whether it is a card catalogue or a computerized online catalogue, its basic functions viz., enabling a user to find a book of which either the author, the title as subject is known; to show what the library has by a given author, on a given subject or in a given form of literature; and to assist in the choice of a book as to its edition as character. In the case of a computerized catalogue and also to a certain extent in a card catalogue, the subject retrieval is the most common and at the same time the most problematic one on this fact has urged librarians and information scientists to

¹ Librarian, HKBK College of Engineering, Bangalore - 560045. Karnataka, India, Email: krmulla@gmail.com

² Reader, Department of Studies in Library and Information Science, University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysore-570 006. Karnataka, India

undertake more and more research studies and projects so as to make the catalogue more efficient and friendly. In the present study an attempt has been made to know the use of OPAC by the research scholars in the libraries of engineering colleges in Karnataka

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are to determine to know the:

- i) Age and Research experience of OPAC users of research scholars in the libraries of engineering colleges of Karnataka.
- ii) Frequency of visit to the libraries of engineering colleges, instruction received and the sources of such instruction in the use of OPAC.
- iii) Use v/s non use, the frequency of consultation and the reasons for not consulting OPAC.
- iv) Research scholar's approaches to and the purposes of consulting the OPAC.
- v) Difficulties faced by the users in using OPAC.
- vi) Usefulness of library staff in providing the assistance for the use of OPAC.
- vi) Opinion(s) of research scholars regarding the up-to- dateness, the location, need for user orientation and programme.

3. Methodology

A survey of the use of OPAC in libraries of engineering colleges by the research scholars, was carried out during the 2007 - 2008 academic sessions using a questionnaire. Specially designed questionnaire, was randomly distributed to 211 research scholars of the library as shown in the above out of 100 questionnaire 133 were received back from the respondents. The questionnaire sought information on the state of automation, use of the OPAC.

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1 Age-wise distribution of respondents

Table - 1 shows the age group of the respondents. It is seen that 56.39percentage of the respondents belong to the age group of 36 -40 years, followed by 28.57 percentage of respondents lie in the age group of 31 -35 years. Only 15.04percentage of the research scholars are

in the age group of 41 -45 years. Majority of the respondents are young scholars.

Table - 1 showing the age-wise distribution of respondents

Age in years	Research scholars	Percentage
31 - 35	38	28.57
36 - 40	75	56.39
41 - 45	20	15.04
Total	133	100.00

4.2 Research experience of respondents

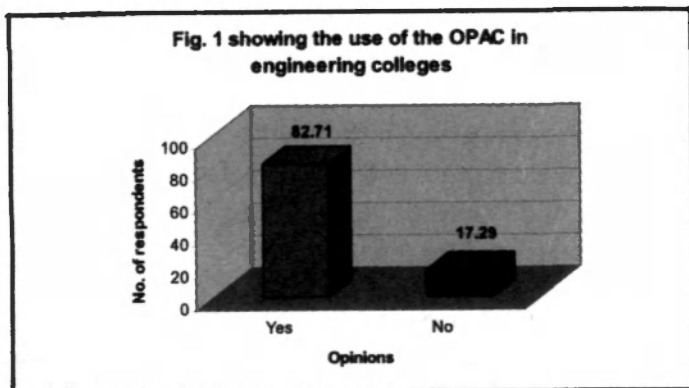
By observing table 2, it seems that majority of respondents are beginners in the research work i.e. 45.11 percentage of the respondents have research experience of 1 year followed by 26.32 percentage of respondents have 3 years of experience and 18.80 percentage of the respondents have 2 years of experience. It is clear from the above table that 9.77 percentage of the respondents have research experience of more than 3 years.

Table - 2 showing the research experience of respondents

Research experience	Research scholars	Percentage
1 year	60	45.11
2 years	25	18.80
3 years	35	26.32
More	13	9.77
Total	133	100.00

4.3 Use of OPAC

Figure 1, gives the details about the use of OPAC by the research scholars in the libraries of engineering colleges. The study has identified that, 82.71 percentage of the respondents are using OPAC and only 17.29 percentage of respondents are not using OPAC.



4.4 Frequency of use of OPAC

A question was asked to know the frequency wise use of OPAC. The results are tabulated in table 3. shows that 41.35 percentage of the respondents use it once in a month, 18.05percentage use it once in a week, 13.53 percentage use it once in two days, 10.53percentage use it daily and 9.02percentage of them use it twice in a week. Only 7.52percentage of them use it once in two-weeks.

Table - 3 frequency of use of OPAC

Sl. No.	Frequency of use	Research of scholars	Percentage
1	Daily	14	10.53
2	Once in two days	18	13.53
3	Once in a week	24	18.05
4	Twice in a week	12	9.02
5	Once in two weeks	10	7.52
6	Once in a month	55	41.35
	Total	133	100.00

4.5 Selection of reading materials in library

Table-4 gives the picture about how research scholars choose their books and other reading materials for their study. 54.14 percentage of them choose their books and other reading materials by consulting the OPAC. 50.38 percentage of them by consulting the card catalogue. 30.08 percentage of them by referring the subject bibliographies. 28.57 percentage of them by referring the journals. 26.32 percentage of them get their materials with the help of library staff. 23.31 percentage by referring the indexing journals with current contents. 21.05 percentage of them directly from the shelves. Only

9.77 percentage of respondents take the help of any other medium.

Table - 4 choosing of books and other reading materials

Sl. No.	Searching the Book(s)	Research of scholars	Percentage
1	Consulting the OPAC	72	54.14
2	Consulting the card catalogue	67	50.38
3	Directly from the shelves	28	21.05
4	Referring the subject bibliographies	40	30.08
5	Referring the indexing journals with current contents	31	23.31
6	Referring the journals	38	28.57
7	Consulting library staff	35	26.32
8	Any other	13	9.77

Total percentage will not be hundred because responses are more than one

4.6 Purpose of consulting OPAC

Another specific question was raised to know the purposes of consulting the OPAC. Results are given in table 5. Majority of the respondents i.e., 58.65 percentage consult the OPAC to check whether the required book(s) is/are available in the library or not and 44.36 percentage of respondents use OPAC to locate the book(s) in the library. Only 18.80 percentage of the respondents consult it to compile bibliography of books in a particular subject and 17.29 percentage of the respondents consult it to find out bibliographical details. 13.53 percentage of respondents use OPAC to check the number of copies available in the stock. It is surprising to note that only 3.01 percentage of the respondents have some other purpose in consulting the OPAC.

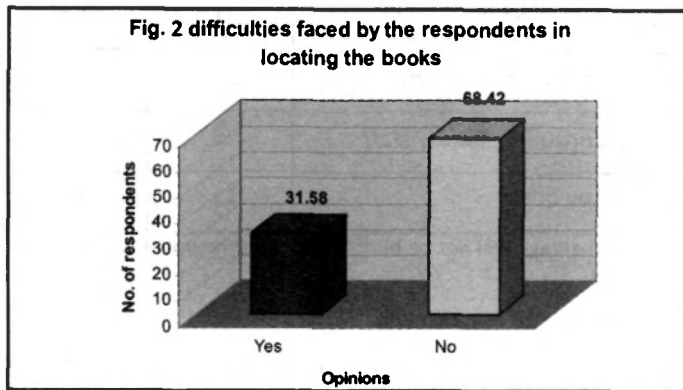
Table - 5 purpose (s) of consulting the OPAC

Sl. No.	Purpose (s)	Research of scholars	Percentage
1	To locate the book in the library	59	44.36
2	To find the bibliographical details	23	17.29
3	To check whether the required book is available in library or not	78	58.65
4	To compile bibliography of books on a particular subject	25	18.80
5	To check the number of copies of the required book in the stock	18	13.53
6	Any other	4	3.01

Total percentage will not be hundred because responses are more than one

4.7 Difficulty in locating books through OPAC

Figure 2 shows whether the respondents are facing any difficulty, in locating the book(s) and other reading materials in the library through OPAC or not. Majority 68.42 percentage of respondents responded that they don't have any difficulty in locating book(s) using OPAC. Only 31.58 percentage of them responded 'Yes' it means they find difficulty in locating the Books in the library through OPAC.



4.8 OPAC for periodicals and other reading materials

Table - 6 revealed majority of respondents i.e., 98.50 percentage like to have OPAC on periodicals as well as other reading materials. Only 1.50 percentage of respondents feel that there is no necessity of having OPAC on periodicals and other reading materials.

Table - 6 OPAC for periodicals and other reading materials

Respondents Response	Research scholars	
	For periodicals	For other reading materials
Yes	131 (98.50)	131 (98.50)
No	2 (1.50)	2 (1.50)
Total	133 (100.00)	133 (100.00)

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentages in respective responses of users

4.9 Time devoted to search OPAC

A question was raised to know how much time research scholars are spending on an average in consulting the OPAC (search the OPAC), (see table - 7). Most of i.e., 66.17 percentage of the respondents spend less than an hour to consult the OPAC. 19.55 percentage of them spend an hour. Only 14.29 percentage of them spend more than an hour for the use of OPAC.

Table - 7 time spent by the respondents

Sl. No.	Time Spent	Research scholars	Percentage
1	An hour	26	19.55
2	Less than an hour	88	66.17
3	More than an hour	19	14.29
Total		133	100.00

4.10 User's approach to OPAC

Whenever the research scholars want to confirm about the existence of a required document in the stock of the library, they can approach the OPAC through author, title, subject, class number, etc.,

Table - 8 users approaches to OPAC

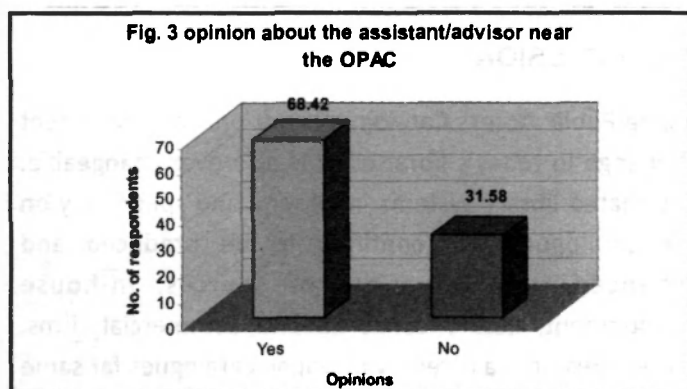
Sl. No.	Access strings	Research scholars	Percentage
1	By author	88	66.17
2	By title	69	51.88
3	By subject	60	45.11
	By class number	6	4.51
	Any other	4	3.01

Total percentage will not be hundred because responses are more than one

Table - 8 revealed that 66.17 percentage of the respondents approach the OPAC by author(s). 51.88 percentage of the users approach the OPAC under the title, remaining 45.11 percentage approach the OPAC through the subject and remaining 4.51 percentage approach the OPAC through the class number and only 3.01 percentage of respondents approach through any other means. When we compare all the four approaches of the users, author approach is more familiar to the respondents as compared to title, subject and class number.

4.11 Assistant/Advisor near OPAC

Figure 3 shows the opinion about the Assistant/Advisor near the OPAC. Majority 68.42 percentage of research scholars responded 'yes' and 31.58 percentage of research scholars are not interested in taking assistance. From the above table it is clear that maximum number of respondents need assistance near the OPAC to help them in searching the required book(s).



4.12 Organizing programmes for promoting the use of OPAC

By the above discussion one can clearly understand that, the research scholars are facing certain difficulties in making use of the OPAC. In view of this the question was asked about the conduct of some programs like Lectures/Talks, Symposia/ Seminars/Conference, Orientation or Training in using OPAC.

The results are presented in table 9, that the majority 65.41 percentage of research scholars responded for orientation or training in using OPAC and 43.61 percentage are in favour of Lectures/Talks, 14.29 percentage of Symposia/Seminars/Conference are to be conducted and 6.77 percentage of respondents wants some other programs to be conducted apart from the above listed programmes.

Table - 9 conducting programs for promoting the use of OPAC

Sl. No.	Organizing programmes	Research scholars	Percentage
1	Lectures / talks	58	43.61
2	Symposia /seminars/ conference	19	14.29
3	Orientation or training in using OPAC	87	65.41
	Any other	9	6.77

Total percentage will not be hundred because responses are more than one

4.13 Assistance of library staff in using OPAC

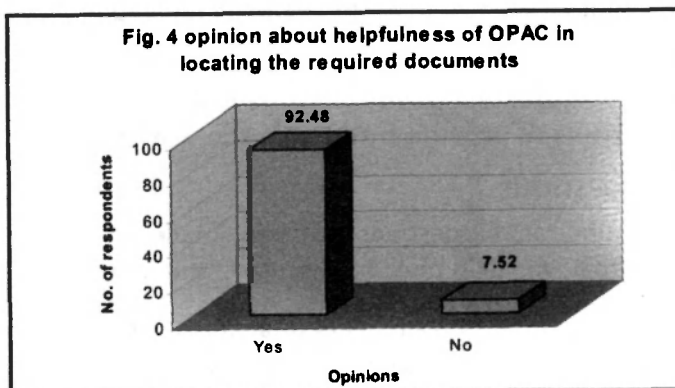
Table - 10 gives the picture of the opinions of the respondents about the assistance given by the library staff in the use of OPAC. 52.63 percentage of them opinioned that the assistance was satisfactory, 39.85 percentage of the research scholars are of the opinion that the assistance was moderately satisfactory. But only the minority i.e., 7.52 percentage of them is not at all satisfied the way library staff is assisting in using the OPAC.

Table -10: assistance in the use of OPAC by the library staff

Sl. No.	Opinions	Research scholars	Percentage
1	Satisfactory	70	52.63
2	Moderately Satisfactory	53	39.85
3	Not at all satisfactory	10	7.52
	Total	133	100.00

4.14 Usefulness of OPAC

Figure 4 reveals the respondents opinion about OPAC, i.e., 92.48 percentage of respondents feel that OPAC really helps them in retrieving the required book(s) and 7.52 percentage of respondents feel it is not useful for them in searching the book(s).



5 Opinion of the respondents

Some of the open questions were asked to research scholars to know the opinion of the respondents to obtain much more information from the research scholars related to use of OPAC for various other purposes. The respondents are making use of the OPAC for the following Purposes:

- a) To find out particular articles in journals.
- b) To check the copies of available reading materials.
- c) To collect literature on seminars, thesis, etc.
- d) For review of literature for the research work.
- e) To know the arrival of new journals and other reading materials.

In this modern world there is no human activity where the computers are not playing their role. The libraries are not an exception to this where the role of computers in collecting, organizing, storing, retrieving and disseminating the great volume and the varied forms of information with great speed and accuracy, is indispensable. A lively functioning computer in the library gives the modern look to the library itself. Most of the activities in the libraries can be computerized, including the OPAC.

The libraries of engineering colleges in Karnataka acquired a OPAC, in view of this the research scholars were asked to give their opinions far computer the OPAC have been collected and presented here.

- i) It serves the time and provides quick accurate and efficient information.
- ii) It is easy to search.
- iii) It is easy to locate
- iv) Retrieving of required information is at a much faster rate.
- v) Without wasting much time we can find required book.

The respondents in favour of it have suggested the authorities to provide training in the use of OPAC.

6. SUGGESTIONS

A few important suggestions have been made which, it is hoped that, will help the effective use of the OPAC.

- I. There is need to train users to acquire basic skills in searching, research scholars have suggested to give assistance in the use of OPAC by the library staff and also suggested for user orientation programme for new research scholars.
- II. Research scholars have suggested to keep the OPAC up-to-date by adding the new entries quickly and replacing the too old entries by new ones.
- III. Some respondents have stressed the library staff regarding the distribution of up-to-date library guides explaining about how to use the OPAC including library services, etc.

- IV. Some respondents suggested to circulate the "list of newly arrived books and other reading materials.
- V. Research scholars have requested to locate the OPAC near the book stocks there by the research scholars can use it conveniently without wasting much time.
- VI. Organization and provision of training on information retrieval and information communication technology (ICT) to users.

7. CONCLUSION:

Online Public Access Catalogue is not only an instrument of change in today's libraries, it is also ever changeable. Automated library systems in general and specifically on line catalogues will continue to be produced and enhanced from a variety of sources; in-house development, library consortia and commercial firms. This will result in a diversity of online catalogues far same time to come.

Librarians must continue to play the role of change agent for the online catalogue. But this will require that they make efforts to learn about the potential of online retrieval, catalogue access issues that cannot be couched in the familiar terms of card catalogue use and user-system interface problems and promises.

The study also revealed that the major access point used in retrieval of information on the OPAC is the author, it can be said that the non satisfaction of some research scholars may not be connected with their inability to use the appropriate search terms on the OPAC.

In order to meet the challenges of the new millennium, without wasting further time, it is recommended that all the academic libraries in the country must reintroduce and upgrade their information technology and computerized systems to render better services to the library users

REFERENCES

- 1. Biswas, S. (2002). From card catalogue to web cat: my experiences in library automation in India. *New-Zealand-Libraries*, Sep, Vol. 49 (7); pp.248-50.
- 2. Borgman, Christine L. (1996). Why are online catalogs still hard to use? *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 47(7); pp.493-503.

3. Ferguson, Douglas et al (1982). The CLR public online catalog study: an overview. *Information Technology & Libraries*. June, 1(2); pp.84-97
4. Harmsen, B. (2000). Adding value to Web-OPACs *Electronic-Library*, Vol.18 (2); pp.109-13.
5. Hildreth, Charles R. (1985). Online Public Access Catalogs. In: Martha E. Williams (Ed.) *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST)*, NY: Knowledge Industrial Inc. Vol. 20; pp. 232-285.
6. Hirst, S.J. (1998). Hyperlib deliverable 1.2: In-depth survey of OPAC usage. Part of *Hyperlib electronic document store*, University of Antwerp - University of Loughborough www.lia.ua.ac.be/MAN/P12/root.html
7. Larson, Ray R. (1991). Between Scylla and Charybdis: Subject searching in the online catalog. *Advances in Librarianship*, edited by Irene P. Godden, San Diego Academic Press, Vol.15; pp.175-236.
8. Matthews, Joseph R., Gary S. Lawrence and Douglas K. Ferguson (1983). Using online catalogs: A nationwide survey. A report of a study sponsored by the Council on Library Resources. In: Matthews, Joseph R. (Editor) *The impact of online catalogs*. New York: Neal-Schuman.
9. Mulla, K.R, & Chandrashekara, M (2004). Automation of HKBK College of Engineering Library & Information Center: A Case Study". *National Seminar on 'Resources and Services in Libraries' Organized by ASSIST and Kuvempu University, Shimoga*. .pp.156-162.
10. Norden, David J. and Lawrence, Gail herndon (1981). Public terminal use in an online catalog: some preliminary results. *College & Research Libraries*. July, 42(2); pp.308-316.
11. O'Brien, A. (1994). Online catalogs: Enhancements and developments, in Martha E. Williams (Ed.) *Annual review of information science and technology*, Vol. 29; pp.219-242.
12. Oduwole, A.A et al., (2002), "On-line public access catalogue (OPAC) use in Nigerian academic libraries: a case study from the university of agriculture, Abeokuta", *Library Herald*, March, Vol. 40 (1); pp. 20-27.