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UTILIZATION OF ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUE (OPAC) AS A RETRIEVAL TOOL FOR INFORMATION RESOURCES IN SOME SELECTED UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated utilization of online access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The population of the study consists of 204 regular users which was randomly picked in the university libraries under study. A total of 204 questionnaires were distributed only 169 were retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics mean and percentage mean scores of 2.5 and above and a percentage score of 50% were considered. The study revealed the following as the purpose of using OPAC in the study under study: it allows users to search books on parameters such as title, author's name, volume, and keywords with mere clicks, it has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records easier and faster, it allows multidimensional searches, it displays the query search results in an easy-to-understand format to enable patrons to find digital material quickly and its users friendly. The study also affirmed that library users made use of the library daily, weekly, monthly during exams and yearly. Challenges affecting the utilization of OPAC were also affirmed by the study as lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system, poor/irregular power supply, lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system, inadequate computer terminals and navigational frustrations. The study recommended that orientation and awareness of OPAC usage among library users should be a thing of continuous campaign, universities should have the supporting infrastructure, such as sufficient power supplies, reliable Internet access, etc., to promote the usage of OPAC, and university libraries should formulate policies that would encourage mandatory use of OPACs.

Keywords: Utilization, OPAC, Retrieval tool, Information resources, University library, South-South, Nigeria

Introduction

University libraries play an important role in the intellectual development of students as well as the total development of the university. The availability of developing technologies as a way to create, store, distribute, retrieve, and use information resources has depended on the

availability of adequate and sufficient information resources to give people access (Udoudoh, 2009). Every organization needs information, which is a critical resources and a necessary input for all different kinds of organizations. Therefore, the use of the university library refers to the documented use

of information sources by patrons (who may be students, lecturers, researchers, etc.). This includes how often people visit the library, how often they borrow books, and what sorts and how old the information sources are. The university library has a wide range of information resources, including books and other text materials, journals and journal articles, periodicals, newspapers, databases, and electronic resources. This demonstrates the rationale behind the development of several information systems to enable and encourage users' efficient use of recorded information in various formats (Lamptey 2010). For these information resources to be made available to users, the adoption of an online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool is critical.

The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is an information retrieval system of any one of the libraries. Books, non-book items, and the needed information resources are all readily available at the specific library. Online public access catalogue, (OPAC) is a computerized library catalog that is accessible online. It includes additional services like online renewal and reservation, borrower status checking, and other things in addition to making finding and retrieving bibliographic information quicker and easier. The user can examine their library registration information and request materials through the interlibrary lending service from other libraries. Depending on the ILM software being used, it enables multidimensional searches and offers several access points through the data elements of author, title, subject, and keywords (Naik, Devendra, and Nikam, Khaiser, 2014). OPACs are essential for sustaining client-specific information environments, maintaining uniform and authoritative forms of bibliographic management, and protecting access to library resources.

OPACs also play a significant part in keeping the books and preserving access to library holdings. It allows libraries to provide users with reliable and consistent types of bibliographic management and creates a customized information environment for certain customers. By providing a digital library catalogue, OPAC aims to speed up and simplify users' searches for digital materials. For users to start using the OPAC, all they need is a reliable internet connection and a log-in ID. They may find out how many copies are still available, where they are located, and other vital details before going to the library to pick up the books. They may easily obtain information and access it whenever they want for e-books. The OPAC software allows librarians to manage their online database and catalogue books from various genres. It is in light of these benefits that this title utilization of online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria is imperative.

Statement of the problem

Information resources are the total means available and organized in a university library for the support of learning, teaching and research. These resources are made available to library users through online cataloguing tool. An online database of items owned by a library used as a retrieval tools for information resources is known as the online public access catalogue (OPAC), which is now commonly used interchangeably with the term library catalogue. Users can search for any item under a library's control using the online cataloguing system. In order to help users rapidly access digital content, it presents the query search results in an easy-to-understand way. In the initial stages, OPAC was developed as a standalone online catalogues from VT100 terminals to a mainframe library catalogue. The globally located library authorities or

librarians have the provision to update the catalogue which usually requires a small amount of time.

It has been noted that studies have been done on using online public access catalogues (OPAC) as retrieval tools for information resources, but none have been done on using OPAC as a retrieval tool for information resources specifically with reference to some chosen university libraries in South - South Nigeria. So, in order to close the information gap in knowledge, this study is being conducted.

Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the utilization of online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries South- South Nigeria. The specific objectives were:

1. To investigate the purpose of using OPAC in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria.
2. To find out the frequency of usage of OPAC in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria.
3. To find out the challenges affecting the utilization of online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria.

Literature review

University libraries are a fundamental part of tertiary institutions; they assist in improving learning and dissemination of knowledge to meet the information needs of the universities and their communities through the provision of timely information. Information resources serve as the foundation for teaching, learning, and research in every field (Maxwell, 2018). Undergraduate students are required to use the library's information resources to satisfy all of

their information needs and to thrive academically. In any academic community, library information resources are crucial teaching and learning aids. Academics require library information resources for their research, teaching, learning, updating of knowledge, and personal growth. Online sources, print materials, and policy papers are some of the information resources that administrative and professional senior members of universities most frequently examine or use (Ogunbodede & Ambrose, 2020). According to Buhari (2016), elements including research, work performance, exams, leisure and relaxation, problem-solving, awareness, and education influence how people find and use information. .

Idachaba (2004) defined information resources as items made available to the public for use, including books, journals, and audiovisual materials. Typically, these resources are kept in a structure that has been carefully organized for quick access. According to Solarin (2012), libraries must both supply resources and oversee their efficient use if they are to contribute to the development of knowledge. This suggests that the library's goals of satisfying the information demands of its patrons are achieved thanks to the availability of information resources. The selection and acquisition of books and other pertinent information resources for the library is the responsibility of the librarians. According to Kerscher (2006), outstanding services must be supplied to users for stunning facilities, well-trained library employees, and cutting-edge information storage and retrieval technologies to be appreciated. These services cannot be provided without a live collection of information resources. For library users to have access to these information resources with ease, the use of online public access catalogue is critical.

Over time, the activities and duties of libraries have changed. The advent of online

public access catalogue (OPAC) facilities for university libraries has brought about an advanced method in the techniques of accessing and retrieving information resources that a library acquired to serve its users; it has also changed the ways of providing services offered to users community, libraries today are more proactive in their activities. For this reason, OPAC, according to Swaminathan (2017), is a device of change in today's libraries since it enables users to search for library materials and determine if such resources are available at a certain moment. Universities' libraries are currently transitioning from the manual retrieval system of the conventional card catalogue to the use of the OPAC, a system for information retrieval that is characterized by brief bibliographic records, primarily of the books, journals, and audio-visual materials available in a specific library (Thanuskodi, 2012). The amount to which library users are aware of OPAC's availability and the implications of use affects the extent to which they will utilize it (Gana, Ajibili, & Dare, 2019). According to Narayanaswamy (2019), OPAC is a tool for information retrieval that is based on brief bibliographic data, mostly for books, journals, audio-visual, and other non-book items that are available in libraries. Users place a high value on using the online public access catalogue at university libraries.

The understanding and usage of OPAC by students at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, was researched by Fabunmi and Asubiojo (2013). The majorities of students, according to the survey, utilize manual catalogues rather than OPAC to access library materials, because OPAC may be difficult to use and has a number of other issues. Kumar (2015) also investigated the faculty at Chennai's Great Lake Institute of Management's OPAC usage habits. The study's findings make it abundantly evident that the library's OPAC has to be improved regularly. They stated further that users should

be taught how to use the OPAC during library orientation and a manual should be developed on how to use the OPAC and it should be placed at the OPAC desk or circulation desk of the library.

Additionally, Kannapanavar and Manjunatha (2010) looked at the library use habits of the instructors at the engineering institutions in Karnataka and discovered that the library catalogue is not used to its full potential. It was shown that 48.8% of users visited the librarian and library staff to seek papers, while 53.2% of users used the online public access catalogue (OPAC) to find their reading materials. In this regard, Kumar and Vohra (2011) have conducted research on how the Panjab University Library in Chandigarh's OPAC is used by its teachers and students. The study's findings showed that a substantial proportion of users had trouble using the OPAC to search for information, and the majority of users simply utilized it to find out where and what kinds of library resources are available. They lacked fundamental search abilities, which was the main barrier preventing them from exploiting all of OPAC's advantages. According to Ajulo (2007), even though OPAC use has increased as a result of research and increased knowledge of it, there are still many obstacles that OPAC users must overcome. All of the information items that have been gathered, kept, and processed in libraries are mostly due to the patrons that utilize them. It is important to guarantee easy access to the materials and compliance with the legislation of librarianship.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The sample size is 204 users, which were randomly picked in the university libraries under study. A total of 204 questionnaires were distributed only 169

were retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics mean and percentage mean scores of 2.5 and above and a percentage score of 50% were considered. The choice of the university libraries is critical to the study because the libraries under studies

have commenced the usage of OPAC in their respective libraries, and it is assumed that the users have broad knowledge of OPAC usage in answering research the various research questions.

Population of the study

Table 1

S/N	Institutions	Regular users
1	University of Porthacout	62
2	University of Uyo	51
3	University of Calabar	52
4	Admiralty University	39
	Total	204

Table 1, shows the population of the study which was randomly picked among regular users. The following are the population. University of Portharcourt library (62), University of Jos library (51), University of Calabar library (52) and Admiralty University library is (39) respectively.

Purpose of using OPAC in libraries

Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
It allows users to search books on parameters such as title, author's name, volume, and keywords with mere clicks.	81	68	11	9	3.3	Accepted
It has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records easier and faster	86	60	12	11	3.3	Accepted
It allows multidimensional searches	78	76	9	6	3.3	Accepted
It displays the query search results in an easy-to-understand format to enable patrons to find digital material quickly	89	68	4	8	3.4	Accepted
It is users friendly	49	59	33	28	2.6	Accepted

Table 2 above identifies five (5) items on the purpose of using OPAC in libraries. The following are: It allows users to search books on parameters such as title, author's name, volume, and keywords with mere clicks (3.3), it has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records easier and faster (3.3), it allows multidimensional searches (3.3), it displays the query search

results in an easy-to-understand format to enable patrons to find digital material quickly (3.4) and its users friendly (2.6) respectively.

Frequency of usage of OPAC

Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
Daily	43	64	32	30	2.7	Accepted
Weekly	55	54	33	27	2.8	Accepted
Monthly	58	62	29	20	2.9	Accepted
During exams	76	69	14	10	3.2	Accepted
Yearly	33	60	37	39	2.5	Accepted

Table 3 identifies the frequency of usage of OPAC among users as daily (2.7), weekly (2.8), monthly, (2.9), during exams (3.2) and yearly (2,5).

Challenges affecting the utilization of OPAC

Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
Lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system,	76	67	15	11	3.2	Accepted
Poor/irregular power supply	56	74	20	19	2.9	Accepted
Lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system	59	69	27	14	3.0	Accepted
Inadequate computer terminals	76	62	25	6	3.2	Accepted
Navigational frustrations	73	63	22	11	3.1	Accepted

Table 4 shows the following as the challenges affecting the utilization of OPAC lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system, (3.2), poor/irregular power supply (2.9), lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system (3.0), inadequate computer terminals (3.0) and navigational frustrations (3.1) respectively.

Discussion

This study deals with presentation and analysis of data obtained from responses. As earlier noted sample population for the study were 204. Accordingly, 204 questionnaires were sent and 169 returned. The result of the study was organized around the research questions as follows. Research questionnaire

one investigated the purpose of using OPAC in some selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The result is in the affirmative. This was supported by Swaminathan (2017), who opined that OPAC is a device of change in today's libraries since it enables users to search for library materials and determine if such resources are available at a certain moment. According to Narayanaswamy (2019), OPAC is a tool for information retrieval that is based on brief bibliographic data, mostly for books, journals, audio-visual, and other non-book items that are available in libraries. Users place a high value on using the online public access catalogue at university libraries.

Study also revealed frequency of usage of OPAC in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria. This is in line with Kumar (2015) who also investigated the faculty at Chennai's Great Lake Institute of Management's OPAC usage habits. The study's findings make it abundantly evident that the library's OPAC has to be improved regularly to enable library users to make utilize the library more frequently. The challenges affecting the utilization of online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria was also investigated. This is supported by Ajulo (2007), when he asserted that even though OPAC use has increased as a result of research and increased knowledge of it, there are still many obstacles that OPAC users must overcome.

Conclusion

The study investigated the utilization of online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Information resources access to relevant and accurate information resources by users can provide significant benefits, from making informed decisions to achieving academic objectives. The importance of information resources in the library cannot be overstated, and it is essential to understand how access to information can impact various domains. The study made to understand that the purpose use of OPAC usage in academic libraries is that it allows users to search books on parameters such as title, author's name, volume, and keywords with mere clicks, it has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records easier and faster, it allows multidimensional searches, it displays the query search results in an easy-to-understand format to enable patrons to find digital material quickly and its users friendly respectively. The study also affirmed that library users made use of the library daily,

weekly, monthly during exams and yearly. Challenges affecting the utilization of OPAC were also affirmed by the study as lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system, poor/irregular power supply, lack of OPAC knowledge and unfamiliarity with the OPAC system, inadequate computer terminals and navigational frustrations. This is the first study of its kind to explore and describe the utilization of online public access catalogue (OPAC) as a retrieval tool for information resources in some selected university libraries in South- South Nigeria. This study will enhance the usage of OPAC among library users and contribute positively to the reality of knowledge in the society in contemporary Nigerian society.

Recommendation

The study recommends following:

1. The orientation and awareness of OPAC usage among library users should be a thing of a continuous campaign
2. Universities should have the supporting infrastructure, such as sufficient power supplies, reliable Internet access, etc., to promote the usage of OPAC.
3. University libraries should formulate policies that would encourage mandatory use of OPACs.

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