OPAC:Catalogue of Modern Library

Javitri Panwar[1],Basant Bais[2]
[1] *Department of Livestock Products Technology, CVAS, RAJUVAS, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India*
[2]*Professor and Head, Department of Livestock Products Technology, CVAS, RAJUVAS, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India*

Abstract:
OPAC stands for **"Open Public Access Catalogue".** The online public access catalogue depicts the online library database of resources like books, journals, newspapers, e-books, etc. The students can get access to any books as well as e-content from anywhere & at any time with the OPAC .All they need is to search for keywords such as – name of the book, title, author's name, volume number, and much more. Thus, OPAC can contribute to students' success in the long run by helping them carry on their e-learning journey. The purpose of OPAC or the Online Public Access Catalogue to make the digital resources search faster & easier for the students by offering a digital library catalogue

Keywords: Information Retrieval, Database, Academic Libraries, Library Users.

Introduction:
OPAC is an essential information retrieval tool to help academic library users to locate the library resources efficiently and effectively; it is a singular tool for accessing and properly utilising printed collection of a library. It is an entry point and a guided pathway to a library's treasures. "An OPAC provides the users the benefits of online access to the library's catalogue. It allows them to search and retrieve records depending on the underlying library management system, it also offers several facilities like online reservation, borrower status checking and so on".1 It is no longer merely an inventory, but an investigative tool for locating what the library owns. At the same time, the internet also provides various options to academic community for obtaining information. Internet search engines, Google in particular, have impacted upon users today who are accustomed to the simplicity of search engines. Challenged with the Web and the Web-savvy users, most libraries have been facing difficulties in trying to adjust and reinvent the services they provide for them. The changing trends in Web search engines have driven the new generation of users to explore information themselves and seek personal help only at times when they were stuck. OPACs had been criticised for its difficult use and poor search capabilities and resultant output for more than 30 years and more so after the advent of the web. Consequently, libraries need to devote more attention to their most important reference tool – the OPAC.2 Interestingly, users had been satisfied to a great extent with OPACs in the early nineties, but the situation changed drastically with the popularity of the web search engines because they provided the opportunity for easier and quicker means of finding information.3 In addition, the search results produced by search engines are presented using relevance ranking system which have proved more user-friendly than those of current OPACs.[4] In a recent study, Kumar[5] pointed out that a majority of the users performed searches on OPAC in a manner similar to popular search engines. Besides, they could not have known the differences between the inner-workings of OPAC and common search engines like Google Over the time OPAC improved its functions, but most of the improvements were merely superficial and not of the core functions that would actually have an impact on the user search behaviour.[6-7] Presently, the library community is pondering how OPAC can be made a single entry point or portal to find information available on resources inside libraries and even outside libraries, for example e-resources on the Web. In recent years, a large number of OPAC

systems - components of Integrated Library Management Systems (ILMS), are available in the Indian market. Thus, keeping in mind the foregoing, the present study is an attempt to assess the features andfunctionalities of OPACs in the university libraries of the Union Territory of Chandigarh and Punjab State, to determine whether these OPACs are offering searching potential and facilities in accordance with the needs of the present days, rapidpaced, digital age and IT-based society. This study will also give insight into the current status of the features and functions of OPACs in these libraries.

Literature Review

Numerous research studies have been conducted on the OPAC. The present study explored literature related to the evaluation and comparison of OPACs. Cherry *et al*[8] evaluated the functional capabilities and interface features of twelve Canadian academic libraries for this purpose. The study indicated that there was a wide gap regarding the developments between the OPACs studied. These OPACs on an average had roughly half the features of the ideal OPAC. A study by Babu and O'Brien[9] examined the features and functions of six popular Web OPAC interfaces which were in the use in academic libraries of U.K. It was found that all OPACs had similar features. Advanced features such as hyperlinks, limiting and more flexible keyword searching were also valued but to a lesser extent. Similarly, Ibrahim[10] examined the compliance of ten bilingual Arabic scripts Web-based catalogues in the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC). The findings revealed that a majority of the OPACsoffered access points by author, title, subject and keyword. There was inconsistency in the given access points and types of searches. Hyperlinks to bibliographic elements wasnot uniform across all the surveyed OPACs, as about half the OPACs providedhyperlinks to both authors and subjects. The instructional information or user assistancegained the highest score.

Mahmood carried out a study to analyse features and functions of 16 indigenous Web-OPACs in libraries of Pakistan. The findings showed that the indigenous Web-OPACs were at an initial stage of development and offered only basic facilities to the users. The study highlighted that there was an absence of MARC format and Z39.50 protocol in Web-OPACs, an essential aspect of shared cataloguing. However, due to the lack of training and awareness among librarians, the MARC standards were not well-known in Pakistan. Sauperl and Saye examined whether librarians had actually made their OPACs more user-friendly by adopting technologies and techniques already present in other resources. Their findings identified changes in the information services studied over a seven year period. Least development wasfound in the library catalogues. It was suggested that the OPACs must be both attractive and useful and they should at least offer easy usage like their competitors

Further, Luong and Liew studied the usability features of the OPACs of New Zealand academic libraries. The results showed that all OPACs covered main searchingabilities like Boolean Operators, truncation, field searching and browse searching.Although most OPACs provided facilities for online renewal and reserving materials, their weak areas were searching, output, services, facilities, external links and search limits and strategy. Most OPACs received high scores in the areas of bibliographic display, text, layout, labels and user assistance.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims at evaluating the OPACs in university libraries of Chandigarhand Punjab. It is formulated along the following objectives:
- To ascertain the status of features and facilities of OPACs in university librariesof Chandigarh and Punjab.
- To evaluate the OPACs with the help of a structured evaluation checklist.
- To compare the various features, search capabilities and functionalities ofOPACs under study.

Scope and Methodology

The present study is confined to the OPACs operational in academic libraries ofthe universities of Chandigarh and Punjab i.e. Panjab University, Chandigarh, Punjabi University, Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. These universities are using SLIM21, LibSys and WINISIS softwares respectively. The instrument used for data collection was a structured evaluation checklist to determine the features and functionalities of OPAC systems under study. Several checklists have been developed by various researchers, but this study chose the evaluation criteria designed by Babuand O'Brien[17] and included some modifications. Some new features were included which had been observed in the literature and other OPACs. The checklist covers interface, search capabilities and facilities of the OPACs. Table 1 represents the features available in OPACs of three library softwares under investigation. In the table, a tick mark indicates the existence of a particular feature in the OPAC.

OPAC Systems under Study: A brief overview:

Panjab University Library, Chandigarh recently installed a new library management system "SLIM21" and whereas earlier, it was using Techlib Plus. SLIM21is an integrated, multi-user, multi-tasking library information software for the Windowsenvironment, working on a single computer system or in a client-server multi-platform environment. It was produced by a Pune based library automation software supplier, Algorhythms Consultants Private Limited. It is designed and developed in modules to take care of complete functionality required for automating libraries. It has five modules viz., acquisitions module, circulation module, cataloguing module, serial module and OPAC. It can be configured for the specific requirements of a library by selecting one or more of these standard and add-on modules. These modules exhibit features that make SLIM21 a top class software. The modules work on the same data from different nodes of a network. They can be installed independent of each other on different desktops. Retrieval of the data is simple, fast and efficient. Its cataloguing adheres to popular international standards. It also offers the "LibMap" module tomaintain the map of a library. With the aid of LibMap, the users can view and specify physical location of documents in the library. The greatest advantage of SLIM21 is that it can make data entries in any language since it supports Unicode.

LibSys:

LibSys is an integrated library management system developed by LibSys Corporation, Gurgaon. It is the most popular library software in India and has been installed in more than 1000 different types of libraries. LibSys provides full graphic user interface front end for the Windows client. It is designed to run on variousplatforms like Windows (95/98/NT/2000/XP), UNIX, Linux, Nowell Lan, etc. It is built around its own bibliographic database following ANSI Z39.50 format and support variable field length for different types of documents. It works on a client-serverenvironment and supports Unicode that facilitates handling of both International and Indian languages. It needs additional authorization/identification to access various modules. There are six modules in this software viz., acquisitions system, circulation system, cataloguing system, serial system, OPAC and article indexing.

WINISIS:

The Guru Nanak Dev University Library is using the WINISIS software after customizing this software. WINISIS is a Windows version of CDS/ISIS (ComputerizedInformation Service/Integrated Scientific Information System). It is widely used as an information storage and retrieval software all over the world. It was developed by UNESCO to meet the automation requirements of libraries and information centres, particularly in developing countries. WINISIS includes all features and

capabilities of the MS-DOS version of CDS/ISIS. It can run under all Windows versions without problems. The most important feature of WINISIS is its capability to handle an unlimited number of databases; each of which may consist of completely different data element sets. It performs various operations of a library like bibliographic databases for an in-house collection like books, theses, manuscripts, etc. and automating acquisition procedure, circulation control, serial control, serial holdings, cataloguing, OPAC, etc.

Types/methods of searches:
Simple/basic search and advanced/expert search are indispensable search features provided by the OPACs of all the three university libraries. Search methods like Boolean search, phrase search, exact search and truncation are covered in all three OPACs to enhance the search capabilities Only SLIM21 offers word adjacent and proximity search. It was, however, surprising that none of the OPACs was capable of providing federated search, faceted navigation, word cloud and thesaurus search.

Browsing capabilities
Browsing search is an effective approach to searching that requires little effort and knowledge on the part of the user. SLIM21 and LibSys provide browsing search by author, title, and subject, class number, type of publication and publishers. In addition, SLIM21 also has the provision of browsing search by series, year of publication and by journal source.

Access points
All surveyed OPACs offered access points by author, title, subject, and combined search for searching information/documents. Keyword search is made possible through title, author and subject in all OPACs studied. Class number, ISBN/ISSN and Accession number access points have been observed in SLIM21 and LibSys. Even though the OPACs examined showed inconsistencies in providing the access points, all covered the basic access points.

Search strategy
A search strategy displays the method to devise an effective search statement to find a larger amount of relevant information quickly. The OPACs have different search strategy tools like a display of search strategy, provision of examples under each type of search and display of search history. The study found that only LibSys have "displays search strategy". Critically the provision of demonstrative steps under each type of search for initiating any academic search was lacking in the three OPACs under study.
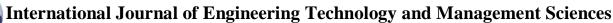
Search limit
The provision of a search limit is an essential means for making the search meaningful and successful. The study found that each OPAC provides search limits through delineating the year of publication and type/form of publications, while language limiting is found only in the SLIM21 based OPAC . Each of the three OPACs offers the facility of sorting the retrieved documents by author, title, and subject.

Bibliographic display and entry structure
A bibliographic display of retrieval records in the OPACs serves different purposes. All three OPACs have provisioned for both short and long bibliographic displays. Each OPAC system has provision to customize the display screen as well as to limit the number of records per display. All OPACs featured a library structured entry format. Only LibSys have provision for catalogue card form display. The MARC format forms the backbone for conducting an exchange of bibliographic data electronically, besides LibSys, the other two systems did not follow the MARC format.

Conclusion:
The study brings out the prominent fact that none of the OPACs had all features and facilities listed in the evaluation checklist. There were variations in the features available among all three OPACs.

Browsing search by author, title, and subject, class number, type of publication and publishers was found in SLIM21 and LibSys OPACs, while browsing search by series, year of publication and journal resource was provided in only SLIM21. The study revealed that all the OPACs offered search limits by year ofpublication and type/form of publications, while only the SLIM21 based OPAC provided search limits by language. The provision of MARC format and Z39.50 protocol was not found in the WINISIS based OPAC. Providing access to full-text internal and external resources is another feature that is also present in SLIM21 and LibSys OPAC. The user assistance feature was another weak area in the OPACs under study, while spell error checking facility/software, a significant feature of OPACs, was not observed in any of the systems. Further, evaluation revealed that there was no 'provision of procedural prompts or guidance to indicate next steps during a search' in any of the OPACs which, had they been available, would have been very helpful to users. Each OPAC had the ability to suppress initial articles and special characters. None of the OPACs provided separate search options for novices and experienced or expert users. The findings of the present study are in consistency with those of the previous studies of Babu and Tamizhchelvan; Kapoor and Goyal and Mahmood.

information storage and retrieval software all over the world. It was developed by UNESCO to meet the automation requirements of libraries and information centres, particularly in developing countries. WINISIS includes all features and capabilities of the MS-DOS version of CDS/ISIS. It can run under all Windows versions without problems. The most important feature of WINISIS is its capability to handle an unlimited number of databases; each of which may consist of completely different data element sets. It performs various operations of a library like bibliographic databases foran in-house collection like books, theses, manuscripts, etc. and automating acquisition procedure, circulation control, serial control, serial holdings, cataloguing, OPAC, etc.

References:

1. Ansari M A and Amita, Awareness and use of OPACs in five Delhi libraries, *The Electronic Library*, 26 (1) (2008) 111-129.
2. Mercun T and Zumer M, Library catalogue - the ultimate reference tool? In *Education and training in digital libraries and Reference in digital environments: LIDA 2008 - Libraries in the digital age* (2008a) 79-85.
3. Mercun T and Zumer M, New generation of catalogues for the new generation of users: A comparison of six library catalogues, *Program: electronic library and information systems,* 42(3) (2008b) 243-261.
4. Mi J and Weng C, Revitalizing the library OPAC: Interface, searching and display challenges, *Information technology and Libraries*, 27 (1) (2008) 5-22.
5. Kumar, S (2011), Effect of web searching on the OPAC: A comparison of selected university libraries, *Library Hi Tech News*, 28 (6) (2011)14-21.
6. Tennant R, Digital libraries: Lipstick on a pig, *Library Journal*, 130 (7) (2005) 34.
7. Borgman C L, Why are online catalogue still hard to use?, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science,* 47 (7) (1996) 493-503.
8. Cherry J M, Yuan W, and Clinton M, Evaluating the effectiveness of a concept- based computer tutorial for OPAC users, *College & Research Libraries*, 55(4) (1994), 355-364.
9. Babu B R and O'Brien A, Web OPAC interfaces: An overview, *The Electronic Library*, 18 (5) (2000) 316-328.
10. Ibrahim A E, Displays of Arabic script on web-based OPACs in GCC Institutions, *The Electronic Library*, 23 (4) (2005) 419-432.
11. Mahmood K, Library Web OPACs in Pakistan: An overview, *Program: electronic library and information systems*, 42 (2) (2008) 137-149.

12. Sauperl A and Saye J D, Have we made any progress? Catalogues of the future revisited, *Journal of Documentation*, 65 (3) (2009) 500-514.

13. Luong T D and Liew, C L, The evaluation of New Zealand academic library OPACs: A checklist approach, *The Electronic Library*, 27 (23) (2009) 376-393.

14. Babu R R and Tamizhchelvan M, An investigation into the features of OPACs in Tamil Nadu (India), *Library Review*, 52 (6) (2003) 257-267.