



USAGE OF ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUE (OPAC) AS A RESOURCE DISCOVERY TOOL: A STUDY IN LNB LIBRARY, DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of OPAC is to deliver users with a user-friendly interface for searching and retrieving library resources. OPACs enable users to conduct searches based on various parameters such as author, title, subject, keyword, and other criteria, making it easy for them to find the materials they need. OPACs also provide users with information on the availability and location of the resources they are searching for, enabling them to request or reserve items if necessary. OPACs are also used to gather statistics and data on library usage and resource utilization. Librarians can use OPAC data to analyze the frequency of resource use and identify trends in user behavior. This information can be used to optimize resource allocation, identify gaps in the collection, and improve library services. To analyze the application and satisfaction level of users in OPAC services, the present user study has been conducted in LNB Library, Dibrugarh University to gather feedback from users on their experience with the OPAC. A structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed among the users (Faculty/Research Scholars/UG/PG Students) of Dibrugarh University. A total nos. of 84 filled in questionnaire has been received which is 56 % of the total population of the study. The study reveals that library orientation/Information literacy programs are helpful for enhancing credibility amongst the users (55.99%) in OPAC search.

KEY WORDS: User Studies, OPAC, Pathfinder tool, LNB Library, Dibrugarh University.

1. INTRODUCTION

The application of technology in library management and service delivery has been observed since the 1960s, especially at the forefront of computers. The growth and widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in library services gradually created a wider scenario of user engagement that we could not imagine. Among the many key areas of library automation, cataloging is an important part. Cataloging went through a long development phase from a card catalogue to a machine-readable prototype and then to an Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Today, the integration of new technologies in the form of Web 2.0 tools into the standard features of OPAC or Web-based OPAC can evolve with the changing information search behavior of users. An OPAC can be a powerful reflective tool in a learning space such as a library, allowing users to think critically and reflect on themselves as they search for and evaluate resources that support learning. For example, after using an OPAC search, students can reflect on the effectiveness of their search terms and consider alternative search strategies they may use in the future. Access to library resources is essential to ensure that all users have equal access to information regardless of their aptitude. In this context, information literacy must play a key role because it expresses a set of skills and competencies that enable users to effectively identify, find, evaluate and use information. This includes accessing and using various sources of information, as well as critically evaluating the information found and using it ethically. Overall, technology has greatly expanded the scope of library services, making them more accessible and convenient for users while enhancing their ability to provide high-quality services and resources.

2. DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Dibrugarh University Central Library is named after the doyen of Assamese literature, *Sahityarathi* Shri Lakhminath Bezbarua i.e. Lakhminath Bezbarua Granthagar. The library started functioning in 1967, just two years after the establishment of Dibrugarh University. The circulation of the library began with an initial collection of 997 books at the tea factory of Rajabheta Tea Estate in the western part of Dibrugarh district.

In 1983, the library was moved to its current location (Appendix 1) with the construction of a new building in the tenure of the then Vice Chancellor of Dibrugarh University, Dr. Sailadhar Gogoi. The current state-of-the-art infrastructure was created after renovation in 2016-17. The library's collections consist of more than 2, 25,000 print and non-print resources and provides online



access to more than 10,000 e-journals and over 7,000 e-books along with many other collections. The Library has been automated with SOUL 2.0.

Figure 1: an OPAC terminal in ground floor Figure 2: OPAC terminals in each floor



3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Uplaonkar (2020) conducted a case study of OPAC services provided by the Library of Agricultural Sciences University, Dharwad, Karnataka. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 80 nos. of faculty members and found that most of the faculty members (79.66%) of Dharwad University of Agricultural Sciences are well acquainted of the use of OPAC and use it regularly to access library resources.

Kumar et al (2018) in their study on OPAC usability in both Indian and foreign university libraries and found that there is an important relationship between OPAC awareness and OPAC usage. User behavior in academic libraries has changed significantly over the past decade, and most libraries now follow Web enabled OPAC rather than a traditional catalogue.

Kumar (2017) in his study tries to determine the awareness and usage of OPAC among English, Mathematics and Commerce students of Kurukshetra University, Haryana. The study reveals that students' knowledge of OPAC is weak, and most students use the OPAC to search for documents from the shelves using the Title search (33.90%) with the assistance of library staff.

Kumar and Singh (2017) conduct a descriptive survey in the Guru Gobind Singh Inderparstha University Library, Delhi and found that 39.1% of the library users used the OPAC daily. 54.4% of the users were fully satisfied with the existing OPAC facility and some of them faced difficulties such as lack of awareness about the OPAC system, unsuitable location of OPAC terminals and lack of library staff near the OPAC terminals.

Shivakumaraswamy and Narendra (2016) conduct a study on OPAC usage and user satisfaction in BGS Institute of Technology Library, Mandy, and Karnataka. The research shows that the main purpose of using OPAC is to find information of documents on the library shelves (27.69%). Lack of information literacy and lack of proper guidance are the biggest problems of the users who participated in the study.

Kumar and Vohra (2011) conducted a study on OPAC usage in Punjab University Library, Chandigarh. The study deals with various aspects of OPAC such as frequency of use, purpose, ease of use, satisfaction of students and staff of Punjab University Library, Chandigarh. The survey reveals that most users are not satisfied with the OPAC system and need familiarization with it.

The studies reveal that although a significant percentage of faculty members and students are acquainted with using OPAC, there is a lack of awareness and knowledge among users. Further research could explore effective methods for raising user awareness and providing adequate training to enhance their understanding and usage of OPAC systems. The studies mention that users often use OPAC to find documents on library shelves. However, it's important to understand the underlying reasons for this behavior. Exploring user information literacy levels and investigating the factors influencing user behavior in utilizing OPAC for accessing both physical and digital resources could be a valuable area of research. Different studies report varying levels of user satisfaction with OPAC systems. Factors such as lack of awareness about the OPAC, usability issues, and physical placement of OPAC terminals contribute to user challenges.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know the usage of OPAC as a guiding tool to inventory.
- To study the purpose and use of OPAC by the library users.
- To analyses satisfaction level of users in OPAC services.



5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted using the descriptive survey method. Considering the objectives of the study the researcher prepared a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool and physically went to the library to collect data. The total population of the study was 150, and the researcher selected 84 samples using stratified random sampling, which accounts for 56% of the total population.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Category of library OPAC users

Mapping the user of the library's OPAC is one of the ways to understand the primary user category (Table 1). In the context of Table 1, it is evident that the majority of the OPAC users are students 46 (54.76%) followed by research scholars (34.52%). This information can help the library staff to focus on the needs of these two primary user categories and design services and resources that cater to their requirements.

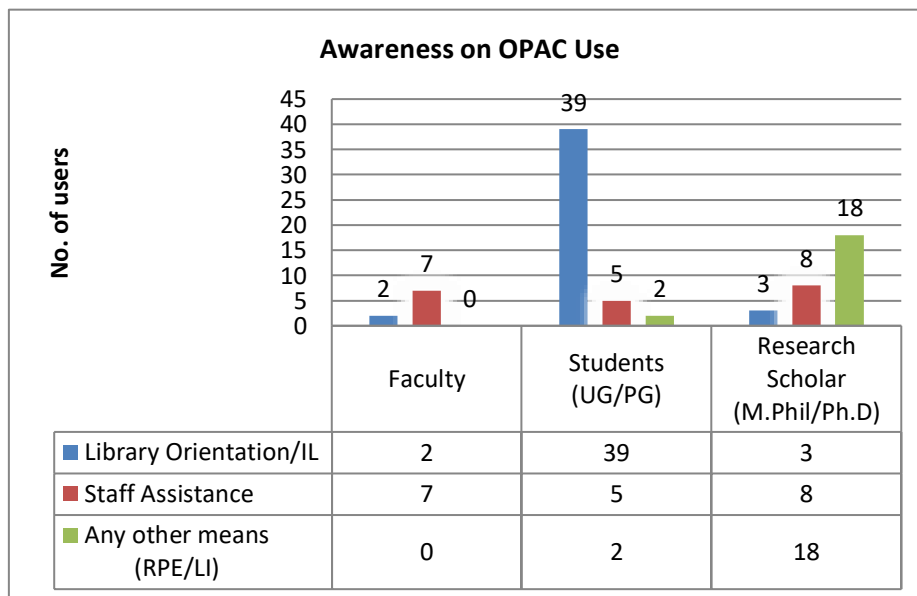
Table 1: Responses received from the category of library OPAC users (N=84)

Sl. No.	Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholar
1	09 (10.71%)	46 (54.76%)	29 (34.52%)

6.2 Awareness on OPAC use

It is important to measure the level of awareness on OPAC use in order to recognize the sources of learning factors for OPAC among different categories of users. Figure 3 indicates that for undergraduate and postgraduate students, Library Orientation/Information Literacy (IL) programs are the main source of familiarization with OPAC facilities, with 39 out of 46 students (84.78%) reporting this as their primary source. For research scholars, other means such as Research and Publication Ethics (RPE) classes, library instructions, and other resources were reported as the primary source by 18 out of 29 scholars (62.06%).

Figure 3: Sources of obtaining knowledge on OPAC



6.3 Frequency of OPAC use

It is important for libraries to determine the frequency of use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) system in order to better understand the usage habits of the users and identify areas for improvement. Table 2 shows that Students (UG/PG) 19 (22.61%) are the largest user group who use OPAC very frequently to search library documents followed by Research Scholar 10 (11.90%). These data indicate that OPAC is particularly important for these user groups and the library should continue to focus on providing quality OPAC services to meet their needs.



Table 2: Frequency of library OPAC use

Frequency of usage	Response		
	Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholar
Very frequently	0	19 (22.61%)	10 (11.90%)
Frequently	7 (8.33%)	06 (7.14%)	11 (13.09%)
Occasionally	2 (2.38%)	13 (15.47%)	07 (8.33%)
Rarely	0	08 (9.52%)	01 (1.19%)

6.4 Types of library collections searched in an OPAC search

Table 3 shows use Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) by library users for searching different types of reading materials. Most of the users, 34(40.47%) of students use OPAC to search for textbooks and reference books that are available on the library shelves. On the other hand, research scholars 21 (25%) seem to be more interested in searching for other types of reading materials such as journals, reports, theses, and dissertations.

Table 3: Types of materials sought for in OPAC search

Type of Collections	Response		
	Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholar
Text Books	4(4.76%)	34 (40.47%)	05 (5.95%)
References Books	9 (10.71%)	34 (40.47%)	18 (21.42%)
Any other reading materials (Journals/Reports/Thesis/Dissertation etc.)	9 (10.71%)	16 (19.04%)	21 (25%)

(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options)

6.5 Search options used in OPAC

Table 4: Search options used in OPAC

Search options	Response		
	Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholars
Basic search	5(5.95%)	31 (36.90%)	11(13.09%)
Free text search(Title/Author/subject heading)	09 (10.71%)	46 (54.76%)	27 (32.14%)
Boolean Search	0	19(22.61%)	5(5.95%)
Advanced Boolean Search	0	0	0

(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options)

Table 4 shows that the majority of students, specifically 46 out of 84, use the OPAC free text search option, which allows them to search for materials by title, author, or subject heading. This is followed by researchers, with 27 (32.14%) of them using the same search option. In contrast, the Boolean search option appears to be the least popular choice among students, with only 22.61% of them using it, and even fewer research scholars, with only 5.95% using it.

6.6. Effective retrieval of documents through OPAC

Table 5: Effective retrieval of documents through OPAC

Question: got required information in OPAC as per the input	Response			Total
	Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholars	
Yes	09	38	20	67 (79.76%)
No	0	7	4	11(13.09%)
Sometimes	0	0	5	5(5.95%)
Not Always	0	1	0	1(1.19%)

It appears in the Table 5 that success rates of users in obtaining the necessary information through an Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) search, out of which 67 (79.76 %) of users were able to find the necessary information through their OPAC search terms. 11 (13.09%) of users did not find the desired results with their search terms.



5 (5.95%) of users sometimes found the results they were looking for with their search terms.
 1 (1.19%) of users did not always find the required results according to their search terms in the OPAC.

6.7 Importance of Library Orientation Programme /IL programme in OPAC use

Table : 6 Impact of Library orientation /IL programme in OPAC Use

Question: Orientation helps in searching OPAC		Response			Total
		Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholar	
Options:	Yes	3	39	05	47 (55.95%)
	No	0	05	04	09 (10.71%)
	Neutral	6	02	20	28 (33.33%)

Table 6 shows that the majority of users 47 (55.95%) feel that such a program is important, while 28 users (33.33%) did not express an opinion on the matter and was considered neutral. The results suggest that a significant number of users believe that library orientation and information literacy programs can be beneficial in enhancing their ability to use the OPAC system effectively to find relevant documents in the library.

6.8 User satisfaction on OPAC

Table 7 : User satisfaction on OPAC

Options	Response			Total
	Faculty	Students (UG/PG)	Research Scholar	
Yes	09	26	29	64 (76.19%)
No	0	0	0	00
Not prefer to say	0	20	0	20 (23.80%)

(Respondents were allowed to choose one option only)

It appears in the Table 7 that the level of satisfaction of users with the facilities available in the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) is that 64 users, representing (76.19%) of the total, were satisfied whereas, 20 users, representing 23.80% of the total, chose not to express their satisfaction level with the OPAC facilities.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

- It appears that out of the respondents surveyed, 8 out of 46 students (17.39%) and 1 out of 29 research scholars (3.44%) did not use OPAC to search for information in the library. This suggests that there may be a need to increase awareness and promote the use of OPAC among library users to improve their information-seeking behavior. The library management could consider conducting training sessions, workshops, or information literacy programs to educate users about the benefits of using OPAC and how to effectively use it to search for information.
- It is observed that users mostly search for textbooks (40.07%) and reference books (40.07%), although there are more documents in the database, users search for textbooks and reference books more often.
- It appears that users tend to prefer free text search, as it is easier to use and requires less specialized knowledge. The result shows that most users (76.19%) are satisfied with the search results of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), which is a positive finding. However, it is also important that a significant number of users (23.80%) doubt whether they are satisfied with the OPAC, suggesting that there may be areas for improvement.

8.CONCLUSION

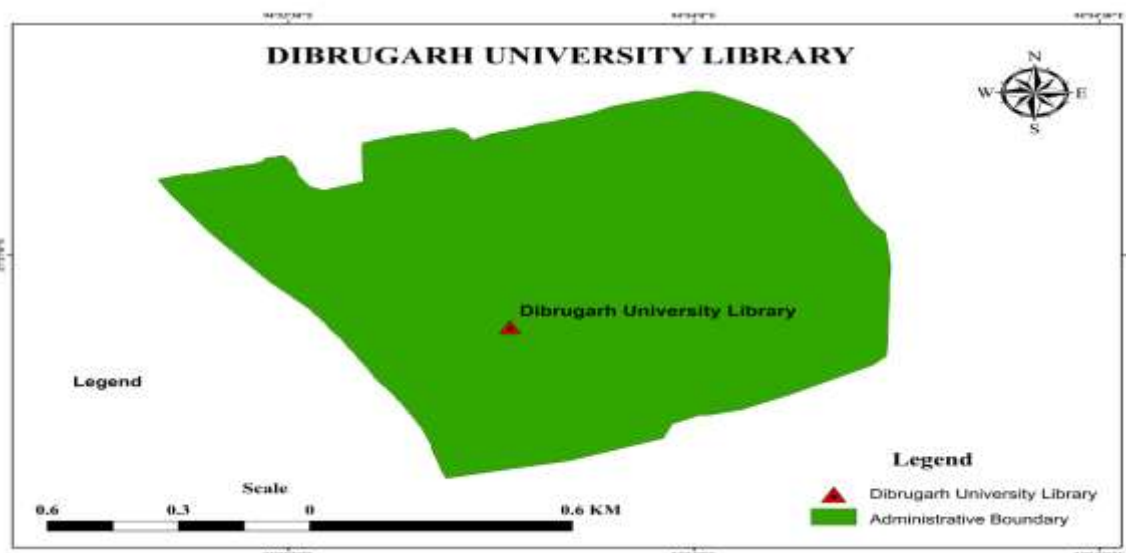
It is true that the effectiveness of an OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) largely depends on how users understand and use its various features and search techniques. Although OPACs are designed to be user-friendly, users without prior knowledge of OPACs may find it difficult to use them. Therefore, it is important that libraries provide specific guidance and training to enable users to get used to OPACs. Training programs like workshops and orientations can be organized at least two or three times a year to help users understand the actual structure of OPACs and develop their attitudes and behaviors regarding the search facilities available in OPACs. These programs can also help identify and solve various problems that users and staff may encounter, and provide feedback on how OPAC systems can be improved to achieve better results. In conclusion, although OPACs have usable features, users require specific guidance and training to take full advantage of their services.



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Appendix 1



- Location of the Library in the University Campus.