Use of OPAC in Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library, Punjabi University Patiala: A Case Study

Kulveen Kaur* and Kiran Kathuria**


INTRODUCTION

New communication technologies have brought noticeable changes in every field, particularly in teaching and learning. Over the years, libraries are the great supporters of learning and function as an essential integral component in the education system. Bennett viewed three paradigms of library that are 'reader-centered', 'book-centered', and 'learning-centered'. With the applications of Information Communication and Technologies (ICTs), libraries have grown in physical as well as in digital forms and the evolvement of digital technologies, more importantly, the ways in which the ICT tools are being applied to access, select, manipulate and produce scholarship has brought a significant change globally. Revolution in technology has paved libraries to expand their offerings beyond traditional library services to online library resources and services also expanding the traditional information retrieval methods to new online retrieval strategies. Online library services have added a more intuitive and user-friendly approach to library services e.g. 'card catalogue' has been replaced by 'Online Public Access Catalogue' (OPAC) and further with Web OPAC. Though OPAC has been used in libraries since late 1970s, but in India it appeared during 1990s. Present paper attempts to know the availability, usage and problems in usage of OPAC at BKSN Library of Punjabi University, Patiala, and encourage library authorities for using the most up-to-date technologies in order to improve library services, to make them really available for everyone, and to make library more flexible, network cooperation-oriented organisation, ready to compete even in business environment.

Brief About Library

The Punjabi University Library is officially known as Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library named after a renowned Sikh Scholar Bhai Kahn Singh. The university library is housed in a spacious modern building catering to the needs of its users. The library keeps open for 360 days of the year from 8.15 a.m. to 8.15 p.m. every day. It has a 400 seating capacity majestic reading hall for readers to study and consult various types of source material.

To keep pace with the ongoing developments, library harness its users with print as well as non-print documents. The library is a member of Developing Library Network (DELNET) and is actively participating in the Information for Library Network ‘INFLIBNET’ programme of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Library Software
The library is automated with the multiuser integrated library management software, LibSys7 that gives a true realization of Lib 2.0. LibSys7 supports almost all activities relating to acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, and serials control.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Husain & Ansari in their paper reviewed the change from card catalogue to OPAC and Web OPAC technologies in libraries1. Fast & Campbell reported that users preferred to find information on the web over OPACs, while they considered OPACs as well-organised and trustworthy tools2. Bennett examined the possible effects of three discrete online public access catalogue (OPAC) design enhancements on public library patrons to improve the circulation and resource sharing within the automated library consortium environment. It was observed that OPAC has significantly increased the Inter Library Loan (ILLS) totals and has brought a considerable change in saving the time3.

Malak focussed upon the usability of OPAC and the implementation of a web usability research for improving the efficiency of online catalogues interfaces. Author suggested the standards that allows for broadening of the access to websites for reading devices, PDAs and mobile telephony and IT tools (applications) that breaks the information access barriers, like loud reading apps. Shiv Kumar in his paper described the effect of web searching on the OPAC and observed that users’ first choice for searching information is to explore the web. It was also found that, the internet had deep and direct impact on users’ information searching behaviour. Author also viewed that there is a lack of understanding of the inner-working of the OPAC among the users. Jetty et al. seen the evolution of OPAC in formulating the next generation of Online Library catalogues coupled with various open source software packages for OPAC 2.0.

Devender & Nikam, also discussed the user perception about and level of satisfaction with library OPAC search. It was observed that there is a positive perception towards OPAC search but the survey also underlines that not all users are fully satisfied with the OPAC system’s an ability to assist in finding books and with the results of OPAC searches. Ruzegea studied the interface features of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Library OPAC and observed some of the drawbacks of OPAC such as OPAC design, lack of visual aid display and lack of multimedia features (audio, real play etc).

**OBJECTIVES**

The present study is an attempt to determine how students perceive and use OPAC and how far the library has succeeded in delivering quality information service to its users. Precisely the main objectives of the study are:

- To know whether the library provides user orientation programmes for the use of OPAC;
- To know the users’ awareness and their satisfaction level with OPAC and Web-OPAC;
- To identify the purpose and usage of library OPAC;
- To find out the most used methods for information retrieval along with the most used access points in OPAC;
- To identify the problems / suggestions to improve the OPAC service.

**SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

It is confined to the users of Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha Library of Punjabi University, Patiala. Aim of this case study is to assess the purpose, knowledge and usage of OPAC and the problems faced by the users. A questionnaire was designed and administered randomly to 100 users at different times in five days. 88 respondents filled in and returned the questionnaires. These 88 respondents belong to 17 teaching departments of the university. Data was collected and analysed for various parameters. Tables presented are analysed using five point Likert Scale.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

- **Gender and Age wise Break-up**

![Gender wise break-up](image1)

![Age wise break-up](image2)

The fig1 exhibits that out of 88 respondents, 54.5% are females whereas 45.5% are males showing more number of females visited the University Library. Fig 2 shows that 69.32% of respondents are below the age of 25 while 29.54% are between the age group of 25 to 35. Only 1 respondent is above 45 and no respondent is in the age group of 35 to 45.

- **Department wise Breakup**
It could be ascertained from figure 3 that maximum number of respondents are from History department (19.32%) of the University, followed by 17.05% respondents from University College of Engineering (UCoE) whereas 15.91% of respondents belong to School of Management Studies (SMS). Only one respondent in the whole sample didn’t mention his department. Out of 45 teaching departments of the university, the above sample includes respondents from 17 departments.

**Qualification wise Breakup**

The figure 4 describes that 37.5% respondents are studying in graduate programmes of the University and 22.7% of them are pursuing PhD followed by 21.6% undertaking Post Graduate studies in the University. The 5.7% of respondents did not reply. It is thus evident that younger generation with an age group below 25 use library and its services more often followed by research scholars and post graduates.

**Frequency of Library Visit**

Figure 5 shows that 34.1% respondents visit library daily whereas 30.7% respondents visit the library rarely, 20.5% visit twice a week and 13.64% visit frequently and only one respondent did not reply. Thus, it can be analyzed that more number of respondents visit library daily for utilising its services.

**Library Orientation**

Fig.6 depicts that 47.72% respondents get library orientation while 43.18% denied and 9.09% did not reply. Since 43.18% replied negatively, it is thus imperative to attract and motivate the users towards the benefits of orientation programmes that help them in utilizing library resources and services. It seems that 9.09% respondents who did not reply are unaware about sense or availability of orientation programmes.

**Awareness and Frequency of using OPAC**

Library catalogue is the mirror of the university library. It is thus necessary to know the awareness and frequency of usage of OPAC. It is established from the figure 7 and 8 that...
53.41% of respondents are aware of OPAC while 45.45% respondents are not aware and 1.14% did not reply. Whereas while analysing the frequency of those respondents who are aware of OPAC it was found that 10.63% of respondents use it daily followed by 25.53% who use it twice a week and 21.28% use it frequently whereas 40.43% of respondents use it rarely and 2.13% did not reply.

Reasons for not using OPAC

Reasons for not using OPAC is measured through five point Likert scale where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) .Various parameters like lack of knowledge, difficulty in usage, feeling of hesitation in use, lack of assistance from the library staff; slow speed of computer systems and number of computer terminals are measured.

Table 1: Reasons for not Using OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for not Using OPAC</th>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Knowledge</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to Use</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Hesitation in Use</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Assistance from Library Staff</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems are Slow in Accessing</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Number of Computer Terminals</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Need of It</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is found from table 1 that 57.5% of respondents ‘strongly agree’ with the reason ‘difficult to use’ as a main factor for not using OPAC followed by 30% respondents who opined ‘lack of knowledge’ as another reason for not using this service. 17.5% of respondents ‘neither agree nor disagree’ with ‘lack of assistance from the library staff’ while 25% of respondents ‘agree’ with the reason that ‘computers are slow in accessing’. 22.5% of respondents ‘agree’ with ‘less number of computer terminals’ as the reason for not using OPAC. Nearly 32.5% respondents do not bother about the utility of OPAC and rated ‘no need of it’ on point one scale. It is thus clear from the findings that there is a mixed response of the respondents about the reasons for not using OPAC whereas difficulty in use and lack of knowledge are the two major reasons of not using OPAC.

Usefulness of OPAC as an Information Retrieval tool

In response to the usefulness of OPAC, figure shows that 64.77% of respondents feel OPAC very useful while very few (9.09%) respondents do not find it useful giving various reasons such as books present in the OPAC database are not available in the book stacks, etc. whereas 26.14% of respondents did not reply.

Further, usefulness of OPAC is examined by analysing various access points of OPAC like Title, Author, Classified, Keywords, Publisher and Combined Search. Users are asked to rate the most used access point of OPAC on the five point rating scale.

Table 2: Access Points of OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Points of OPAC</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>40.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classified</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>7.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>12.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Search</td>
<td>10.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from table 2 that 40.35% respondents use ‘title’ approach for accessing OPAC followed by 33.33% respondents who access OPAC using ‘author’ approach. It was also observed that 26.32% of respondents preferred search through ‘classified’ approach, whereas very few (15.79%) respondents used ‘keyword’ approach for searching. Though ‘keyword’ search is very important but respondents may not be aware of the utility of the search through ‘keyword’ approach. However, for ‘publisher’ as an access point, table 2 shows that 15.79% respondents rated it 4 on the five point likert scale. The overall results thus show that respondents give maximum ranking to Title (40.35%) as an access point followed by author (33.33%) and classified (26.32%) and very few of them use Keyword, Publisher and Combined Search for searching operations.

Level of Satisfaction and difficulty in search for documents in Regional Language

It is found from figures that 50.68% respondents are satisfied with the level of satisfaction while 40.91% are moderately satisfied and 3.55% are dissatisfied.
Library is a service institution where readers from all genera can come and study. Punjabi university being the world's second university named after language; it is here imperative to know the satisfaction and difficulty in accessing OPAC for retrieving documents in the languages other than English such as Punjabi and Hindi. During analysis it is found that majority of respondents (40.91%) are moderately satisfied followed by 30.68% of respondents are satisfied whereas only 4.55% respondents are dissatisfied (Fig10). However, 23.86% respondents did not reply. While assessing for level of difficulty, result shows (Fig11) that maximum of 51.14% respondents do not find any problem in assessing documents in Punjabi and Hindi language while 26.14% respondents find OPAC difficult to use reason being that the respondents are not aware of the Punjabi and Hindi typing, lack of assistance of library staff near OPAC terminals, etc. whereas 22.73% of the respondents did not reply.

Need and Frequency of Assistance of Library Staff near OPAC

On asking about need to extend OPAC timings (Fig.14), 68.18% are affirmative. It is worth mentioning here that the library is providing OPAC services only from 9.15 am to 8:15 pm.

Purpose of Using OPAC

Various aspects are analyzed to know the purpose of OPAC. It can be seen from table 3 that 48.86% of respondents strongly agree that they use OPAC ‘to know the availability of required document’. Equal percent of respondents (22.73%) use OPAC ‘to know the total collection in a particular field’, ‘particular author’ and ‘particular subject’. Only 21.59% of the respondents use OPAC to know the location of the required document.

Table 3: Purpose of Using OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Using OPAC</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To know the availability of required document</td>
<td></td>
<td>48.86%</td>
<td>17.05%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know the total collection in a particular field</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>14.77%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know the total collection of a particular author</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.91%</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know the latest document in a particular subject</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.91%</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
<td>20.45%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know the location of the required document</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.59%</td>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>15.91%</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>2.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, it is inferred that though the response rate is low, but respondents see the worth of OPAC and it is observed that maximum of respondents use OPAC to know the availability of required document.

- **Response Time for Displaying Results**

  ![Response Time for Displaying Results](image)

  Fig.15: Response Time for Displaying Results

  Fig15 exhibits the response time for displaying results in OPAC. 37.5% respondents feel display time of OPAC results is fast while 29.55% of respondents opined it as moderately fast whereas only 2.27% respondents are not satisfied with its response time and termed it slow. It is, thus inferred that though 21.59% of respondents did not reply, but still majority of the respondents are satisfied with the response time of displaying results of OPAC.

- **Adequacy of OPAC Terminals**

  ![Adequacy of OPAC Terminals](image)

  (NR~4.54%)

  Fig.16: Adequacy of OPAC Terminals

  Regarding adequate number of OPAC terminals (fig.16), 54.55% respondents are unable to determine. 21.59% respondents feel the library has appropriate number of OPAC terminals while 19.32% are not agreed with it. It can be assumed from above figure that regarding available terminals is not an issue as majority of them has not faced scarcity of terminals that is why they are unable to record their opinion.

- **Other Methods used for Information Retrieval (IR)**

  ![Table 4: Methods of IR other than OPAC](image)

  (NR=21.59%)

  Thus, it is inferred that though the response rate is low, but respondents see the worth of OPAC and it is observed that maximum of respondents use OPAC to know the availability of required document. Only 14.77% of respondents preferred to ‘consult card catalogue’ for finding information. This implies that respondents are not aware of the utility of library catalogues and majority of the respondents prefer to consult their ‘teachers’ followed by ‘friends’. It is noteworthy here that number of respondents did not reply.

- **FINDINGS**

  - Library conducts orientation programme at the start of every academic session that is very important and useful for students. Less than 50% are familiar and have attended this programme.
  - Younger generation with an age group below 25 use library and its services more often followed by research scholars and post graduates.
  - 53.41% respondents are aware of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and 25.53% respondents use OPAC twice a week followed by 21.28% of the respondents who use it frequently.
  - 57.5% respondents find “difficult to use” as the main reason for not using OPAC whereas 30% respondents find lack of knowledge as the main reason.
  - 40.35% respondents opined Title as the most used access point in the OPAC followed by author (33.33%).
  - 64.77% of the respondents find OPAC as the significant tool for information retrieval.
  - 37.5% respondents opined the display time as fast and 29.5% respondents opined it as moderately fast. So, overall respondents are satisfied with the display results.
  - 81.82% respondents need the assistance of library staff near OPAC terminals.
  - 48.86% respondents use OPAC to know the availability of required document.
  - Other than OPAC, 30.68% of the respondents prefer to consult the library staff as well as their teachers rather than looking into the card catalogue.

- **SUGGESTIONS**

  On the basis of above data analysis and findings, the following suggestions have been made for optimum utilisation of OPAC facility in the university library:

  - It should be mandatory for every student to attend the orientation programmes imparted by the library.
  - Proper training to the staff should be given in handling technology.
  - Respondents are aware of the utility of web OPAC and want this service to be made available by the university library so that users can take the benefit of the same across the location and time which is the need of the hour.
  - Apart from the above suggestions, users pointed out for the need of proper infrastructure such as AC on second floor, increase of seating capacity in reading hall, filtered water, etc.
REFERENCES


