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ACCESS TO INFORMATION RESOURCES USING THE ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUE (OPAC) IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Benjamin Kenechukwu Nwobu
Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos
kenebenjamin@yahoo.com

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Emmanuel Smile George CLN
Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan Automated Library,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni – Port Harcourt, Nigeria
E-mail: emmanuel.smilegeorge@iaue.edu.ng
Phone: +2348039587963

Abstract
The study focussed on the access to information resources using online public access catalogue (OPAC) in the 21st century. A brief discussion on the traditional methods of retrieving information resources using the catalogue cards was discussed. The need for online public access catalogue (OPAC) in libraries was extensively discussed. The competency of cataloguers and classifiers of information resources in the 21st century was added to the study. The challenges affecting online public access catalogue (OPAC) in libraries. The study recommended that users should be encouraged to make use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) more frequently in accessing information resources, Information literacy program should be designed to enlighten and teach users how to effectively use online public access catalogue (OPAC) in accessing information resources.

Keywords: Access, Information Resources, OPAC, 21 Century

Introduction

Information resources are the total means of information available and organized in a library for the support of learning, teaching and research for the public, an organization, or an individual. Academic libraries usually maintain collections in a variety of media. These include textbooks, encyclopedias, magazines, databases, newspapers, reference materials, journal articles etc. Library users are delighted when they have access to their information resources in the library. And for them to have access to this information, the cataloguing and classification of these

information resources have to be put in place. In library and information science, cataloguing and classification are one of the primary functions of librarianship. It is the core of the profession, the cohesive force that binds the library into a unified whole.

Making metadata for information resources like books, sound recordings, moving pictures, etc. is the process of cataloguing. Through the creation of bibliographic records, cataloguing provides details about resources, such as author names, titles, and subject terms. For the average person, cataloguing merely refers to describing or listing items in alphabetical order. Technically, it is the systematic description of bibliographic data using the RDA codes or AACR2 guidelines. These are presented on cards, books, sheets of paper, microfilm, computerized, etc. The documents act as stand-ins for the information resources that are being saved. In order for users to access the information resources contained in the library, a sophisticated method is used to provide an access point to materials in a collection (Aina, 2012). Cataloguing, according to Ugwanna (2013), is the process of creating catalogue entries for all of the library's materials. Thus, cataloguing is a crucial process that ensures that all information resources acquired in the library can be accessed to meet the needs of students and staff in terms of research, learning, and teaching for their personal and professional development. After the bibliographic description of information resources in the catalogue cards, the classification of these information resources is critical for easy access.

As stated by David-West and Angrey (2018), classification is the process of allocating class numbers to the library's information resources. Professionals in libraries use this practice to group resources with the same subject matter (Obiozor-Ekeze, 2016). According to Olajide and Yusuf (2010), the primary goal of classifying informational resources in libraries is to increase access to them. Accessibility was highlighted by Madukoma, Onuoha, Omeluzor, and Ogbuiyi (2013) as one of the requirements for information use since the more accessible information resources are, the more probable it is that people will utilize them. Consequently, professional librarians working in libraries and information centers want to provide organized information resources with high-quality services. In recent times and the 21st century, cataloguing and classification using traditional means are slow and cumbersome for library users to retrieve

information resources from the library. The application of information and technology to library process has helped to enhance library resources with the introduction of online public access catalogue (OPAC).

The information revolution of the 21 century has also pervaded the library with far-reaching developments. One of such developments is that the library card catalogue is been replaced by the Online Public Access Catalogue (Chisenga, 2009). There is no clear definition of the online catalogue since it has been defined in various ways by libraries and scholars and there is little consensus about what really constitutes an online catalogue. The OPAC according to Carroll (2007) is an electronic equivalent of a card catalogue designed to be accessed via terminals so that library users may directly and effectively search for information about the library's resources. It is an online public access (database) of the resources and materials held by a single library or group of libraries.

Since there is every need to make available to users the findings of books in the form most needed and useful in the course of further research and routing job. This has called for a re-evaluation of the existing traditional library catalogue which leads to the subsequent introduction of the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to meet the specific needs of users. Central to the challenge is that not much is known about users' encounters with OPAC, particularly their search pattern, relevance of information retrieved and the effectiveness and adequacy of the catalogue to retrieve specific information needed. This has prompted the conducting of this study to reveal the issues associated with the use of online public access catalogue (OPAC) in meeting the users' demands and to find ways of solving those challenges.

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) as Access to Information Resources in the 21st Century

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) or simply a library catalogue is a digital database of materials such as text files, e-books, journals, etc held by a library or group of libraries. Library 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. OPAC is described by Nahfees and Azwer (2018) as an online bibliography

of library collections, including those that are available and accessible to the general public worldwide and include AV materials, books, electronic resources, and periodicals. OPAC was first established as independent online catalogues that could be accessed via VT100 terminals or a mainframe library catalogue. It is possible for the worldwide dispersed library authorities or librarians to update the catalogue, which typically takes little time.

Additionally, the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), is an automated catalogue, which houses all of the library's databases. The OPAC makes it easier and faster to access library materials than the manual catalogue. An online public access catalogue (OPAC), especially for academic libraries, has changed how people typically access library resources. Users can access library resources through a number of access points using this interface for an information retrieval system. The American Library Association's (1983) ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science defines OPAC as a computer-based and aided library catalogue. It is meant to be accessible through terminals so that library patrons may effectively search for and retrieve bibliographic records without the use of a human intermediary. From this, it may be inferred that an OPAC is a public, computerized library catalogue that provides bibliographic details about the library's information resources.

Ansari (2008) claims that a sizable percentage of users at five university libraries in New Delhi use the OPAC as a search engine to locate articles. According to the report, the majority of users handled OPAC management themselves. This suggests that users of those five academic libraries have taken advantage of the training programs offered by the library, enabling them to use OPAC without seeking for staff assistance. One of these technologies, the online public access catalogue (OPAC), has altered how libraries and information centre’s provide services to their patrons as well as how people access and retrieve information sources (Swaminathan, 2017). OPAC has been frequently utilized since its creation in the 1970s to enhance the availability of information in libraries (Feather & Sturges, 2003). OPAC, in accordance with Msagati (2016), promotes access to the information resources present in a specific library, permits communication, and consequently raises staff morale and motivation, which in turn boosts productivity of both the individual staff member and the library as a whole.

OPAC capabilities allow users to register with the library, search for information items, access them, reserve them, and renew them. Users can also utilize these features to request information materials from other libraries via the interlibrary loan service (Swaminathan, 2017; Rout & Panigrahi, 2018). It permits access to several search points, including title, author, keywords, and subject (Rout & Panigrahi, 2018). As a result, it has been adopted and is used by many academic libraries, including Tanzania's Sokoine National Agricultural Library (SNAL), to facilitate the delivery of information resources. OPAC has been crucial since it aids in finding books and determining their availability and borrowing status (Aju and Foti, 2020). It also aids in identifying the information resources that are accessible in the library collection. However, the adoption of OPAC in some countries has been hindered by a number of variables, such as poor user awareness, a lack of technical know-how, network issues, and subpar computers (Bansal & Kumar, 2017).

Concept of Library Catalogue

Library catalogue is a register of all bibliographic items found in a particular library or group of libraries, such as those belonging to a University system spread out over several geographic locations ("Library Catalogue" 2018). A bibliographic item can be any information entity (e.g., books, computer files, graphics, realia, cartographic materials, etc.), that is considered library materials (e.g., a single novel in an anthology), or a group of library materials (e.g., a trilogy), or linked from the catalogue (e.g., a webpage) as far as it is relevant to the catalogue and the users of the library.

Sangam (2015) observes that a library catalogue is an essential tool, especially when a library has a large collection. It serves as a key to the resources of a library. Atanda and Ugwulebo (2017) corroborate that generally, they are an interface of information retrieval system which assists information searchers in accessing resources of libraries using several access points. Atanda and Adeyemi (2018) classify library catalogues as In-house Information Retrieval systems, as they are set up by a particular library or information centre to serve mainly the users within the organization. Without a library catalogue, it would become difficult to know what is available and where it can be located. Hence there is a need for a catalogue in every library. Before the advent of online catalogues, library catalogues were pieces of furniture that contained

numerous small drawers, housing "3x5" cards with author, title and subject descriptions making list of information materials owned by or within a library's collection.

Access Points in OPAC

In addition to OPAC's features, of distant essence are the access points. Access Point refers to a name, term, code, heading, word, phrase etc., a unit of information representing a specific entity that can serve as a search key in information retrieval, under which a library catalogue or bibliographic database may be searched and library materials may be identified and retrieved Haider (2016). OPAC allows for multi-dimensional searches, providing as many access points as the data elements depending on the software used. It is an advantage over the linear search provisions in the earlier forms of catalogue. OPAC has been the most common tool for library users and librarians, and it will be also commonly used in digital libraries. Various access points provided in OPAC enable the user to locate documents as well as to filter the query for obtaining results of a refined search. Search strategies in OPAC include author, title, keyword, subject, call number, barcodes and many more. OPAC in some modern software provides additional provision of the truncation of terms is also available in the OPAC system Searches in OPAC could be done either through the basic or advanced search options. The access points as identified by Ashikuzzaman (2018) are discussed below:

- **Subject Access points:** Subject searching in online catalogues requires the paraphrasing of the user's Information need into the terms that have been used in the system's terminology. The library catalogue has authorized subject headings which makes subject searches easier. So, the ability of the user to identify a correct subject heading simplifies information retrieval through OPAC.
- **Author Access Point:** The search for a document through OPAC is very easy if the name of the author is known to the user. Generally, the last name of the author is used as the entry element. Title Access Point: Searching for documents by title is similar to searching by author. For title search, users have to select the title option in the menu and type the words in the title of the document. The initial articles are often omitted. In the OPAC system in modern software, users need not type the complete words in the title as the computer will list a certain number of titles in alphabetical order.

- **Call Number:** The Search using the class number requires the user's knowledge of the class number of a particular subject. For an exhaustive search for document in a subject, class number search is useful.
- **Keyword:** Many OPAC systems in modern library software provide keyword search options. This greater flexibility of access to the bibliographic records. In keyword search, documents can be searched after using a single word appearing in the name of the author, title subject or abstract /content depending on the details given in the database. Keyword searching has the flexibility to allow the user to create simple searches and yet allows the experienced user to build sophisticated searches through precision searching and filtering.

Benefits of OPAC over Traditional Catalogues

- Online catalogues could be edited and updated more easily and quickly than card catalogues.
- Online catalogues showed the current status of each item (i.e., "available" or "checked out").
- Searching is easier and more flexible — users could enter Keywords as well as Title, Author, and Subject terms to search for materials.
- Users could access the catalogue from computers located outside the library — from home or from thousands of miles away.
- The use of see and see also references is eliminated.
- In addition to that, the catalogue can be as up-to-date, as the holdings it represents.
- OPAC promotes resource sharing.
- It promotes and publicizes the resources of the library.

Digital literacy of Library Users

Users of the library must develop their digital skills to effectively utilize and access the library's resources and gain access to information that will meet their requirements. The term "digital literacy" was first used by Paul Glisster in his book "Digital Literacy," where he defined it as the capacity to comprehend and apply information presented in a variety of formats from a wide range of sources with the aid of computers Gilster (1997). The capacity to utilize ICT to access, analyse, produce, and convey information was defined by the American Library Association (2013) as involving both cognitive and technical abilities. Knowing how to utilize technology and being up to speed on its uses and locations is required for digital literacy. A person is

considered to be digitally sound if they have good communication and teamwork skills, as well as the ability to learn and use new technology quickly.

The use of the most appropriate and significant channels to portray information appropriately in various situations is supported by digital literacy (Karpati, 2011). Information in the modern world is continually evolving in terms of its volume, technological elements of storage and retrieval, and communication methods. These developments have brought forth a number of difficulties, including the difficulty in finding, selecting, and using information (Lwoga et al., 2005). Digital literacy supports professionals from all backgrounds in developing their abilities that elevate economic status and raise the bar for living standards (Emiri, 2017). As a result, many libraries have taken the natural step of attempting to improve the digital literacy of persons who are unfamiliar with digital services and technology, who are uneasy online, or who are unaware of the benefits or drawbacks of their online behaviour. The capacity to utilize technology effectively improves professional, personal, and social endeavours, and librarians are aware of this (IFLA, 2017). The expansion and development of digitization has led to a rise in the demand for people with digital literacy, competences, and abilities. The large range of terminology not only shows the quick advancement of technology but also other fields of study, including data analysis and computer or library studies.

In order to use the online public access catalogue (OPAC), library users must acquire the necessary digital abilities. In Nigeria, several colleges now demand that applicants have a basic understanding of computers. In order to help students fulfil the requirement for computer literacy, several academic institutions in Nigeria currently mandate that their students take a certain set of beginning computer courses. For instance, Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, has recently implemented procedures to improve computer literacy among students, particularly at the undergraduate levels. The inclusion of numerous computer courses in the undergraduate curriculum is one of these strategies. The capacity to operate computers and related technologies has been referred to as computer literacy (Manowaluilou, 2008).

Since most libraries in wealthy nations are automated, information and communication technology (ICT) has had little or no impact on library services. There is little question that libraries that have already adopted ICT are providing better services to their patrons. According

to Adetunji (2007), a majority of the libraries in South West Nigeria are partially automated. Not all automated libraries have OPAC incorporated in their Library Management Software (LMS) modules, particularly the academic libraries in South West Nigeria. Chu (2003) noted five characteristics of OPAC. Undergraduates are required to have some level of computer literacy to use a web-based OPAC effectively. It is undeniable that there may still be people in our generation who lack computer literacy. There are a few situations where they indirectly employ OPAC. For instance, even if a student lacks computer literacy, colleagues or library personnel may be able to help him use the OPAC to look for materials. Even if he lacks the computer literacy necessary to utilize the OPAC, such a student might nevertheless be regarded as an OPAC user. However, it may still be said that having computer literacy is essential for using OPAC effectively.

Competency of Cataloguer and Classifier of Information Resources In The 21st Century

The current technological environment has enlarged the conventional role of cataloguers. This calls for understanding of an automated cataloguing system, as well as professional and technical skills. As cataloguers have the responsibility to facilitate patron access to information resources. The use of information and communication technology to catalogue and categorize information resources includes, among other things, identifying the bibliographic characteristics of an information resource, selecting the proper subject headings, assigning the proper call numbers, creating catalogue entries, producing catalogue cards, and maintaining library catalogues, all of which call for the expertise of librarians in the cataloguing and classification processes.

Aniebo (2004) stated that the use of ICT in the cataloguing department makes it easier to create and maintain catalogue databases, name authority files, and subject authority files, while Abdullahi, Yunus, and Awarri (2011) claimed that ICT makes it possible to use online services for cataloguing practices. In this digital era, resource description and access (RDA) is rapidly taking the role of American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition (AACR2). As a result, several libraries, mainly in industrialized nations, have begun to categorize items using Resource Description and Access (RDA) rather than AARC2. According to Aina and Onuoha (2016), many national libraries have incorporated resource description and access (RDA) into their cataloguing procedures. These national libraries include the British Library, the Library of Congress, the National Libraries of Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

However, the authors concluded that by modernizing its ICT infrastructure and the Centre for Advanced Library and Information Management (CALIM), the National Library can play a vital role in promoting and supporting initiatives towards bibliographic control and RDA adoption in Nigeria.

However, the use of information and communication technology in cataloguing and classification improves the bibliographic control of information resources. This is true for online cataloguing, copy cataloguing, using an OPAC, and creating and using a machine-readable catalogue, among other things. According to Nwalo (2006), there are several distinct steps of computerized subject cataloguing, including cataloguing-in-publication (CIP) data copying, online cataloguing, cataloguing on the web, and using an online thesaurus search engine.

Challenges Affecting Cataloguing and Classification of Information Resources

According to several researches, several obstacles make it difficult for libraries to use OPAC. According to the study by Bamidele, Omeluzor, Onoyeyan, and Titilayo (2014), the majority of the professors at Babcock University in Nigeria exhibit low awareness. Msagati (2016) found in a different study that the majority of distance learners have little knowledge of OPAC. Similar to this, Rout and Panigrahi's (2018) study and Swaminathan's (2017) study also found a lack of awareness. Msagati (2016) suggests several methods to address the issue of lack of knowledge, including the use of websites, newsletters, and mailing lists to offer simple instructions on how to utilize OPAC. According to Gana et al. (2019), one effective strategy for raising awareness and promoting OPAC usage is the employment of orientation and sensitization programs.

Lack of knowledge and expertise in using OPAC is another issue preventing efficient use of it (Fabunmi & Asubiojo, 2013). In conclusion, other issues that have been documented by several studies include insufficient power supply (Emiri, 2019), subpar computer terminals (Emiri, 2019), inadequate network (Eserada & Okolo, 2019), and a lack of instruction from software or support from library employees.

Conclusion

Information resources in today's world are increasing and libraries and librarians have the responsibility to increase the provision of quality intellectual access to information resources to those who need them at their convenience and with a lot of precision. The future of today's

library is the online public access catalogue (OPAC), which is a database containing the library's collection that can be accessed by anyone online. Libraries now can offer full-text electronic subscription-based journals to their users that can be accessed via the library's web page in addition to supplying a username and password. In the present-day information environment, Online catalogue is a must-embrace tool for quality accessibility to Information.

Recommendations

The study recommends thus:

1. Users should be encouraged to make use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) more frequently in accessing information resources.
2. The system should be maintained periodically to ensure its continuous effectiveness.
3. Satisfaction of users should be paramount in the mind of the library management by ensuring that the information needs are met.
4. Funds should be made available for the provision of more facilities and infrastructure.
5. Information literacy program should be designed to enlighten and teach users on how to effectively use online public access catalogue (OPAC) in accessing information resources.

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