AWARENESS AND USE OF LIBRARY ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUE (OPAC) AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OYO, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

By

Oso, Olutoyin Olukemi (Ph.D)
T.Y Danjuma Library,
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State
oluwatoyinoso@gmail.com

Diyaolu, Akorede Muftau (Ph.D)
M.T Kontagora Library,
Federal School of Surveying, Oyo.
Oyo, Nigeria
diyaolu5@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the awareness and use of Online Public Access Catalogue by students in higher institution libraries of Oyo township, Oyo State, Nigeria. A survey design was adopted using a self-developed instrument. The population of the study comprises 3,500 students across the three institutions namely, Federal School of Surveying, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education and Federal College of Education (Special) all in Oyo. However, a sample size of three hundred and fifty (350) respondents was chosen among related programs of study across all the three (3) institutions based on Boddie (2021) sample size reduction. The contents of the instrument were found very relevant to the research constructs while Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the variables ranged from 0.73 to 0.85. The retrieved 300 instruments represent an 85% rate of return. Analysis involved mainly descriptive statistics of the SPSS Version 210 using frequency counts and percentages. Findings revealed that majority of the students 223 (74.3%) were aware of OPAC services while about 77 (25.7%) were unaware. 286(95.3%) across all the three institutions attested to the use of OPAC while 49(16.3%) were the most frequent. Similarly, 133(44.3%) which constitutes the largest of

respondents used OPAC most often. A total number of 39(13%) used the Author Search, 106(35.3%) regularly apply the Title Search, while Author/Title search recorded 103(34.3%) responses. The management of the libraries are implored to improve on their sensitization programme and ensure that more users adopt the services so that they could access the library more with ease. It is recommended among others that more efforts should be geared towards assisting the library to ensure that OPAC is well implemented and maintained so as to enjoy its full benefit.

Keywords: Online Public Access Catalogue, OPAC Awareness, Use, Students, OPAC functions, Library, Tertiary Institutions.

Introduction

In this modern era, libraries have transformed significantly from their traditional scope of a mere physical repositories of books and resources to an advanced hub of knowledge which is backed by the integration of technological tools. The integration of technology has brought about introduction of various innovative tools, such as the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), which has practically replaced the traditional card catalogue with its associated repetitive routines of bibliographic knowledge organization as well as the corresponding access and retrieval of these information by the respective library users. David-West (2020) ascertained that the online public access catalogue provides facilities for library users to carry online catalogue searches and then check the availability of the item.

According to Katabalwa and Mnzava (2020) Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs) have revolutionized the way library patrons search for and access materials. Unlike the traditional card catalogues, OPAC offer keyword searches, Boolean searches, and other advanced features that enhance the user experience. OPAC stations offers an effective and users-friendly interface for searching, identifying, and accessing library resources through loaning, reading and reservation, significantly and as such fulfilling the users information needs. For instance, academic institutions, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. OPAC serves as a critical tool for

information retrieval within the library's collection while it also enhances catalogue procedures in libraries, and as such makes information retrieval more effective (Igere, 2022). Acceptance of this technology is critical in our pursuant of effective service delivery and quality assurance in respect of supporting the academic and research needs of library clientele.

Oyo State, South-West, Nigeria, has several higher educational institutions including universities, Polytechnics and colleges of education that have subscribed to OPAC systems to ensure access to their vast library collections. These notwithstanding, the extent to which undergraduates in these institutions use these resources does not commensurate with the expectations of the management and the huge resources committed to its procurement. Obviously, this may either be as a result of low level of awareness about OPAC and its inherent advantages or probably due to inability to understand its operation.

Use of OPAC by students encompasses ability and efforts required to search the library collections through the browsing of the system i.e OPAC. The user is expected to have at least little information about the subject of interest that could facilitate the search. This may be in terms of knowing the subject, title of the work, author information, series or editions, publishers and or journal titles. In addition, the user must also be conscious of the different search strategies that is embedded in the system. For instance, the boolean operators and the use of symbols among others make the OPAC use a topic of interest. Similarly, understanding the level of awareness of OPAC among undergraduates is very crucial for identifying factors that positively influence the orientation of students about the OPAC and as such stimulates their interest towards the use. Definitely, being aware about the use of OPAC is about understanding its prospects and numerous advantages most especially, when considering the amount of time spent on searching through the card catalogue as well as the cycles taken in order to loan a book and also thinking about the process of charging and discharging of information resources. Therefore, developing strategies to push an awareness structure in place will help to ensure the maximum benefits of these systems among the

undergraduate users of this academic libraries. Previous studies have found that awareness is an essential factor of OPAC usage.

For instance, a study by Madhusudhan (2010) identified that a large population of students in Indian universities were not aware of the OPAC use and as such failed to make use of the new systems, but studies by Omekwu (2017) and Okello-Obura (2013) had hinted that although most undergraduates were aware of OPACs, but their actual use may be limited. Similarly, the work of Ukwoma and Ijeoma (2015) on Nigerian universities asserted that many students lacked adequate knowledge about OPAC functionalities. Several other factors could also influence the use of OPAC among students. These may include perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and the availability of training programs, computer and ICT literacy skills among others. Therefore, the effectiveness of OPAC relied upon the users' awareness and utilization of the system. According to Amoah and Ankamah (2019), OPAC user-friendly interfaces allow students to efficiently locate a vast array of library materials, from physical holdings to electronic databases, but understanding the extent to which undergraduates optimize this powerful research tool remains relevant for anticipating library services and leveraging data literacy.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the popularity of the availability of OPAC systems among various academic libraries in Oyo States higher institutions, there are visible signs suggesting that many undergraduates of these institutions may not make maximum use of these systems. The problem may include issues relating to awareness, ease of use, and functionality of OPAC in academic research. Studies have shown that while there is a high level of awareness of OPAC services among undergraduates, but the actual usage is not yet commensurate with this awareness. For instance, it could be seen that while most of our institutions have adopted OPAC, the level of usage still remained low among the undergraduate students. However, understanding these mechanisms is important for library administrator who care to enhance easy

access to resources for the much-needed academic performances of students. To this end, this study aims to investigate the use of OPAC among students in tertiary institutions of Oyo State, Nigeria, thereby appraising their level of awareness and mode of use in order to improve their usage of the technology.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the awareness and use of OPAC among students of selected higher institutions in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives sought to:

1. ascertain the current awareness of OPAC use among students in Oyo, Oyo State.
2. determine the frequency of OPAC use among students for their academic research.
3. examine the type of OPAC search technique commonly used by the students.
4. find out whether students are satisfied using the OPAC systems.

Research Questions

The following research questions guides the study:

1. What is the current awareness of OPAC use among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo,
   Oyo State?
2. How often do students use OPAC for their academic research?
3. What type of searching technique of OPAC is widely used by the students?
4. How satisfied are the students while using the OPAC systems?

Justification of the Study

This study is necessitated by the need to enhance academic library services and support undergraduates' research activities. In modern libraries, efficient use of OPAC can significantly aid the information retrieval processes and

ensure better academic outcomes through adequate access to quality information resources. By identifying gaps in awareness and use, this research can inform a better ideology to promote effective use of OPAC. By investigating the research questions, the study will give more insight on the current state of OPAC awareness and use among undergraduates in Oyo State. Similarly, the findings will also inform recommendations to improve students' interactions with library OPACs, and as such helps to advance a culture of information literacy that further builds confidence in students' research abilities.

Literature Review

Egunjobi (2017) conducted a study on the awareness and use of OPAC by undergraduate students in selected Nigerian universities, finding shows that a large number of students were not aware of the existence of OPAC in their institution libraries, and those that were aware, even find it difficult to use the system due to their limited orientation and lack of understanding of OPAC benefits and functionalities.

Yusuf and Olaniyi (2022) highlighted the importance of exposing the students to the library resources through the computerised systems, establishing that OPAC systems can significantly enhance student interest if effectively directed. Their study proposed integrating OPAC training into library orientation programs and offering continuous support to help students become vast in the use of these systems. Zaid and Adetunji (2019) also emphasized the role of academic libraries in promoting digital literacy, with an advice that libraries should take active role in educating students about the benefits and uses of OPAC as well as other digital resources. Meanwhile, Adebayo and Adesope (2020), has established that digital literacy is a critical factor that influences the effective use of OPAC among students in Nigerian universities. The study thus founded that students with higher levels of digital literacy were more likely to use OPAC effectively, and this has greatly shown the importance of including digital skills training into the school's academic curriculum.

Akanbi, Adekanbi and Bankole (2021) investigated the use and perception of Online Public Catalogue (OPAC) by users in academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research method to survey library users in two selected academic libraries using a simple random sampling technique. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents were quite aware of the provision and availability of OPAC in their respective libraries, but a very small percentage of the respondents in Unilorin and Kwara State Polytechnic got to know about OPAC through the library. The study also showed that an average percent of respondents in both institutions can make use of the library OPAC effectively. Considering user's perception of OPAC, findings of the study confirmed that most of respondents highly accepted OPAC, and found it more preferable to card catalogue. They (respondents) however, reported series of challenges which includes poor network services, incessant power failure, and lack of technical support as part of factors that hindered their use of OPAC.

Gana, Ajibili and Abel (2019) studied the awareness and use of OPAC catalogue by patrons of Bingham University Library, Karu, Nassarawa State, Nigeria. The work adopted a descriptive survey design and employed the use of questionnaire as data instrument method of data collection. The population of the study comprises of 350 patrons (student and staff users) who were randomly selected. A total number of three hundred and thirty-three (333) respondents (85%) were retrieved eventually, while analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings has shown that most of the respondents were aware of the OPAC to a very little extent, while few individuals were not aware of the OPAC services at all and they still preferred to wonder about the shelves physically. Also based on the study, a considerable number of students consults OPAC to a very little extent and this is the pointer to the fact that there are still low awareness of OPAC use among the respondents. It is obvious from the findings of this work that majority of the respondents were not aware of the existence of the OPAC services, and neither do they use OPAC services. Adebayo and Adesope (2020) had reasoned along this line that digital

literacy is crucial for the effective utilisation of OPAC among students in Nigerian universities. Their study exposed the students with higher levels of digital literacy as more positioned to consult OPAC more meaningfully compared to their counterparts in the lower grade, this however, enunciates the relevance of adding digital skills training to the academic curriculum of the undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Igere (2022) conducted a study that examined the role of OPAC in the utilization of library resources by students in two Universities which are known to have applied an OPAC Set up in Edo State Nigeria namely; University of Benin (UNIBEN) and Ben Idahosa University (BIU). It was gathered that respondents employ the OPAC as a library resource. This further strengthened that OPAC rendered numerous functions which are far beyond the imagination of the students. In essence, this attested to the fact that respondents have not been able to fully harnessed OPAC utilities for useful academic need. The findings also revealed that OPAC is used to locate required documents in University of Benin, while in Benson Idahosa University, majority of the students still do manual browse through the shelves for books due to low awareness. It was also established that some of the respondents in BIU were equally not aware of the various techniques of search as well as the inherent benefits attached to OPAC use. However, reports of this study shared the fact that respondents from both universities actually derived some level of satisfaction with OPAC usage as part of the services being rendered by their respective university libraries.

In summary, the appraised literature reveals that while OPAC systems offer numerous benefits for accessing library resources, several challenges hinder their effective use among undergraduates in Nigerian universities. Awareness, training, and access to necessary infrastructure are critical factors that influence the successful adoption and utilization of OPAC. This study builds on the existing literature by focusing on undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria, to provide a localized understanding of the awareness and use of OPAC in this specific context

Methodology

This study is a survey and it adopts descriptive design. The population includes students from three major institutions in Oyo township, Oyo State: Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo and Federal School of Surveying, Oyo. Ajayi Crowther University was exempted because their own library management System is still at the implementation stage as at the time of conducting this survey. Meanwhile, the study population comprises of final year and semi- final year students respectively. Respondents were purposively selected across similar faculties in each institution in order to compare findings on programme of study.

The population of the study comprises of three thousand five hundred (3,500) students across the three institutions namely, Federal School of Surveying (147), Emmanuel Alayande University of Education (1,377) and Federal College of Education (Special) (1,976) all in Oyo. Faculties of Sciences in all the schools were considered relevant because of their similarity of courses. However, a sample size of three hundred and fifty respondents was chosen among related programmes of study across all the three (3) institutions based on adopted sample size reduction of 10% established by Boddie (2021). Therefore, the breakdown of the respondents are: Federal School of Surveying (70), Emmanuel Alayande University of Education (134) and Federal College of Education (Special) (96) respectively. Data was collected using structured questionnaire (QOPAC) and analyzed with SPSS (version 21.0). The Research instrument Questionnaire on Use of OPAC (QOPAC) is an adapted questionnaire having worked on similar instruments of related studies, it was subjected to content validity by giving it to professional colleagues and the items were found to be relevant to the study. Again, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the variables ranged from 0.73 to 0.85 showed that the items in the instrument directly measures the required information about the study. Meanwhile, descriptive tools; frequency counts, percentages were used to analyse the research questions. The retrieved 300 instruments represent an 85% rate of return. A purposive stratified random sampling technique is used to select participants across different faculties in each

school, respondents were found in the classrooms after lectures and at their various departments at their leisure period.

Results and Interpretation

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	INSTITUTION			TOTAL
	EAUED N %	SPED N %	FSS N %	
No. of Students	134 44.7	96 32.0	70 23.3	300

Gender
        Male
        Female
        Total
	40
	29.9 94
	70.1 134
		35
		61
		96
			16
			22.9
			54
			77.1 70
				91
				209
				300

Age (years).
        18 -
        27
        28 -
        37
        38-
        47
        48-
        57
 	
        Above
57yrs
	183
	10
		80
		5
			13
			4
				276
				19 2
				2
				1

Research Question 1: What is the current awareness of OPAC use among

56

students of tertiary institutions in Oyo, Oyo State?

Table 2. Awareness of OPAC usage.

Awareness	EAUED		SPED		FSS		Total(F). %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Very Aware (VA)	51 17.0		25 8.3		16 5.3		92 25.3
Aware (A)	28 9.3		24 8.0		13	4.3	65 21.6
Moderately Aware (MA)	27 9.0		20 6.6		21	7.0	68 22.6
UnAware (UA)	23 7.6		22 7.3		18 6.0		63 21.0
Very Unaware (VU)	5		5		2		12	3.7
Total	134		96		70		

Table 2. Showed that majority of the respondents 157(46.9%) are aware of the use of OPAC, 68(22.6%) are neither aware, while 75(24.7%) were totally unaware of the use. The trend show that the awareness of the OPAC use is still relatively low based on the findings, at least few numbers above the average in the first two(2) institutions considered, that is EAUED and SPED (79 and 49 respectively) were aware of OPAC use while the third institution FSS recorded less than average (29) in terms of the students population of OPAC use

awareness.

Research Question 2: How often do students use OPAC for their academic research?

Table 3. frequency of OPAC usage

Frequency of use	EAUED		SPED		FSS		Total(F). %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
A –Always	20		16		13		**49** 16.4
O – Often	79		29		25		**133** 44.4
S- Sometimes	21		29		18		**68** 22.6
R – Rarely	07		20		09		**36** 12.0
N – Never	**07**		2		5		**14** 4.6
Total	**134**		**96**		**70**		**300** 100

Table 3 show the responses of the students where 286(95.3%) across all the three institutions attested to the use of OPAC while the remaining 14(4.7%)

respondents had never used the catalogue. However, the breakdown, as reported by the table show that 49(16.3%) were the most frequent, 133(44.3%) which constitutes the largest of respondents on table 3 used OPAC most often, 66(22.7%) rarely consults the catalogue while the 36(12%) preferred to use OPAC on occasional basis, that is sometimes.

Research Question3: What type of searching technique of OPAC is widely used by the students?

Table4. Type of OPAC search used by Students

Search Technique	EAUED		SPED		FSS		Total(F). %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Author	20		12		07		**39** 13.0
Title	44		21		21		**106** 35.3
Author/Title	47		24		11		**103** 34.3
Keyword	10		3		3		**16** 5.3
Call Number	5		6		1		**12** 4.0
Subject	2		4		4		**10** 3.3
ISBN/ISSN	2		2		8		**12** 4.0

Table of content	-	-	2	2 0.7
Total	134	96	70	300 100

Based on the results, a total number of 39(13%) used the Author Search, 106(35.3%) regularly apply the Title Search, Author/Title search recorded 103(34.3%) respondents. Keyword search 16(5.3%) used the Call Number search function 12 (4%) respondents, Subject Search involves 10(3.3%) respondents, ISBN/ISSN search menu has 12(4%) while the remaining 2(0.7%) only used Table of content menu.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, focus on awareness still reflects some level of low awareness of the use of OPAC, some students are still unaware about the use and this implies that more attention should be given to information and orientation on the use of OPAC. Egunjobi (2017) corroborated this finding in a study on the awareness and use of OPAC by undergraduate students in selected Nigerian universities, in which the finding reflected a significant existence of low awareness on OPAC use in libraries. The study established that those who were aware doesn't use the system regularly due to a lack of understanding of its functionalities. Similarly, Bello and Olayinka (2018) identify several challenges associated with using OPAC in Nigerian libraries, including limited access to computers, inadequate internet facilities, and a preference for traditional cataloging systems among some users. The results of this study indicate that awareness of the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) has a significant influence on its use among students of higher institutions in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted in Nigeria and other countries (Fati & Adetimirin, 2015; Salami, 2016; Ochogwu, 1984). Similarly, Salami (2016) reported that students' attitudes towards OPAC use were significantly influenced by their

awareness of the system.

Conclusion

This study highlights critical insights into the awareness and use of OPAC among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo, Oyo State. While there is a reasonable level of awareness, actual usage is relatively low. The findings of this study have implications for libraries in Oyo State and Nigeria as a whole. To encourage greater use of OPAC among students, libraries should prioritize raising awareness of the system through various channels, such as workshops, training sessions, and online tutorials. Additionally, libraries should ensure that their OPAC interfaces are user-friendly and accessible to students of all backgrounds. Libraries should also ensure that both OPAC and the contents were regularly updated to ensure that new and current materials are acquired and the records are made available through the catalogue. However, this study provides evidence that awareness of OPAC is a critical factor in its use among students of higher institutions in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Libraries in the region should invest in strategies to enhance OPAC awareness and accessibility in order to promote its effective use and support for student learning and research. More efforts should be geared towards assisting the library to ensure that OPAC is well implemented and maintained so as to enjoy its full benefit. Libraries should be well organized to ensure adequate visibility of their resources online while regular subscription should be made for resources listed on the catalogue. Also, based on the findings, more enlightenment programme in form of orientation and information literacy training should be conducted on a regular basis for the library users. Similarly,

a special awareness about OPAC could be scheduled for the fresh students during their usual Annual Orientation Programme for the new students, this will encourage adequate use of the catalogue. Generally, Users session and training will help to equip students with necessary skills on how to make best use of OPAC and also help those who lack searching skills and lack of confidence borne out of fear to build self-confidence. Similarly, satisfaction of users is also a necessary tool needed to be achieved; therefore, respective library management of the concerned institutions should ensure that the systems are regularly maintained so as to have its continuous effectiveness. Most importantly, library should dedicate a well versatile staff who will be seated closed to the OPAC stations to promptly guide and assist the users whenever they closed-by just to ensure on-point users training and support.

Future Research

It is important to note the limitations of this study. The sample size of 300, while adequate for many research purposes, may not represent the entire population of students in Oyo State. Similarly, the study relied solely on questionnaire data, which may be subject to biases and limitations. Future research could explore this topic using a larger sample size, mixed-methods (the cross-sectional approach).

References

Adebayo, O., & Adesope, A. (2020). Digital literacy and the use of library
	resources in Nigerian
 universities. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 46(3), 102-115.

Akanbi, M. L, Adekanbi, R. O., and Bankole, Q. A. (2021). Perception and Use of OPAC by
 Users in Academic Libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria, *Record and	Library
	Journa*l, 7(2).	215-233.

Amoah, J., & Ankamah, E. Y. (2019). User interface design principles for online

library   catalogs: A review of the literature. *Library Hi Tech,* 37(2), 223-242.

Boddie, K. (2021). How to Approximate Independence with the 10 Percent Rule. https://study.com/skill/learn/approximating-independence-with-the-10-percent-rule explanation.html

Bello, S., & Olayinka, R. (2018). Challenges of using online public access catalogs in Nigerian   libraries. *Library Review*, 67(6/7), 435-448.

David-West (2020). Information retrieval tools as predictors for information resources utilization in academic libraries in Nigeria. *International Journal of Knowledge Content Development & Technology.* 10 (3, 21-31.

Egunjobi, R. (2017). Awareness and use of library OPAC by undergraduate students in selected   Nigerian universities. *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science*,   27(1), 23-33.

Fati, O. I., & Adetimirin, A. (2015). OPAC awareness as a factor affecting OPAC use by   Undergraduates in two Nigerian libraries. *International Journal of   Academic Library and   Information Science*, 3(3), 72-8022.

Gana, M., Ajibili, D.O & Abel, D. (2019). Awareness and use of OPAC by patrons of   Bingham University Library, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Journal of ICT Development, Applications and Research, Volume 1,* 61 – 69, 2019.

Katabalwa, A.S & Mnzava, E.E.(2020). Usage of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) by   undergraduate students at Sokoine University of Agriculture Sokoine University of Agriculture. *University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal Vol 15, No 2, pp* 84-99

Madhusudhan, M. (2010). Use of electronic resources by research scholars of Kurukshetra University. *The Electronic Library*, 28(4), 492-506.

Ochogwu, E. U. (1984). Analytical study on availability of information and communication   technology facilities in selected Nigerian university libraries. *African Journals Online   www.ajol.com*

Omekwu, C. O. (2017). Awareness and use of library information resources among   undergraduate students in private universities in South-

East, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 17(2).

Salami, M. O. (2016). Attitude and use of Online Public Access Catalogue by students of Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria. *UNL Digital Commons.*

Yusuf, A., & Olaniyi, M. (2022). Enhancing student engagement with library resources through technology: A case study of OPAC usage in Nigeria. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 14(2), 45-57.

Zaid, Y., & Adetunji, W. (2019). The role of academic libraries in promoting digital literacy in

Nigeria. *Library Hi Tech News*, 36(8), 14-21.