Awareness and use of OPAC by patrons of Bingham University Library, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study explored awareness and use of online public access catalogue by patrons of Bingham University Library, Karu, Nassarawa State, Nigeria. It adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 350 patrons (student and staff users) randomly out of which 333 (85%) copies were retrieved and used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that most of the respondents - 124 (37.2%) - were aware of the OPAC to a very little extent, while 133 (39.9) were not aware of the OPAC services at all, they preferred to physically browse through the library shelves; that 253 (76.0%) of the respondents used the OPAC to a very little extent and this validated the lack of awareness and use of the OPAC. Meanwhile, 62 (18.6%) of the respondent have never used the OPAC It was obvious from the findings that the majority of the respondents were not aware of the existence of the OPAC services neither nor used it hence, the need for this study. The study, therefore, recommended among others that the library should organize orientation and sensitization programmes as measures for creating awareness and encouraging the utilization of the OPAC amongst library users and stakeholders.

Keywords: Awareness, Use, Online public access catalogue, University library, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Introduction
Libraries play a pivotal role in the development and promotion of university education worldwide. University library as the heart of the university system provides suitable materials useful for teaching, learning and research purposes and thus supplement classroom teaching work along with provision of knowledge required to attain intellectual pursuits. In order to achieve this goal, most libraries have put in place adequate resources to support teaching and research, trained qualified librarians capable of organizing the information contents in the most scientific and helpful order for the readers who come to use the library and its resources as well as a library catalogue which is used to facilitate easy retrieval of educational resources in the library (Msagati, 2016).

The use of online public access catalogue (OPAC) has brought about enormous changes in library practices. Furthermore, it has made the library collection easily accessible to everyone by breaking the physical boundaries of the library. It is also necessary to find out the usage of the OPAC from time to time, so that the necessary measures can be put in place for better utilization of this service.

Utilization of OPAC by library users depends largely on the extent to which they are aware of its availability, impact and usage. Automation of Bingham University Library started in 2015 with the adoption of NewGenLib integrated library management system with its OPAC accessible online. Observation has shown that there is low utilization of the OPAC services by library users who resort to alternate such laudable service with seeking assistance from library staff or just browse through the library shelf for books or other information resources. Their inability to use the service may be attributed to lack of awareness or technophobia. It is expected

that users should be able to access library web based OPAC from their hostels, offices or through their smart mobile phones before coming to the library to borrow needed materials.

The Bingham University Online Public Access Catalogue (BHULOPAC) as a bibliographic control tool is a computerized catalogue which provides access to the collection of the library from workstations within the branches of the library located in the main and the Library Annexe of the University. It is accessible via the campus access points stationed at different points on campus. The BHULOPAC enhances easy retrieval of the collection available in the institution library as they grow. It is also noteworthy that staff and students remotely login to the catalogue from their offices and hostels respectively through the IP address. This affords library users the opportunity to keep track of charging and discharging activities and to effect necessary bookings as well as reservations online. Apart from knowing which materials are available in the system, patrons enjoy the comfort of reading some of the electronic books at their pace and convenience. Digitized versions of journal articles and past question papers are also made accessible to the students electronically at different remote locations within the campus. Faculty members involved in selection of materials for acquisition and those intending to recommend reading lists to students are apprised with the current holdings of the library, thus communication between faculty and library is enhanced.

Statement of the problem

OPAC has revolutionized traditional accessibility to resources of libraries in general especially academic libraries in particular. It is an interface of information retrieval system which assists information searchers to access resources of libraries using several access points. Traditionally, it is concerned with searching for and retrieving bibliographic records of information items. It has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records of materials easier and faster.

However, studies have shown that most information searchers tend to easily use available information sources rather than sources that require extensive efforts. For instance, library users will prefer to search a database that is fast and easy to operate in terms of retrieving precise records which they would need rather than a card catalogue box that requires more rigorous effort to extract information. But on the contrary, it has been observed that many library patrons do not often use BHULOPAC not minding the fact that the university library is, to a large extent, automated; that these users do not maximize the use of the OPAC facility. Thus, this study sought to investigate patrons' (staff and student users) awareness and use of Bingham University Library OPAC.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the level of awareness and use of Bingham University Online Public Access Catalogue (BHULOPAC) by patrons of Bingham University Karu, Nigeria. Specifically, the study set out to:
1. determine the extent to which patrons are aware of BHULOPAC services,
2. determine the extent of BHULOPAC use,
3. find out the factors that affect awareness of BUHLOPAC by the patrons and
4. find out the factors that affect the use of BHULOPAC by the patrons.

Research questions

In order to guide the researchers to arrive at reliable results, the following research questions were raised:

1. To what extent are the patrons of Bingham University Library aware of the OPAC services?
2. To what extent do the patrons use the OPAC services?
3. What are the factors affecting the awareness of Bingham University library OPAC services by the patrons?
4. What are the factors affecting the use of Bingham University library OPAC services by the patrons?

Literature review

The ALA glossary of library and information science (2018) defines OPAC as a computer-based and supported library catalogue. It is designed to be accessible via terminals so that library users may directly and effectively search and retrieve bibliographic records without the assistance of a human intermediary. This implies that an OPAC is a computerized library catalogue that is available to the public which provides bibliographic information about information resources in the library. Since early 1980s, various studies have been carried out on the use of OPAC worldwide when there was much concern about the replacement of traditional card catalogues and book catalogues with OPAC.

The historical background of OPAC dates back to 1970s when the first generation of OPAC was developed. This model emulated the card catalogue approach and was characterized by various drawbacks such as lack of authority control over name and subject heading; lack of types of materials, portion of books and information about utility and availability of books. The second generation of OPAC was developed in the 2000s with improved features such remote access, varieties of search features, display and user interface, e-mail delivery, holdings of other libraries, current awareness services, circulation information and ordering and processing files (Sridhar, 2004).

Today, most libraries worldwide have made a significant leap in terms of embracing and adopting technologies in order to increase access to and use of library collections. Nevertheless, despite such massive investment, it is apparently that awareness and use of OPAC among library users play pivotal role on influencing the effective utilization of the library information resources to enhance teaching, learning and research among scholars. Ruzegea (2012) asserted that awareness of OPAC is the knowledge of this facility and it is also a first step to increase usage of library educational resources to aid students in their learning process. This is evidenced in the study conducted by Ebiwolate (2010) on the use of library catalogue by undergraduate students which revealed that majority of students were not aware of library catalogue as a result they had never used the catalogue. The study further revealed that, due to limited use of OPAC majority of students resorted to browse through shelves technique to locate books which resulted to frustration and thus militated against the use of library information resources.

Similarly, the study by Bamidele et al. (2014) revealed that majority of respondents (71. 4%) were not aware that OPAC can be used to facilitate retrieval of library information resources and thus only (26%) of the respondents used OPAC independently to retrieve library information resources. Likewise, Adedibu (2008) in his work examined catalogue use by science students and showed that the users of the OPAC represented a small portion with 33 respondents (7.9%).

Studies (Mulla and Chandrashekara, 2009; Arshad and Shafique 2014,and Asubiojo and Fabunmi, 2013) have identified obstacles that constrain effective use of OPAC. These factors are lack of awareness, inadequate IT skills, erratic power supply, network failure, inadequacy of

computer terminals and searching library materials in oriental languages such as Urdu, Persian and so forth.

On the other hand, studies have revealed that the use of OPACs is current increasingly important worldwide and many university libraries have embraced OPACs as the potential information retrieval tool. This is revealed in the study conducted by Gohain and Saikia (2013) on the use and user satisfaction on Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) services which reported that (72.05%) of respondents were aware of OPAC and that (51.03%) of respondents consulted the online catalogue on daily basis. Ansaar and Amita (2008) on the study of awareness and use of the online public access catalogue (OPAC) in five Delhi libraries by found that a high percentage of respondents are utilizing the OPAC as a search tool for retrieving documents. Also, Kumar and Vohra (2011) on the study of faculty member awareness and use of OPACs found that a significant number of users search information regarding the library material through OPAC.

Dilger (2008) went further to discussed the usability of OPAC systems in large libraries with a color-coded classification system showing the status of the book likes the green highlight for available books, yellow highlight for borrowed and red highlight for reference. The behavior of academic library users has drastically changed in recent years. Internet search engines have become the preferred tool over the library OPAC. Jia and Cathy (2008), in their study attempted to find the answers to the following questions: Why is the current OPAC ineffective? What can libraries and librarians do to deliver an OPAC that is as good as search engines to serve their users in a better way? Revitalizing the library OPAC is one of the pressing issues that has to be accomplished.

A study by Adedibu (2008) at the University of Ilorin investigated catalogue use by science students. A questionnaire was randomly distributed to 500 users in the 2004/ 2005 session; the preponderance of the respondents (90.1%) used the library catalogue to gain access the library stock; three-quarter (74%) claimed to know, how to use both the card catalogues and the OPAC. The users of the OPAC represented a small portion with 33 respondents (7.9%). The study also showed that many respondents (192 or 46.3%) preferred the Subject Catalogue, one fourth (111 or 26.7%) preferred the Author/Title and about a fifth (88 or 21.2%) preferred a combination of Author/Title and Subject Catalogues. The use of library catalogues increase as the respondent's progress in their academic career.

Several factors militate against effective utilization of OPAC, such factors may differ from one university and library to another. Research conducted by Asubiojo and Fabunmi (2013) indicated that lack of informationsearching skills, awareness, erratic power supply, network failure and inadequacy of computer terminalsdesignated for the use of OPAC were among the factors inhibiting use of library OPAC. Ansari and Amita (2008) observed that problem of recall and precision were the problem faced by users. In another development, Mulla and Chandrashekara (2009) established that major constraints for the use of OPAC at the libraries of engineering colleges were lack of awareness; non-user friendly and information technology (IT) competency among user communities. Awareness in this case may have been caused by inability of librarians to notify users since a study by Yusuf (2012) also identified lack of awareness amongst the library user's community. Other problems identified by Yusuf (2012) were lack of instruction in the use of software package, shortage of terminals, and instability of electricity supply among others as hindrance for use of OPAC at the library.

To improve use of OPAC, Kaur and Sharda (2010) strongly advocated that librarians should assist users in learning the use of OPAC, search engine, e-mail and CDROM techniques

and inform library users of the web sites available through the various networks. Beside, implementing effective software is also important as well as organizes orientation programs and training for users at different levels. Educating library users on these important aspects will go a long way to curb the challenges they face each day in using library resources.

Methods
Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The target population for this study includes undergraduate students and staff of Bingham University Library. Some variables like age, level and department were ignored as long as the students were undergraduates and the staff were users of the library. Sequel to the fact that the population is too large to be covered for this study, the researcher randomly selected 350 from the total population of about 4000 as sample size. The sample from the population was considered justifiable against the backdrop of the position of Edem (2005), who refers to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities", which suggests "a sample size of 384 will be sufficient for a population of 100,000; 370 for 10,000 and 248 for 700". The research tool used was a structured questionnaire which comprised of sections on demographic data and use of the library OPAC by the patrons.
    Copies of questionnaire distributed were 350 but 333 (85%) were retrieved and used for analysis of data. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS.

Results
This section is concerned with presentation of the results of the study. Table 1. shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. While the males were 101(30.3%), females respondent were 232(69.7%).
    Table 2 reveals frequency of use of the library by the respondents. A total of 274(82.3%) of the respondents use the library 3 to 5 times a month, while 56(16.8) respondent don't use the library at all.
    Table 3 shows clearly that most of the patrons of Bingham University were not aware of the existence of OPAC services in the library. It indicates that 133 (39.9%) of the respondents were not aware of the OPAC in the library. It also shows that 124(37.2%) of the respondents were aware of the OPAC to some little extent, while 75(22.5%) of the respondents were aware to some extent. This finding confirms the findings of Bamidele, et'al (2014); Ebiwolate (2010); Yusuf (2012) and Onuoha, et al. (2013) that most library users did not use OPAC while some were not aware of OPAC services in the library.
    Table 4 reveals that 253(76.0%) of the respondents use the OPAC to a very little extent. This has validated the lack of awareness and use of the OPAC. However, 62(18.6%) of the respondents have never used the OPAC at all.
    Table 5 shows that 176(52.9%) of the respondents were not aware of the OPAC while 89(26.7%) find slow connectivity of network as the major problem while using the OPAC; inadequate searching skills attracted 58(17.4%) followed closely as the major problem and limited access to computers 10(3.0%) came last as a problem.

Table 1: Gender of the respondents

Gender	Freq.	Percent
Male	101	30.3
Female	232	69.7
Total	333	100.0

Table 2: Frequency of use of the library

Freq. of lib. Use	Freq.	Percent
Daily	1	.3
2 to 4 times a week	2	.6
3 to 5 times a month	274	82.3
Not at all	56	16.8
Total	333	100.0

Table 3: Awareness of OPAC services in the library

Awareness	Freq.	Percent
To very great extent	1	.3
To some extent	75	22.5
To a very little extent	124	37.2
Not at all	133	39.9
Total	333	100

Table 4: Extent of use of the OPAC

Extent of use	Freq.	Percent
To a very great extent	6	1.8
To some extent	12	3.6
To a very little extent	253	76.0
Not at all	62	18.6
Total	333	100

Table 5: Problems faced while using the OPAC

Problems	Freq.	Percent
Slow connectivity	89	26.7
Limited access to computers	10	3.0
Inadequate searching skills	58	17.4
Not aware of the OPAC	176	52.9
Total	333	100.0

Discussion

According to Msagati (2016), the need for having an effective information retrieval mechanism in the library settings is of paramount to influence maximum use of library information resources in this age of information explosion. OPAC being one of the most efficient information retrieval systems plays critical role in facilitating easy retrieval of library information resources in the library.

Findings of this study revealed that most of the respondents - 257 (77.01%) - were not aware of the OPAC services rendered by the library. Thus only few of the respondents - 76 (22.8 %) - use the OPAC services to retrieve library materials. These findings conform to the previous study by Bamidele et al. (2014) who discovered that a majority of their respondents (71.4%) were not aware of OPAC, Also, Msagati (2016) in his study revealed that most of his respondents (75.22%) were not aware of OPAC as only few of the respondents (22.61%) used OPAC services to retrieve library materials. It is evident from the aforementioned findings that lack of awareness of the OPAC services by the library users militate against the use of this resource.

The finding also shows that 253 (76.0%) of the respondents use the OPAC services to a very little extent. This has validated the lack of use of the OPAC while 62 (18.6%) of the respondents have never used the OPAC at all.

Conclusion

OPAC is an indispensable information retrieval tool of library resources. It is the gateway to library resources which every library users must be aware of and use in order to meet their bibliographic information needs.

The study concludes that a good number of library users were not aware of Bingham University Library OPAC services while those who were aware do not use it. Although, the library operates a web-based OPAC where majority of the users access the library OPAC only within the library premises, patrons would rather scan through the shelves to retrieve books for their use than to use the OPAC to locate needed materials. This could be due to lack of basic information searching skills by a majority of staff and student users, frequent power outages, network failures, among other problems. Most library users of Bingham University have not been making effective and efficient use of the library OPAC despite the huge financial and human resources committed to its installation and sustenance. Based on the findings of the study, following are recommended:

1. Since it is very difficult for anyone to use what he/she is not aware of, there is a need for the library embark on awareness creation programmes on the existence of and how to use the library OPAC. This can be achieved through notice boards, the library's social media platforms or during new students' orientation programme..

2. The Library should organise training or seminar for users in all faculties on information searching skills.

3. More computer terminals for accessing OPAC within the library premises should be provided.

4. There is need for the library to also provide power inverters or solar power facilities in the library as backup for stable electricity. This will forestall the persistent power failure. Besides, the power backup will also be beneficial in enhancing library services especially for libraries that are fully automated.

5. Network terminals especially via Wi-Fi should be increased on campus to

allow room for more flexible use of the Intranet especially for those with PCs (Personal Computers).

6. Finally, it will be highly beneficial if the university's bandwidth is further increased to accommodate and enable the OPAC being hosted online. This will enable the users access the OPAC outside the university premises assist the university library to enjoy wider visibility.

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