Use of online public access catalogues and overseas students

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY
USE OF ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUES
AND OVERSEAS STUDENTS

BY

Mustaffa Darimi

A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Science degree of the Loughborough University of Technology

SEPTEMBER 1993

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Department of Information and Library Studies

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the the study were to investigate the usage online public access catalogues (OPACs) by the overseas students, to discover whether they need a special session to use OPACs, and to find out whether using the OPAC helps to improve their studies.

A questionnaire survey was carried out to discuss the use of online public access catalogues by overseas students in Loughborough University. The results of the survey indicated that there were two types of overseas students: first, those who had used OPACs, and second, those who had not used OPACs before coming to Britain. Some of the overseas students had attended the training session on how to use the OPACs run by the library staff during their pre-sessional course. The others learned to use the OPACs either through friends or by themselves.

The analysis and discussion of the survey related to postgraduate and research students only because of the poor response rate by undergraduate students during the Pilot Survey.

Recommendations to improve library services to cater for the needs of overseas students are included with the conclusion.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Inese Smith, for her help, advice, suggestions and criticism throughout this project. I am also grateful to Janet Stevenson of the English Language Support Unit for help with editing the manuscript.

I would also like to thank my employer, University of Malaya, for granting me one year study leave.

Finally, my appreciation to overseas students in Loughborough University who were involved in this study.
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CHAPTER 1

OVERSEAS STUDENTS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of developing countries is to grow in the fields of economics, politics and social culture. Their achievements depict the hard work by their populations. However development can not be achieved without the primary work of educating the nation.

The development of science and technology means that most of the developing countries are unable to cater for the needs of higher education locally. There are two problems: (i) the lack of specialised teachers, and (ii) the lack of learning facilities. In other words they are not fully equipped. Therefore, developing countries have to send their students (undergraduate or postgraduate) or qualified staff abroad to gain further education and training.

For the Commonwealth countries Britain is the mother country. It is highly developed in the fields of economics and education, and as a developed nation is seen as a first choice to send their students.

Students come to study in various universities,
polytechnics and further educational institutions. They come to further their studies and when completed will return to their home countries in order to apply the expertise that they have gained for the further development of their profession. They come from different countries of origin, race, religion, culture, education and work experience. They are known as overseas students.

The British Council has defined an overseas student as:

"A person over the age of 18, whose permanent home is overseas, who has come to Britain for full-time study, research and practical training of at least six months and who is expected to return to his own country at the conclusion of his study and training. In academic institutions such a person generally pays the increased fees for overseas students introduced by the British Government in 1967."[1]

1.2 LEVEL OF STUDY

Overseas students in Britain can be categorised into two groups:
1. from Commonwealth countries
2. from non-Commonwealth Countries

They attend courses in various universities and institutions throughout the country. Some of them have studied in Britain before at A-Level and first degree
courses. These students are familiar with the British educational system. Those who are now postgraduate will have used online public access catalogues (OPACs), services since almost all university libraries in Britain have computerised their library system. When they pursue their studies in other universities they should not have any problem in using the OPACs. However, those coming straight from British schools, like most home students may not have used OPACs before.

1.3 LIBRARY EXPERIENCE

Overseas students coming to study in Britain will have very varied background experience with OPACs. Most of them have completed their first degree in their home countries. Computerised library systems are now increasingly available in overseas academic libraries. This will have given them experience in the use of OPACs and they can use them confidently.

However, there are overseas students who have not used OPACs services in their countries before coming to Britain. This is due to their countries not having computerised their library systems yet.

Some countries have computerised the library systems. However, the location of the libraries can be far from their places of living and working. Also some university libraries have rules that the facilities can be used only
by their own students. Therefore, not all students have access to OPAC services.

The library experience of overseas students depends on what type of library and services are available. If they are used to traditional card catalogues in their countries, they will find that OPAC services are something new to them. They need somebody to teach them. As Wayman said "the concept of library services may be unknown; there may be no reference librarians who instruct in the use of the library."[2]

1.4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English language can be a problem for overseas students when attending courses at British universities and institutions if English is not their first language. This can be even more difficult for some students where English as their third language.

Commonwealth countries have an advantage because they were once British colonies. One of the significant results of the British colonisation is education. In some countries such as Malaysia, English language used to be the medium of instruction in schools; education received was based on British education so it became a common practice to refer to the 'mother country' for further education. Since the early 1970s this has changed. English is now taught only as
a foreign language and more students have difficulties when they come to Britain for higher education.

Most British universities have set up a support service to help overseas students with their English language. This may help them to cope with their studies so that during lectures and tutorials they can understand better. However, they need to use the library for background reading to give them confidence during discussion with the local students.

1.5 LIBRARY ORIENTATION

Overseas students with no experience in using OPACs may find them difficult to use. They may ask their friends to help, but their friends will only teach them to a level based on their own experiences. The overseas students need somebody to teach them how to use the OPAC and let them know what other facilities are available, e.g. book reservations. A librarian is a suitable person to handle this. According to Ball and Mahony, "It is our responsibility then to define the library setting for these students, to let them know what services are available, and to teach them how to use the basic research tools."[3]

The Pilkington Library at Loughborough University organises library orientation during pre-sessional courses, but many students do not attend these courses. During the term the library puts up a notice informing students that
library orientation can be arranged for students. However, overseas students are often not used to scanning notices for information and may miss such notices. Therefore they do not avail themselves of such orientation.

1.6 OVERSEAS STUDENTS IN LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

In 1992/1993 the total student population in Loughborough University of Technology was 8,875 students.[4] Of this there were 1,087 overseas students, which represents 12.24 percent of the total population. The number of overseas students in the University has increased compared to 1991/1992 session when there were 964[5] overseas students which represented 12.17 percent of the total population. However, the number of undergraduate overseas students remained at 339 students for both 1991/1992 and 1992/1993 sessions.

In 1992/1993 session the number of postgraduate students has increased, especially in the Departments of Engineering and the Department of Human and Environmental Studies.[6] It shows that the sender countries are more concerned with or are giving more attention to training at the postgraduate level especially in the areas of science and technology.
1.6.1 OVERSEAS POSTGRADUATE AND RESEARCH STUDENTS

There were 547 full-time postgraduate and research students in Loughborough University in 1992/93. The breakdown of these students by area can be seen in the Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Postgraduate and Research Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Middle East</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Others</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>547</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Asian students are the largest group among the overseas students in Loughborough University. This may be because of recommendation from friends who have attended previous courses. Continental European students enjoy the same fee status as the local students. This could be the reason why they are the second largest group behind Asian students.

Most of the overseas postgraduate and research students are attending courses in Engineering. In 1991/1992 the number of postgraduate and research students in Schools of Engineering were 121 and 99 respectively. This number have increase to 214 and 117 in 1992/1993. Observation in
Malaysia suggests engineers use small specialist libraries for their work. They may have become unused to the large academic libraries which are available to them for university courses in Britain. Also the technology will have advanced since they did their first degrees. For all these reasons they may need initial help with making full use of OPACs.
REFERENCES


6. Loughborough University of Technology, ref. 4.
CHAPTER 2

ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUES

The literature search to provide a background context for this project was conducted by using LISA CD-ROM. The search words used were online public access catalogues, OPAC use, library use, foreign students, overseas students and attitudes. The search was restricted to overseas students, academic libraries and OPAC use. It was found that most research had been done in the United States.

2.1 ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS IN GENERAL

Catalogue use has increasingly gained attention. Baker and Lancaster[1] cited two reasons why this has happened. First, librarians are becoming more concerned with the evaluation of library services in general; they want to know how well the catalogue performs, what its deficiencies are, and how effectiveness can be increased. Second, many libraries are replacing traditional card catalogues with online public access catalogues (OPAC).

The increase in awareness of the importance of OPACs in the field of education has resulted in the increasing demand for OPAC facilities. As it is now they are generally available in college and university libraries but it is thought that "their number will increase in other
type of libraries."[2]

Every development achieved is not always a smooth journey. It has to pass through various processes: experiment and constructive criticism. The same goes for OPACs. The online catalogue as it is now is the result of various achievements based on the opinions of librarians and the users as well.

2.2 OPACs IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

The Sterling C. Evans Library in the USA installed the NOTIS system (the online public access catalogue) in 1988.[3] The library administration decided to freeze the card catalogue which was no longer updated and corrected. Signs placed on top of the card catalogue asked users to refer to NOTIS for current information. However, librarians observed that users still chose the card catalogue to search for information.

Some of the reasons were thought to be that they were accustomed to the card catalogue, lacking in typing skills, and lacking in available NOTIS terminals. However, users gradually became more acclimatised to OPACs and fewer users used the card catalogue. Such observations show that users need a certain amount of time to become familiar with this new technology.
Before removing the author/title card catalogue all academic departments were notified in articles appearing in the campus and local newspapers. Finally the author/title card catalogue was removed in late December 1989. Additional terminals were placed in the area previously occupied by the card catalogue and other floors of the library.

These findings were similar to earlier surveys of students and faculty attitudes at Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore Colleges in 1984 towards proposed online public catalogue. The libraries were hesitant to implement OPACs because of lack of popularity of the online catalogue due to negative publicity regarding excessive downtime, queueing or perceived difficulty in use.

The University of Cape Town installed a new online catalogue called BORIS (BORrower Information Service) in the early 1990s. Due to a large networked situation the library was unable to teach all the users. Therefore help sheets, charts, and cards were provided alongside terminals as well as help function available on the terminal itself.

During editing the help functions on the online catalogue Meyer[5] felt that "scanning" or "browsing" was more appropriate than "searching". He approached a postgraduate online catalogue user to ask which word the user preferred. The user said that both would be appropriate.
Later he approached three black first-year students and asked them the same question. They all replied that they were not sure of the meaning of 'browse' or 'scan' but they knew what the search meant. Meyer decided to stick with the word 'search'. This is an example of one of the problems faced by the students where English is their second language.

2.3 LIBRARY USE IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

In 1981 the Council on Library Resources provided funds to enable five organisations (Joseph R. Matthews and Associates, the Library of Congress, the Online Computer Library Center, Inc., the University of California's Division of Library Automation, and the Research Library Group, Inc.) to do a concerted study on analysis of online catalogue user behaviour and requirements and examination of existing online public access systems. The survey involved twenty-nine libraries.[6]

Analysis of the data collected disclosed that the purpose for OPAC searches was related to the type of library. In academic libraries, for example, undergraduates frequently indicated their purpose of searching was related to their course. However, faculty and other staff often carried out searches related to their research or job.

The American Council of Learned Societies surveyed 5,385
members of eight humanities and social science societies in November 1985. The majority of the respondents ranked their library collection as good, very good, or excellent. More than 75 percent responded positively regarding the quality of library service and interlibrary loan service.

They were in favour of the online catalogue. The survey indicated that 38 percent agreed that it increased access to scholarly materials, 37 percent found that it made library use more enjoyable, 23 percent believed that it increased their research productivity and 17 percent agreed that it increased their teaching productivity.

The survey also indicated that most scholars do not use existing online catalogues. They reported not receiving adequate instruction in the use of the service. 45 to 47 percent of respondents claimed to have online catalogues available, but only 29 percent reported ever having used them.

A study carried out at William Paterson College Library in New Jersey, USA in 1985 to identify and quantify the causes of users' failure to identify and locate library materials. The data were collected through patron self-reports and librarian-observed subject and known-item searches.

The data revealed that 53 percent of the patrons
completed the self-reports conducted known-item searches and 47 percent conducted subject searches. The librarian-observed searches indicated that known-item and subject searches were slightly different. The survey also revealed that undergraduates carried out an equal number of known-item and subject searches. While graduate students conducted more known-item than subject searches. These findings supported an earlier survey by Palmer[9] and Tagliacozzo and Kochen[10] that the propensity for conducting known-item searches increases with educational level.

2.4 ONLINE CATALOGUE INSTRUCTION

Although OPAC instructions generally explain catalogue use in simple English, beginners need proper guidance from the librarian on how to use the OPAC effectively and what OPAC services are offered to them. The librarian can help the student to use the OPAC. This can be done by assisting users to locate items and teach them how to use the catalogue. The librarian can be an interpreter of the catalogue.[11]

2.4.1. The need for Instruction on OPAC use

There are a number of reasons why the user needs OPAC guidance from the librarian.
1. Many users and librarians claimed that OPACs are better than card catalogue. However, the OPAC is not the perfect online catalogue to suit everybody. What has happened now is the user has to adapt the capability of OPAC limitation.

2. Library users in academic libraries are from various Departments with different experience and educational background. The online catalogue is unable to accommodate the needs of these users.

3. Some of the users do not know what online services are available. Even the experienced user needs to know the services. This is because some OPAC services differ from others. It all depends on the software.

2.4.2 Research on Instruction of OPAC use

Due to the need for OPAC instruction to users the librarians have done some research on OPAC instruction.

In a study carried out by Baker[12] in the early 1980s on OPAC instruction at Northwestern University Library, there were two test groups. They were given two different types of instruction: the first group was given a brochure describing how to search the system; and the other group was given a fifteen minute instructional session. Another group called the control group received no instruction at
all. These groups were first-year undergraduates attending Northwestern University.

The primary objective of the test was to explore the effect of the instruction on user performance. All three groups completed questionnaires and worked searches at the terminals. The questionnaire revealed that:

a. Those who received instruction performed better on the written test

b. The group that had attended the instruction session performed better than the other test group

c. Surprisingly, the control group performed better than the other test group who had read the brochure

Alzofon and Van Pulis[13] also did some research in the early 1980s on instructional sessions on Ohio State University students. Their findings contradicted those of the Baker study. They found that systematic group instruction had no apparent effect on search success. This could be the result of user familiarity, continuous searching or may be because the instructions on the screen display were easy to follow.

OPAC instruction programmes will be more effective if the
librarians are well versed with the OPAC's features. Due to large number of students requiring assistance, the reference librarian are often unable to cope with specific OPAC needs. Usually librarians from other divisions within the library help reference librarians in OPAC instruction programmes. The nature of their work is different and often they may not have detailed experience with OPACs and, therefore, not all librarians are able to do this job efficiently.

According to Lawry[14] cataloguers are the best personnel to teach users mastery of the online catalogue because they produced the catalogue and had valuable knowledge of OPACs.

However, Sager[15] suggested that the library should hold a training session for library assistants from the existing staff. Arizona State University developed a staff training programme to prepare staff volunteers to serve as public access catalogue (PAC) assistants.

The two two-hour intensive training programmes were offered in the main library. The first two hour session was devoted to an overview and description of the online catalogue, an introduction to the keyboard and function keys, and a hands-on session. The second two-hour session was devoted to a review of the subject matter treated in the first session, identified the difficulties encountered
by the trainees and discussed alternate strategies.

Sager believed through his observation that the programme has been a valuable asset for the libraries, trainees, and trainers alike.

According to Miller[16] libraries have invested much money and prestige in their OPACs and OPAC users enjoy their searches. Some students are impressed with the online catalogue.

Those who have not used OPACs before may not type well. This could lead to misspelling during searching. Some users do not follow the instruction well. Miller pointed out that these characteristic are most neccessary for success when using online catalogues. He suggested that the librarian should teach the users the online catalogue successfully because "online catalogues are not really end-products, except perhaps to system librarians; they are merely a means to an end."[17] Miller stressed that online catalogue user education should serve as an integrated component of the search strategy taught by the librarians.

2.5 SPECIAL SESSIONS

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine attracts students from all over the world, especially from developing countries.[18] Before beginning the introductory sessions
on the use of the library, questionnaires were distributed to them. Students were informed that the questionnaire was an information gathering exercise. This information would help to identify the amount of library experience which the students had and which areas needed to be covered in the seminars.

The questionnaire has three sections. The first section regarding previous library use such as "Have you used a library for any previous course?" The second section contained questions on copyright and photocopying. The third section used more direct questions about library use such as "How would you find out whether the library has a book called 'Where there is no doctor' by David Werner.

The data indicated that 19 students had no previous library experience and 26 students had little library experience.

This gave the librarian concrete evidence that the library should hold an introductory session for these students.

2.6 USER ATTITUDES

Since OPACs were introduced in libraries, especially in academic libraries, several reactions have arisen from various users. They were familiar with card catalogues and now have turned to a new better system. Some of the reactions were:
1. Positive

In the Council on Library Resources (CLR) funded research on users' assessment on online catalogues mentioned earlier in this chapter, the results showed that 80 percent of the users of online catalogues reported satisfaction and 84 percent said this is what they were looking for.

A study of users in the Virginia Technology Library System (VTLS) in 1983 by Steinberg and Metz[19] found that most of the patrons were highly satisfied with the system.

Moore[20] did research on four libraries - Ohio State University, University of Toronto, Guelph University and Ryerson Polytechnical Institute - and found that OPAC's were welcomed overwhelming by most library users.

Most of the comments received on OPACs during the survey were on the ease of use. Even first time users also commented that they were fairly easy to use. The success of the OPAC depends on users' first experience. If the new system is more convenient they will accept the system. If the system is more difficult than the card catalogue they do not want to use it.

Markey[21] has summarised why library users accept online catalogues.
a. they more fun to use than the card catalogue;
b. searching with an online catalogue can save time;
c. online catalogues provide new informational services such as location of the items required.

2. Negative

In 1984, a study was done at Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore Colleges in Philadelphia, [22] regarding attitudes of students and faculties toward proposed online catalogues. Students were asked to choose between a card catalogue and a computerised catalogue. The result, 56 percent of Bryn Mawr and 49 percent from Swarthmore prefer the card catalogue. This is not a surprise because they were satisfied with the present system.

A survey regarding the success rate in locating information with the card catalogue was also done. 84 percent at Bryn Mawr and 88 percent at Swarthmore indicated success in catalogue use. When they were unable to locate the items the fault was not because of the catalogue itself but "merely reflected lack of materials in the catalogue" [23]

When checking the preference between card catalogues and online catalogues, several students preferred the online catalogue. However, they commented that they have to wait for terminals much longer than access to card catalogue
The attitude of students in Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore Colleges toward the online catalogue was negative. Some of the reasons were:

a. there was strong support for the traditional card catalogue among both students and faculty;
b. lack of popularity for the online catalogue was due to negative publicity regarding excessive downtime, queueing or perceived difficulty in use.

2.7 EASE OF OPAC USE

Research was done at the Polytechnic of Central London from early 1983 to May 1985 by Mitev.[24] She examined the concept of ease of use but does not define it clearly. According to Mitev, people use OPACs because there is nothing else, or because it is more efficient than the card/microfiche catalogue, or they have not seen any other catalogue. She pointed out that known item searching is all many library system can do and is not related to the user requirements.

Dixson Library, University of New England in New South Wales, Australia, computerised the library system using VTLS software in March 1984.[25] A questionnaire was designed to examine not only user reaction to VTLS system
but also attitudes toward computer technology.

Factor analysis was performed with the specification of two output factors. Factor 1, 17.9 percent of the variance showed characteristics of distrust of computer technology. Elements of this distrust were that "computers have their own minds, which the user is powerless to alter; computers are programmed to always know what is best; and computers make serious mistakes because they fail to take the human factor into account."[26]

Factor 2 explains 13.9 percent of the variance displayed positive acceptance of the technology such as "computers will bring about better life for the average person, computers will free people to do more interesting and imaginative work; and computers are so amazing that they stagger your imagination."[27] The users see the OPAC as easier to learn without assistance.

The study revealed that library users, at one level, have very high acceptance of computer technology but another level exhibit contrasting attitudes.

In the Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore Colleges survey, one student commented that the idea of computerisation of the library system is a good one but "making it the sole source of sources is the height of stupidity."[28] From the author's personal experience, when the computer broke down
at Pilkington Library it took several days to be restored. Although there were backup microfiche catalogues most of the users were not familiar with them and they were little used. Therefore, it is recommended that there should be sessions on both OPAC and Microfiche catalogue use, even if the main emphasis is on the OPACs.

2.8 OPAC TERMINALS

When implementing a computerised library system one of the main question is how many terminals the library should have. A card catalogue is divided into many file drawers and the users rarely have to wait for access the desired section. However, in an online environment the entire catalogue is accessible through terminals, each of which only one person can use at a time. Librarians must make decisions relating to the number of terminals that will be provided for library users, Overestimating the number of terminals will obviously increase costs; however, underestimating will increase queue time and at the same time decrease user satisfaction.

The OCLC's Office of Research proposed a study to develop and test a model to estimate the number of terminals required in an online public access catalogue. The research was conducted at Ohio State University Libraries during the winter quarter of 1981, a date chosen because that was the peak activity during the academic
Tolle, Sanders and Kaske[29] used queueing models for a given service rate and arrival rate to predict the number of terminals needed.

The study showed that users arrived at the catalogue at the rate of 600 per hour, which meant that the service time was 30 seconds. It was concluded that 90 percent of online catalogue users should have to wait no longer than one minute for a terminal. The terminal requirements were based on the traffic intensity (which is the ratio of arrival rate to service rate) and service rate.

According to Taylor[30] three independent variables play a significant role in determining the number of terminals required in the library. First, the rate of users arriving at the catalogue; second, an average user's use of the OPAC services; and third, the service policies of the library.

The arrival rate will depend on the number of users as well as the size of the institution. The service times were reported to be approximately between two to twelve minutes because they involve search time per item and session length per user. Taylor also stressed that the session length was the relevant factor in determining the minimum number of terminals needed.

2.9 USER SATISFACTION
A study at Northwestern University[31] users indicated they were satisfied with the system, what motivated them to express satisfaction was not clear. It is assumed that their satisfaction is based on the speed of the answers, they can see the status of the item and the excitement of a new technology replacing the traditional card catalogue.

The satisfaction of the OPAC user may be based on the experience of the user.

a. Novice user

For novice users the main things they want are books. As long as they can get the books or if they know the status of the items they will be satisfied.

b. Experienced users

Experienced users are very demanding. They will search not only for known items but also for items on other subjects related to their studies. They will be satisfied if the retrieved records meet their needs.

A study[32] of five different online public access catalogue systems was carried out at five Ontario university libraries (Lakehead University, Queen's University, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, the University of Toronto, and the University of Western Ontario) where
students were interviewed to determine their satisfaction with the computerised library catalogue.

After the users had just finished using the OPACs they were approached to participate in a survey of user satisfaction with the library computer catalogue. Data collection was coordinated by a librarian at each site. There were 2,916 undergraduates, postgraduates and faculty staff involved.

The first part of the questionnaire consist of fourteen questions regarding their academic background, experience with OPACs, main method of learning to use the OPAC, and level of computer literacy. The second part, consist of twenty-three questions, to assess their degree of satisfaction with OPAC.

The study concluded with six findings:

1. **OPAC users are "computer literate"

44 percent of the participants reported owning a computer. It was expected that computer ownership and computer experience will continue to increase. Therefore, in future there would be less concern about users being unfamiliar with computer terminals. Computer owners are generally less satisfied with OPACs than non-owners and the demand for more sophisticated OPAC features will probably increase.
demand for more sophisticated OPAC features will probably increase.

2. OPAC users are "OPAC experienced"

47.1 percent of participants reported that they had used some other OPACs. They were less satisfied with their local OPAC than those who had not used other OPACs.

3. Learning methods are similar

The study indicated that 42 percent of overall participants at all sites learned by "trial and error". 62.4 percent of the participants reported learning from the OPAC (both "trial and error" and "online help screens").

4. Learning is independent

Over two-thirds of the participants learned independently through brochures, printed aids, and online help screen. The study found that the satisfaction of learning was higher for those who learned from OPAC help screens than for those who learned from formal instruction.

5. Peer instruction is a factor in learning

8.7 percent of the participants who learned OPAC use from friends, those who learned from online help screens, and those who learned from formal instruction were satisfied with the system.
6. There is a need for more access

Most of the participants were dissatisfied with the number of terminals. Users indicated that they wanted terminals at their point of need such as in the stack and in reading areas.

2.10 SUMMARY

For the initial stage of implementing the OPAC in libraries the reaction will depend on the attitude of the library users. The most important thing is early experiences using OPACs. If the system has advantages over the traditional card catalogue such as simplicity, ease of use, user friendliness and good record display, there is no reason why OPACs cannot be implemented in the libraries.
REFERENCES


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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 LIMITATION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study concerns overseas students at Loughborough University and their use of the online public access catalogues (OPACs). The objectives of the study were:
1. to investigate usage of OPACs by overseas students;
2. to discover whether overseas students find OPACs easy to use or whether they need special training;
3. to find out whether overseas students can improve their studies by using OPACs.

3.2 LOCATION

The questionnaire survey of this study took place at Loughborough University of Technology. The questionnaire was sent to overseas students in two stages. The first stage, a pilot survey, was conducted at the Department of Information and Library Studies. There were three types of students involved in this survey: undergraduate, postgraduate and postgraduate research. During the second stage of the survey, the questionnaires were sent only to fulltime postgraduate and postgraduate research students in various Departments. The main reason that the author did not send the questionnaire to parttime students was
because most of the time they were seldom in the campus, and if the author were to send the questionnaire to them they probably would may reply.

3.3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

There are three common forms of evaluation of use of OPACs:
1. Survey
2. Comparative studies
3. Transaction of log analysis

The author chose a survey as the most practical method in this study because overseas students in Loughborough University of Technology are scattered throughout the campus.

3.3.1 EXPLANATION OF METHODOLOGY

Simplicity was one of the main reasons why the author adopted the questionnaire survey method. Bookstein said:

"Probably most important is its simplicity and naturalness: we are used to asking questions of others when we desire information, and the questionnaire is a straightforward formalisation of this process."[1]

Questionnaires sent to students with different educational backgrounds and work experience no doubt have some
weaknesses. For example, different respondents may interpret in a different way the wording of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire in this study was divided into two sections. Section A contained personal information of respondents. Section B, contained questions regarding experience with use of OPACs. Although the questionnaire was designed for simplicity by asking the respondents to tick relevant answers, the limited choice of answers did also permit them to express their point of view. There were two strategies used:

First, when respondents were limited to a choice of answers by ticking either Yes or No, they were also asked Why, and thus could express their opinions on a particular question. In the words of Parmeggiani:

"Questionnaires give quantitative answers to people's subjective judgements. This is one under-rated source of information; subjective judgements, in many instances, are more sensitive, more accurate and faster than equivalent objective measures."[2]

Second, the option of ticking Other, where appropriate, followed by Please specify gave the respondents a change to indicate answers that had not been suggested by the author.
3.3.2 SAMPLE POPULATION

At first the author aimed to take a sample of 25 percent of overseas students in each school. This could not be done because of the great variation in number of overseas students. For example, the programme Technology for Development has 23 overseas students, but others, such as Urban Engineering, have only 2 overseas students.[3]

To avoid these complications the author decided to distribute the questionnaires to 25 percent of total overseas students in Loughborough University regardless the department. A total of 244 questionnaires was distributed, of which 80 were returned, giving a response rate was 32.78 percent.

3.3.3 PILOT SURVEY

To test the questionnaire, a pilot survey of 44 questionnaires was sent out on 12 June 1993 to all overseas undergraduate, postgraduate and research students in the Department of Information and Library Studies. Responses were requested by 21 June 1993.

3.3.4 MAIN SURVEY

As there were no alterations required to the questionnaire as the result of the Pilot Survey, the Main
Survey questionnaires were sent out on 28 June 1993 with a request to return them by 10 July 1993. For the Main Survey 200 questionnaires were sent out, representing 20 percent of total overseas postgraduate and research students in Loughborough University of Technology.

3.3.5 DISTRIBUTION

As the names of overseas student were readily available from the Department of Information and Library Studies, the Pilot questionnaires were distributed through pigeon-holes in the Department. For the Main Survey the author faced the difficulty in obtaining the names of the overseas students. At first it was intended to send a number of copies of the questionnaire to various Departments without names of specific overseas students hoping that the departments concerned would distribute them. However, it was thought that personally addressed questionnaires would result in a higher response rate, so the author's supervisor requested a list of overseas student names from the University Administration. In order to preserve confidentiality, two list were received: one contained students names, codes, courses and country of origin; the second was identical, except for not revealing student names. From the second list, the author selected at random a spread of full-time postgraduate students and the author's supervisor supplied their names for distribution to different departments.
Undergraduate students were not selected because the distribution took place at the end of the term. During that time undergraduates were taking their examinations, which was expected to result in a very low return or no return at all.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) has two sections:

1. Personal Information

This section asks for the respondents' educational background. Usually students who have studied in developed countries such as Britain, USA, Canada and Australia may have had experience in the use of OPACs. Among those who have not used OPACs in their home countries were students who had used OPAC services during their second, third, or fourth year in Loughborough University.

2. Use of OPAC

This section is to find out the background of overseas students' experience in OPACs use.

In the analysis and discussion which follow some pertinent comments by respondents have been included. A further selection of comments is given in Appendix 2.
4.2 RESPONDENTS

Of the 244 questionnaires distributed, 80 were returned (Table 4.1), giving a response rate of 32.78 percent. The returns were disappointingly low, but as Bookstein has said "the most obvious impediment is the small return rate usually associated with questionnaires - 20 to 60 percent seem most common."[1]

The breakdown of the respondents by origin was:

Table 4.1 Respondents by Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Asian response rate was the highest compared to the other groups. However, even though Asian students are the
largest group of overseas students in Loughborough University, it does not necessarily mean that they were given more questionnaires than the other groups. The respondents were picked at random according to anonymous student list, not by continent.

4.2.1 Academic Status

It was found that there were two types of respondent involved at each level of academic status:

1. respondents who had used OPACs before coming to Britain
2. respondents who had never used OPACs before coming to Britain.

Table 4.2 Academic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Have used OPAC</th>
<th>Never used OPAC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Research</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Undergraduates

Table 4.2 illustrates that two undergraduate students had never used OPACs in their countries. Checking on their
personal information it was found out that these two students were in their final year at Loughborough University. They had had experience in using OPACs in Pilkington Library during their studies in their first year and second years. One of them found no difficulty in using OPACs and locating the materials. The other student found it difficult because of his language difficulty and lack of experience. These characteristics have no doubt will have affected his searching capabilities. With regard to language difficulty, a postgraduate student from Ireland gave her view that 'English is my first language but I imagine language might present a problem for someone whose English is not perfect.' However, this does not hinder them to use OPACs.

The other three students, one from the first year and two from the second year, had used an OPAC in their home countries. They found no difficulty in using OPACs. They claimed that their search was slow at first because of the different display format of the OPAC in the Pilkington Library as compared to the one that they had used in their home countries.

2. Postgraduates

Most of the postgraduate students did not mention their year of studies. The author assumed that they were in one year
course. 29 postgraduate students never used OPACs. This data may help the library to organise such a programme for overseas students.

3. Research Students

Among the 24 research students who had never used OPACs in their country, 11 of them are in the first year. Only one of them gained his first degree in USA and, surprisingly, he claimed that he had never used an OPAC. OPACs are widely used in American universities, but the respondent did not mention the year of his studies or the university that he had attended. Another respondent from USA doing a Master's programme at Loughborough University claimed that during her first degree in USA the library had not computerised yet. These two respondents support the contention that not all academic libraries in USA have computerised their library system.

4.2.2 Limitation of the Study

Because only five undergraduates responded to the questionnaire, it was impossible for the author to assess them as representing other overseas undergraduates. Furthermore, these students were all from the Department of Information of Library Studies. Therefore, it was decided that all further
analysis and discussion would be on postgraduate students and research students.

4.3 QUALIFICATIONS

It was found that the great majority of respondents (Table 4.3) completed their first degree in their home countries.

Table 4.3 Respondents Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the 61 students graduated from overseas, there were 4 respondents who graduated from universities in the USA, Canada, Australia and the Soviet Union. These students had been exposed to educational systems other than their home country and have use OPACs services.

4.4 OPAC SERVICES IN HOME COUNTRIES
Question no. 6 aimed to find out the availability of OPAC services in overseas students' home countries.

Table 4.4  OPAC Services in Home Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Library</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public and Univ.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. and other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ., Public and other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses (Table 4.4) indicated that OPACs were mostly available in academic libraries. This finding similar to Hildreth[2] statement that OPACs are generally available in college and university libraries.

Twenty-eight respondents said that they did not know whether
OPACs services are available in their countries. The reasons were:

1. Since they left the country they did not know the progress of the library
2. They heard that some university libraries were considering computerising their library systems.

Students from Kenya, Malawi and Zambia claimed that their countries did not have the OPACs services yet.

4.5 OPAC USE IN HOME COUNTRIES

Table 4.5 OPAC Use in Home Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPAC Use</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 70 percent respondents (Table 4.5) had not used the OPAC services before coming to the UK. This result was not surprising because use depended on availability of OPACs while in education and on the nature of respondents' work after qualifying. Not all overseas students work in an academic
environment. Some of them work in Government Departments or in the private sector and in many cases do not have a library. In the Public Works Department in Malaysia for example, most of the engineers are doing outdoor jobs. They do not have library and some they do not need it.

4.6 OPAC USE IN PILKINGTON LIBRARY

Regardless of availability in home countries, overseas students do have access to OPACs in the UK, both locally at the Pilkington Library and through JANET to other UK libraries and also ones in the United States and elsewhere.

Table 4.6 OPAC Use in Pilkington Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPAC Use in Library</th>
<th>No. of Respondent</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>97.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only two respondents (Table 4.6) claimed that they had not used the OPAC services in the Pilkington Library. Only one student from Germany stated the reason why he did not use the OPAC services. He had finished his research in Loughborough University, therefore he did not need to use the OPAC. However from his answers to questions nos. 9, 10 and 11 this
respondent had previously done author search, title search, subject search and keyword search. He rated the ease of OPAC use as no. 2 which was easy to use. His most frequent search was by keyword. Therefore this respondent had used the OPAC services. Perhaps this particular respondent misunderstood question no.8 which he assumed meant that he no longer needed to use the OPAC services after completing his research.

4.7 FREQUENCY OF OPAC USE

Frequency of use can vary considerably, depending on the user's needs, particularly as related to the time in the academic year or the stage of research that has been reached.

Table 4.7 Frequency of OPAC Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times per week</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times per month</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1-2 per month</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 4.7, that very few students used the OPAC every day. This could because the survey took place
almost at the end of the third term. During that time some of the students were preparing for their examinations, while research students most probably they have their materials. These factors could be the reasons why less users used OPAC. From the author's experience and observation, waiting and queueing at the terminals is heaviest during the first five week of the first term of the academic year.

4.8 SEARCHING

4.8.1 Most Popular Search

Question no. 9 asked respondents about their types of search.

Table 4.8 Most Popular Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Search</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>86.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>85.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>78.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Title</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>77.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification no.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Catalogues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the survey it was noted that the author search and title search were the most popular (Table 4.8). Findings suggest that known items were gradually sought by the respondents. This is due to respondents going to the library usually with a reading list provided by the lecturers which included complete bibliographic detail. The result was similar to Moore's study where known item searches exceeded subject searching. [3]

Reasons why known-item searching were normally done:

1. **Author Search**

   The author search is easy because, with the surname, the OPAC will indicate all items by particular surname and the initials. Therefore the respondents have no difficulty in searching for particular works.

   A direct hit will only be successful if:

   a. the surname was the only one in the database,
   b. the surname and initials match with the database

2. **Title Search**

   Since the respondents have a reading list this will usually
be successful in retrieving the information. This is due to perfect matches with the database. If there were two similar titles, additional information can be given such as year of publication. The arrangement of the listing will be according to the year of publication. The latest publication will be listed first followed by the earlier publications.

4.8.2 Frequency of Search

Question no.9 not only gives us the most popular search but also gives us the frequency with which it was done.

The survey findings suggested that respondents searched not only for a particular book by author search or title search but also used other type of searches as well. This normally happens when searching is made without a reading list but on a particular subject. Respondents may search under subject search, keyword search, title search or by classification number.
Table 4.9 Frequency of Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Searches Done</th>
<th>No. of Respondent</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows the frequent number of search types used. Combination of five searches was the most used. Equivalent to 40 percent of the respondents.

4.9 THE MOST FREQUENT SEARCH

The respondents were asked which were their most frequent searches and to state their reasons.
Table 4.10 The Most Frequent Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Search</th>
<th>No.of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/Title (A/T)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification no.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Subject</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author,Title and Subject</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author,Title,A/T and Keyword</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author and Title</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword and Subject</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and A/T</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author expected respondents to indicate only one particular search, but a number of the respondents gave more than one search, especially in author search and title search, and combinations of these searches. Most of their reasons were:
1. This type of search was easy because they had a reading list from which they could identify known items.
2. They were used to author and title card catalogues in their home country and were thus familiar with this approach to searching.
3. They got straight to what they wanted

In keyword search and subject search, respondents they claimed that:

1. These types of search were easy.
2. They did not need to know the author and title of the books.
3. They could look at other relevant materials related to their research.

The results of question no.10 (Which search have you done most often?) contradicted the results of the most popular search. Author search and title search were the most popular search. In this question keyword search was found to be the most frequently used.

From the survey 26 respondents used a combination of keyword searching and other searches as their most frequent search, followed by 24 respondents who selected title search as their most frequent search.
4.10 THE RATING OF OPAC USE

The respondents were asked to give their views on whether the OPAC was easy to use.

Table 4.11 The Rating of OPAC Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Used OPAC</th>
<th>Never Used OPAC</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Easy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.Difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this question, a scale of 1 to 5 was given so that the respondents could answer by circling the appropriate number.

From the responses to the survey (Table 4.11), it can be seen that the great majority of users (60 - 80 percent) found the OPAC easy to use. Even those who had never used an OPAC before gave ease of use a high rating.

4.11 OPAC USE

Question nos. 12 and 13 were interrelated. Those who felt
that the OPAC is difficult to use were to answer question no. 12 and those who felt the OPAC is easy to use were to answer question no. 13.

Table 4.12 OPAC Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPAC Use</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As revealed in Table 4.12, 60 respondents found that the OPAC is easy to use. More than half of the respondents agreed that the OPAC instruction were very clear. Those who found it difficult to use indicated that it was due to never using an OPAC before and finding the instructions unclear. Only two respondents claimed that they had language difficulties.

4.12 PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES OF OVERSEAS STUDENTS

As the survey was intended to find out whether overseas students had any special difficulties in using the OPAC, a question was included to see if the students themselves felt disadvantaged simply by virtue of being overseas students.
However, this question seem to be a very sensitive to a student from Denmark. He commented that he does not has any difficulties but being an overseas student "... does not necessarily mean that you are stupid."

Table 4.13 Difficulty in Using OPAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>85.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the great majority of respondents (Table 4.13) indicated that they had no difficulty in using the OPAC, some of the responses suggested that even experience respondents found some difficulty in using the OPAC in Pilkington Library. Their reasons were:

1. The structure of the programme was not clear.
2. The keyword search takes times.

This indicates that they have used other OPAC systems where retrieval was possibly more powerful and easy to use.

An inexperienced user found the OPAC difficult to use because:
1. Not familiar with OPAC.
2. Language difficulty.
3. Need more time and practice to get used to it.

The responses to this question did not provide any conclusive evidence that overseas students as a whole perceive that they have particular difficulties in using the OPAC. The only clearly identifiable problem might be that of difficulty with English language.

4.13 SUCCESS RATE IN LOCATING ITEM

Question no.15 was designed to give respondents views on how OPACs can help them in locating sought items.

Table 4.14  Success Rate in Locating Item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Rate</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very successful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The answers were based on a scale from 1 to 5. More than 70 percent of respondents (Table 4.14) have rated no. 1 and 2 which mean they were successful.

One respondent commented that the word 'success' in locating an item was not specific enough. It can be either success in finding the location of the book or actually getting the book. What the author meant was getting the book. This is because an OPAC will assist respondents to find a book so that they can borrow. There is an instruction on the Pilkington Library OPAC as how to check the status of a book.

This confusion is similar to one Bookstein identified as a 'response fault'.[4] This occurs due to three factors:

1. The question is read and interpreted.
2. The respondent formulates an answer.
3. The respondent translates the answer into the categories provided by the questionnaire.

4.14 OTHER OPAC FACILITIES

Questions no.16, 17 and 18 were interrelated. They investigated respondents, familiarity with other OPAC facilities and how to use them. Table 4.15 shows the breakdown according to respondents' experience.
Table 4.15  Other OPAC Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPAC Facilities</th>
<th>Used OPAC</th>
<th>Never used</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knew and had used it</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew but had not used it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know it</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question no. 16 checked whether the respondents know what an OPAC can do beside searching as stated in question no. 9. Question no. 17 tested respondents' knowledge by asking them to describe the facilities available. Question no.18 checked how the other OPAC services had been used by the respondents by asking them to indicate which of the facilities had been used. It was noted that most of the answers were similar to answers for question no.17. Responses on use included: reservation, to check respondent's own loan record, news, and book ordering.

The survey revealed that other OPAC facilities could be said to be under-used because only 37 respondents knew about them and had use them.
4.15 SATISFACTION OF OPAC SERVICES

The survey also attempted to identify overseas student satisfaction with OPAC services and elicit possible reasons for dissatisfaction.

Table 4.16 Satisfaction of OPAC Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied?</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the respondents who had never used OPACs before agreed that they were satisfied because the OPAC was fun to use, saved time, and they were satisfied with the speed and the accuracy of the information given by the OPAC. They felt that this new technology makes catalogues simpler to use, even though they could be difficult for the first time. As the respondents get used to it they will improve the speed of searching. The experienced users were satisfied with OPAC services because the OPAC was very easy to use and could retrieve the information very quickly.

For inexperienced respondents, the reasons for not being
satisfied with the OPAC services were because there had not been enough user education and they felt that there was a shortage of terminals. Experienced respondents were not satisfied with the OPAC services because they felt that the response rate was very slow, the keyword search should be improved, there was a shortage of terminals and articles from serials were not included. A German student commented that in Germany articles from serials were included in the OPAC. In other words, this respondent felt that the OPAC should also act as an indexing/abstracting service for serials literature. As Culkin noted "The research requirements of a variety of disciplines, especially in the sciences and social sciences, are based heavily in journal sources."[5]

4.16 THE AVAILABILITY OF OPAC TERMINALS IN PILKINGTON LIBRARY

Respondents were asked whether they satisfied with the availability of the terminals in the Pilkington Library.

Table 4.17 OPAC Terminals in Pilkington Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The availability of the OPAC terminals was also an important factor in respondent satisfaction on OPAC use. Most of the respondents were not satisfied with the number of OPAC terminals in Pilkington Library. The OPAC terminals in Pilkington Library are very heavily used during the first term. This comment is based on author's experience and observation. The author as well as other users were queueing and had to wait in order to get access to the terminals.

Queueing at the terminals was due to two factors:

1. Users checking for particular items spent a lot of time referring to their reading lists.
2. Users who had never used an OPAC before took time to get used to it and had to read the instruction carefully before going to the next step.

4.17 OPAC TRAINING

Respondents were asked whether they have received any training in using OPACs in the Pilkington Library.
Table 4.18  OPAC Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPAC Training</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>65.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the respondents had not received any training. The OPAC instructions were in simple English and could be easily understood. However, some of the respondents had difficulty in using it for the first time and also had language difficulties.

A study by Cherry and Clinton [6] at five Ontario universities on user satisfaction with the computerised library catalogue revealed that over two-thirds of the respondents learn to use the OPAC independently.

4.17.1  Respondents Trained and Success in Locating Items

Twenty-five respondents indicated that they had received training during pre-sessional course or from the library staff. The effectiveness of the library training can be determined by comparing the result of the success rate of locating item which is in Table 4.14.
Eighteen respondents (Table 4.19) selected rating no.1 and 2. This figure is among the 52 respondents who selected rating no. 1 and 2 in the success rate of locating item which was indicated in the Table 4.14. Another seven respondents were among the eighteen respondents who have selected no. 3.

The findings suggest that the respondents who have received training did not get any outstanding result from the success in locating of items. Even respondents who have never received training found it easy to use the OPAC and were successful in locating the items. These findings are similar to Alzofon and Van Pulis[7] in a study on Ohio State University students, whereby the systematic group instruction had no effect on search success.
Question no. 22 asked the respondents whether they needed a special session on OPAC use. If the answer is Yes the respondent were asked what sort of session would they like.

Table 4.20 Special Session for Overseas Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Session</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>65.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forty-nine respondents (Table 4.20) agreed that the library staff should hold a special session for overseas students. This included 24 respondents who had received training. Most of them preferred a short introductory course consisting of smaller groups so that the participants could pay attention and do simple practical searching during the session. This training would benefit those who were not familiar with the OPAC. Indirectly, the library staff are building up their relationship with the users.

A study by Blazek at Florida State University found that "The absence or lack of instruction has been found to be the
root cause of most problems."[8] According to Epp and Segal the end user training is becoming a more part of library services. They suggested that "an academic library that doesn't have such a program should aim at establishing one."[9]

4.19 OPAC AND IMPROVE OF STUDIES

Question no.23 asked whether using the OPAC could help students with their studies. If the answer was Yes, it was followed by a question asking respondents how OPACs could do so.

Table 4.21 Whether OPAC Helps To Improve Their Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improve Your Studies</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>82.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of respondents (Table 4.21) agreed that the OPAC did improve their studies. However, how the OPAC helped their studies was not clear. Most of them answered that the OPAC saved time and it was easy to locate materials related to...
their studies. Perhaps the time saved in locating the item can be devoted to read more books and gain more knowledge. There is no concrete evidence that using the OPAC directly helps their studies.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The function of online public access catalogue (OPAC) in replacing a traditional card catalogue has served its purpose. The use of an OPAC in a library may be something new to overseas students, especially those from countries which have not computerised their library systems.

This study aimed to: (1) investigate the usage of OPACs by overseas students; (2) discover whether overseas students find OPACs easy to use or whether they need special training; (3) whether overseas students can improve their studies by using OPACs.

5.1.2 Ease of OPAC Use

Virtually all of the respondents to the survey questionnaire had use the Pilkington Library OPAC and most of them felt that it was easy to use, with only some of them experiencing difficulties. Those having problems felt that this was due to never having used an OPAC before and thus finding the instructions unclear. Even though the instructions are in simple English, language difficulty was one of the reasons given for problems of use.
Slightly over half of the respondents had not used an OPAC before coming to study in Britain. However, some of them had received OPAC training during the pre-sessional course, through library staff and friends, while many had not received any training.

Beginners, especially from overseas, need more time than experienced users to get used to the OPAC. Misspelling, a common problem with OPAC use, may be the result of lack of typing ability and lack of familiarity with the keyboard. Both of these difficulties may hinder them from learning to use the OPAC effectively.

For those overseas students who have come to Britain for the first time, it may be difficult to adapt to the new environment. Those working in government departments or other organisations having a small specialised library are not used to a large library housing materials variety of disciplines. It is felt that these overseas student need a different type of library orientation for the beginners from the library staff.

Responses to the survey suggest that OPACs services are available mostly in overseas university libraries. Therefore, respondents a background of using such a library no difficulty in using the OPAC at Loughborough University. However, studying abroad in developed countries such as the United State did not necessarily result in use OPAC
services. It was found that one overseas student gained his first degree in United State did not have the experience of using an OPAC. This is supported by a student from America, currently studying in Loughborough University, who claimed that she had never used an OPAC during her study in her home country.

Since the survey took place at the end of the academic year, most of the respondents have become familiar with the OPAC system. Besides some learning through formal training, most of the respondents learned through experience and through friends. However, survey result indicated that the success rate of locating items by those who have attended the formal training and those who have not was not significant. The success of locating the item because the respondents have the reading list. The author and title of the books are clearly written. Respondents who search the OPAC with well-documented reading lists had little difficulty in finding the items sought. This is supported by Hufford who noted that "The completeness and the accuracy of the information users brought to the catalog were important factors contributing to the success of a search."[1] However, beginners need to know further steps in finding the location or the status of the desired item. The need to read can cause delays in using the OPAC, as can finding other titles to be checked. The length of time spend searching will effect the waiting and queueing at the terminals. This can be seen during the first term of an
academic year. Although most of the respondents could locate items without any difficulty, the use of OPAC services other than searching were still under-used. Those who learned through experience or from friend may not have been aware of the facilities available. This is where special library orientation may play a major role to answer the needs of overseas students.

A study by Cherry and Clinton[2] on OPACs at five Ontario universities revealed that two-third of the patron learn OPACs independently. This is not a surprise because, according to the study, 44 percent of the patrons had their own computers. In some developing countries, Malaysia as an example, the prices of the computers have been reduced considerably because the government has abolished all taxes on them. The Government has realised the need of computers for research, business, administration and educational purposes and, hence, students from such countries are coming to Britain with more experience of information technology thanm in previous years. Such a situation will also affect their attitude to use of OPACs in libraries.

5.1.2 Group Training

The library is obviously a place where students and others search for relevant materials relating to their subject. What the overseas students need is proper guidance
to use library services efficiently.

The author asked the staff at the Pilkington Library Information Desk regarding providing of library orientation for new overseas students. It appeared that there were not sufficient staff to handle such special orientation sessions, but they also indicated that individual help was available if requested. Such help is advertised through a poster at the main notice board. The author himself did not realise the existence of such a poster because of the large amount of materials on the notice board during the first term. The Pilkington Library does have printed leaflets for the self-guided library tour.

The library orientation would help students to use the library services, especially OPAC services, efficiently. This could avoid embarrassment for some overseas students, who may ask a simple question such as 'where is the card catalogue?', not realising that such a catalogue does not exist because the library has an OPAC.

5.1.3 OPAC Terminals in Pilkington Library

A considerable number of respondents were not satisfied with the number of terminals available in the Pilkington Library. Waiting and queuing at the terminals can often be seen, especially during the first term. Some respondents suggested that the library should increase the number of
terminals in the library.

Those students who have not used OPACs before coming to Loughborough University may take longer to carry out their searching. This may lead to a feeling of embarrassment and uneasiness during searching while other users are waiting in the queue.

5.1.4 Improve Studies

This survey did not provide any concrete evidence that OPACs can improve respondents' studies, despite what respondents claimed. The reason given by the respondents was that using the OPAC reduced the time of searching of the particular items. Therefore, they have more time to read rather than searching through a manual catalogue. Furthermore, the OPAC presents the opportunity for searching for further information relating to a particular subject field and offers a range of items from which to select alternatives if a particular sought item is not available.

Perusal of the literature reveals that no research has been done on how OPACs help to improve students' studies. However, in contrast, a study by Epp[3] revealed that scholars agreed that using the OPAC had increased their teaching productivity.
5.2 Recommendation

5.2.1 Waiting and Queueing

Waiting and queueing have been identified as problems of OPAC use and several solution can be proposed to alleviate this problem. It has been suggested in the previous section that the number of terminals may be increased. In order to increase the number of terminals in the library, the librarian must consider student population in the university. The number of students is increasing, as is the use of the OPAC, therefore the librarian should give consideration to increasing the number of terminals in the library. This would reduce the number of students queueing at the terminals.

It would also be helpful if the users brought their reading list with further information besides author and title of the book, for example, classification number. If the classification numbers were available, users could go direct to the shelves to get the books. If the particular books were not on the shelves, they could use the OPAC to check the status and make a reservation or find an alternative title. This may involve faculty staff in various Departments but the library should inform them of the usefulness of this method and the problems faced by the users.
It is also suggested that the library and individual departments should encourage students to access the OPAC through the campus network from terminals available in department. This may reduce the number of OPAC users in Pilkington Library.

5.2.2 Library Orientation

The library is the place where students must search to find relevant study and research materials relating to their subject. What the overseas students need is proper guidance to use the OPAC efficiently. Library orientation is particular importance to overseas students.

It has already been noted that library staff are unable to hold a special sessions for all new students due to short of staff. However, the library could inform Departments that new students who are interested in attending a special library orientation should register at the library information desk. With this record the library is able to arrange the programme.

The library staff will teach them how to use the OPAC, and inform them what services are available. This will save the library staff time to teach those targetted users who really need assistance rather than to teach for those who simply want to joint the group.
Learning through experience will help users carried out their own searches. Therefore, it is advisable to teach users in a small group so that everybody gets individual attention and hands-on experience. The librarian should guide the user through the search. This would give users confidence during search activities and alleviate the fear of computers often felt by overseas students who are not familiar with library automation.

One good example of library orientation was conducted at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.[4] Questionnaires were sent to all overseas students in order to identify the amount of their library experience. This method can be applied only if there is a small number of students. However, the idea of sending a questionnaire to overseas students to find out their library experience and needs is an excellent one.
REFERENCE


APPENDIX 1 : THE QUESTIONNAIRE

OPAC SURVEY

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Which department are you in?

2. What is your academic status?
   - Undergraduate
   - Postgraduate
   - Postgraduate research

3. Country of origin?

4. For postgraduates, where did you do your first degree?
   - U.K.
   - Overseas
   Please specify country

5. For undergraduates, where did you do your A Level (or equivalent)
   - U.K.
   - Overseas
   Please specify country

B. USE OF OPAC

6. Does your country have OPAC services in (you may tick more than one)
   - University libraries
   - Public libraries
   - Other
   Please specify
   Don't know

7. Have you used an OPAC in your country?
   - Yes
   - No

   If Yes, in what type(s) of library?
   Please specify
8. Do you use the OPAC in the Pilkington Library?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   If Yes, how frequently do you use the OPAC?
   Every day [ ]
   2 - 3 times per week [ ]
   once a week [ ]
   1 - 2 times per month [ ]
   Less than 1 - 2 times per month [ ]

   If No, why not
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

9. Which type(s) of search(es) have you done? (you may tick more than one)
   Author search [ ]
   Title search [ ]
   Subject search [ ]
   Author/title search [ ]
   Key-word search [ ]
   Classification number [ ]
   Other [ ]
   Please specify _______________________

10. Which search have you done most often?
    ______________________________________________________
    Please say why
    ______________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________

11. How easy or difficult do you find the OPAC to use? (Please circle on the scale below)
    Very easy 1 2 3 4 5 Very difficult

12. If you find the OPAC difficult to use, please say why (you may tick more than one)
    Never used an OPAC before [ ]
    Language difficulty [ ]
    The instructions are not clear [ ]
    Other [ ]
    Please specify _______________________

13. If you find it easy to use, please say why
    Used OPAC before [ ]
    The instructions are very clear [ ]
    Other [ ]
    Please specify _______________________

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14. Being an **overseas** student, do you feel that you have any particular difficulties in using the OPAC?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   *If Yes, please comment*

   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

15. How would you rate your success in locating items through the OPAC (Please circle on the scale below)
   Very successful Not successful
   1  2  3  4  5

16. Do you know that the OPAC provides other facilities besides the types of search as stated in question no. 9?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

17. *If Yes, please specify which ones you know*

   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

18. Have you used any of these facilities?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   *If yes, which ones?*

   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

19. Are you satisfied with OPAC services in Pilkington Library?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   Why?

   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

20. Do you think that there are enough OPAC terminals in the Pilkington Library?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]
21. Did you receive any training in using the Pilkington Library OPAC?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   If Yes, what sort of training and from whom?

22. Do you think that the Pilkington library should hold special sessions on OPAC use for overseas students?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

   If Yes, what sort of sessions would you like?

23. Do you think that using the OPAC helps you to improve your studies?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]

24. If Yes, please say how

25. Any other comments

26. Would you be willing to respond to a personal in-depth interview? If so, please give your name

   __________________________

Thank you for your cooperation.

M. Darimi,
DILS.
A: ON OPAC USE

1. I save time in searching for the right materials. It also provide us many options in doing research, e.g. subject, keyword.
2. Cuts the time spent locating books.
3. It saves a lot of time, easy to get many resources.
4. It is faster to locate materials and can help one gain confidence in the computer keyboard.
5. Reduce the time spent in looking for particular items.
6. OPAC only helps in quick searching, which saves time.
7. Manual searches are slow, tedious, and tend to be hit-and-miss, OPAC is a shortcut
8. I work in the library on weekend and I have observed that a high proportion of users, both local and overseas; do not know how to use OPAC to their advantage.
9. It speeds the process of locating the necessary information
10. The correct use of the OPAC avoid to spend a large amount of time in the library.
11. Using the OPAC enables the user to get an overview of what books are held in the library whereas with the manual system you might miss some interesting materials.
12. One is exposed to other literature that you don't have in mind before and one get more ideas by using them.
13. I get the books that I want and I can quickly find
other materials which might be useful without having to go up and down to all the three levels.

14. It gives me a wider range of information that I may not know before I used the OPAC.
B: ON LIBRARY SERVICES

1. Additional OPAC terminals for the growing number of users
2. I do not understand the necessity of having different catalogue i.e. general, journals, new books. If the problems the available computing resources then care should be taken in order to make it easier to change catalogues
3. OPAC should include articles of serials
4. More user education on OPAC is highly recommended for overseas students because of them use OPAC here for the first time
5. It would be useful if the system gave the information about other libraries i.e. direct contact with other university libraries
6. I think this service should be promoted to be used for more students, especially those who have not had this facility before
7. As a whole the library does provide a good service to the student but I find the service in the library is not enough because we still need to go for interlibrary loan and that cost time which is very essential.
C: OPAC AND IMPROVE OF STUDIES

1. It will make your knowledge up-to-date and will save time
2. Help to find the material I need for my research
3. It puts me in contact with the library collection
4. It gives me an opportunities to find more information in my field of study
5. It helps literature search
6. Less time is wasted looking for books and it can be devoted to reading
7. Catch up with up-to-date information in the area of my study
8. It gives you some idea of the range of items available in the library on a given subject
9. Usually you can find some extra related items which you are not expected
10. OPAC doesn't help improve my studies as such but can help to find a lot of related literature


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