
A STUDY OF WEB-BASED OPACs SERVICES IN INDIA

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Abstract

Web OPAC is a systematic application and not exploitation of information technology. Web OPAC is a library catalog on the Web or Intranet. Users can search the required information by connecting to Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of Web OPAC anytime during the day and from anywhere in the world. The purpose of study is geographically how many institutions are providing OPAC services, what type of LMS softwares using. Further highlights the problems faced by libraries and their economical situations.

INTRODUCTION

Simply stated, a Web OPAC is a library catalog on the Web or Intranet. Users can search the required information by connecting to Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of Web OPAC anytime during the day and from anywhere in the world. A different definition can be seen on the Internet according to which a 'WEB OPAC is an independent program designed separately from the Library Program. It is programmed to facilitate the library's members to access the OPAC, through their own search, for the ease of borrowing, instead of searching through the card catalog. In addition, members would also be able to request for the information about borrowing, reservation, etc., related to their own library profile, as well as to make automatic reservations.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in India, with the help of the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), is playing an important role by providing funds and technical support for implementation of library management systems (LMSs), including OPACs, in university libraries. NIC is also playing important role by supplying free software to their institutions, after open source technologies many LMS are came up, most of the library are implementing the open source LMS. The functions of the web-based OPACs various from application to application, nowadays people are using different LMS in Indian academic libraries and Research Libraries.

Web OPAC is a systematic application and not exploitation of information technology. The concept of Web OPAC is very well established and practiced successfully in developed countries especially in USA and UK. Majority of their libraries are well equipped with it and offer regular service to their members. The development of Web OPAC activities can be seen as evolution of OPAC activities into Web OPAC. Further their culture, desire to lead, need to over come problems arising out of information explosion, availability of state of the art technology, and professional attitude towards work converts their dreams to reality. Web OPAC is technology intensive, involving high-speed networks like LAN, WAN, Internet, Intranet with broad bandwidth, extensively web server-based application. According to Dempsey [8] without building richly inter-connected services, based on emerging content

infrastructure, libraries will not provide effective services within that space and they will betray their longstanding legacy. Technology alone cannot help bring the required changes; attitudes, practices and policies need to be changed, if the librarians in India are to benefit themselves and their community of users by the application of new technologies. Finally, to fully utilize the potential of web technologies, we must keep exploring new areas for improving library services. More often than not, ideas are to be implemented in stages, depending on the needs of the user community. One of the key applications for library is Web OPAC.

GENERAL FEATURES OF WEB-BASED OPACS

An OPAC is designed to give the user bibliographic details of holdings in the collection of a particular library. Many OPACs also let the user search the OPACs of a number of other libraries simultaneously, using the Z39.50 protocol. Z39.50 is an international standard for communication between computer systems, primarily library- and information-related systems.

Not all LMS suppliers may provide the full features of a portal, but they generally offer the features found in traditional OPACs, federated searching tools and user services such as renewals and interlibrary loan (ILL) requests. In addition, the portal may include other facilities for users who also want to carry out transactions, such as changing their address details, paying fines or cancelling reservations through the library's web.

All OPACs, however, allow users to search their respective libraries' collections, though their search and retrieval facilities may differ. Common information retrieval facilities include:

- Searching by author, title, call number, ISBN, etc. These are basically string or phrase search options, and consequently the user has to provide either the exact key or the first few letters/words of the search key. The user may be able to combine search terms using Boolean or other operators.

Searching by keywords. The user can enter one or more keywords and these can be combined using Boolean and proximity operators. Other functions, such as truncation or limiting search options, may also be used. Some OPACs use Boolean and proximity operators implicitly, i.e. multiple keywords are automatically ANDed or are considered as a phrase comprising the search term adjacent to one another. A keyword search is not limited to a specific field. Similarly there Searching by subject, Simple and advanced searching, Search output, Print/e-mail/save options.

ADVANTAGES OF WEB OPAC

Scientists can immediately notice the missing reprints by author search.
Updating can be done quickly as scientists take keen interest to submit the reprints.
It is accessible all the time, worldwide.
Increases awareness of 'Scientific Research Contributions' made by the Institute.
It is possible for users to send reprint requests immediately by e-mail.
Compilation of various lists of reprints becomes very easy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the web-based OPACs of University, Government, Public, Private Institution, Research and School Libraries in India.

In particular to:

1. To find out the number of institution libraries having their Web OPACs.
2. To find geographic region wise distribution of Web OPACS in India
3. To identify the criteria for evaluation of web-based OPACs;

METHODOLOGY

Many academic libraries in India are moved and still moving towards the automation of library

automation. Although users prefer to find information on the web more so than in the OPAC, they still consider the OPAC a well-organized and trustworthy tool. Users in India have also become web-savvy. Users are still in the process of adopting the OPAC in Indian libraries.

The main aim of the present study is to find out the how many libraries are having Web-based OPAC. The study was made on content analyses of the library websites and web-based OPACS of the institution /university library, province, sector, category, and URLs by searching Google, and also collected information through the LMS software vendors client list and putting them into excel spread sheets and analysed it. There are nearly 152 libraries are having Web OPACs, among 152 there are only 26 universities are having Web OPACs. The findings of the study will provide useful information about how many libraries are providing services through Web-based OPAC their searches are influencing online users in India. This will assist library authorities in improving their Web OPACs time to time.

Most of the Indian academic and research libraries with successful web-based OPACs are using one or other of the following LMSs:

1. Alice
2. Autolib
3. Cybrarian
4. Easylib
5. E-Granthalaya
6. In-House
7. Koha
8. Libsoft
9. Libsys
10. Newgenlib
11. Ramlib
12. Slim
13. Softaid
14. Soul
15. TLSS (Total Library Software System)
16. Troodon – ILMs
17. VTLS - VIRTUA

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The present study aims to evaluate the web-based OPACs of the study libraries on different LMSs. It also studies the geographical wise distribution.

Table-1 shows that the majority of libraries 43.4% using Koha, and 5.9% libraries are using Alice LMS, 14.5% libraries are using E-Granthalaya, 9.9% libraries are using each of Libsys & Libsoft, there is only one library using In-house LMS OPAC and remaining OPACs are using with different LMS Web-based OPACs. It is indicating that most of the people showing interest in Open Source LMS.

Table 1
LMS Software wise Web-based OPACs

Library Management Software	No of Lib.	Percentage
Alice	9	5.9
Autolib	1	0.7
Cybrarian	1	0.7
Easylib	1	0.7
E-Granthalaya	22	14.5
In-House	1	0.7
Koha	66	43.4
Libsoft	15	9.9
Libsys	15	9.9
Newgenlib	5	3.3
Ramlib	1	0.7
Slim	5	3.3
Softaid	2	1.3
Soul	4	2.6
TLSS (Total Library Software System)	1	0.7
Troodon – ILMs	1	0.7
VTLS - VIRTUA	2	1.3
Grand Total	152	100

Table-2 shows that the majority of libraries 47.3% using Open Source software, 37.5% using Commercial LMS, 14.5% using Free LMS (E-Granthalaya) and 0.7% using In-house developed LMS. When compare to OS LMS with Commercial LMS OPACs, sources shows that open source Web-based OPACs services are more flexible.

Table 2
Web-based OPACs by LMS Category-wise

Software Category	No. of Lib	Percentage
Commercial	57	37.5
Free Software	22	14.5
In-House	1	0.7
Open Source	72	47.3
Grand Total	152	100

Table-3 shows that the geographically implementation of Web-based OPACs in Tamilnadu State shows the highest figure of 27.6%. and further Karnataka with 17.8%, Delhi with 13.2%, Maharashtra with 9.9% and the Andhra Pradesh get the fifth place with 5.9% Web OPACs and the least usage of (0.7%) Web OPACs are in Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa, Utarakhand.

Table 3
Geographical wise use of Web OPACs

State	No. of Lib.	Percentage
Andhra Pradesh	9	5.9
Bihar	1	0.7
Delhi	20	13.2
Gujarat	4	2.6
Haryana	3	2.0
Himachal Pradesh	5	3.3
Jammu & Kashmir	1	0.7
Karnataka	27	17.8
Kerala	6	3.9
Madhya Pradesh	2	1.3
Maharashtra	15	9.9
Meghalaya	3	2.0
Orissa	1	0.7
Pondicherry	2	1.3
Punjab	2	1.3
Rajasthan	2	1.3
Tamilnadu	42	27.6
Uttar Pradesh	6	3.9
Uttarakhand	1	0.7
Grand Total	152	100

CONCLUSION

The study shows that web-based services in India, LIS professionals must recognize the significance of web-based library services and take the initiative to provide them. The major limitation of online catalogues investigated is the most of the libraries not even have library page and lack of federated search facilities. The users generally prefer to go to web search engines rather than to library catalogues. This is the matter of concern for librarians and they must work to bring the users back to the library for their immediate information needs. The introduction of the library portals with the features of web-based OPACs is the ultimate solution to the problem. Web-based OPAC service is one of the key role in e-resource services. Although libraries in India have started to develop their own websites, portals with enhanced features of web-based OPACs along with federated searches are still to develop.

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