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ICT Skills as Determinant of Online Public Access Catalogue Use among Students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria

Tunde Idris YUSUF
Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State.
yusuftundeidris@gmail.com

Ruth Chinomso BASSEY
Main Library, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State.
absolutenuns@gmail.com

Abosede Olufunke AYENI
Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State.
bosfunke@gmail.com

Iskil Arisekola BOLAJI
Federal School of Surveying, Oyo, Oyo State
bolajiiskil@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined ICT skills as a determinant of Online Public Access Catalogue Use among Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria students. The study adopted a survey research design. The study population was 3400 registered users of the library for 2022/2023 academic session. Probability proportionate to size was use as the sampling technique. Thus, 5% of the total population was considered a sample size of one hundred and seventy (170). A questionnaire was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using frequency table and percentage. The study revealed that the students rarely use OPAC to know if a document is available in the library without necessarily visiting the library. It was also revealed that the main purpose of using OPAC included the location of documents: the level of the ICT skills possessed by students was high, and they were proficient in the use of computers and had knowledge of electronic formats, among others. The study concluded that the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is a crucial tool used by undergraduate students in academic libraries to locate materials and access the libraries. The study recommended that efforts should be geared towards teaching polytechnic students the knowledge and skills required to use OPAC; universities should be equipped with the enabling infrastructure, such as adequate power supply, effective Internet connectivity etc.,that will encourage the use of OPAC, polytechnic libraries should formulate policies that would encourage mandatory use of OPACs, among others.

Keywords: ICT Skills, Online Public Access Catalogue, Use, Students

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Introduction

Libraries have transformed their roles and responsibilities, particularly with the advent of Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs). These digital tools enable academic libraries to swiftly access and retrieve information resources, leading to more proactive service provision within the community (Swaminathan, 2017). OPAC serves as an interface facilitating users' search for library materials and determining their availability at any given time, thereby revolutionizing traditional library resource access methods (Thanuskodi, 2012). Characterized by brief bibliographic records, OPACs represent a shift from the manual retrieval system of conventional card catalogues in academic libraries (Eserada & Okolo, 2019). OPAC is an electronic gateway to the library's collection, offering access to a wide range of print and non-print materials, including theses, government documents, audio-visuals, and periodicals (Ukpebor, 2022).

The key features of OPACs include direct access to library bibliographic databases, searchability through various access points, retrieval of information from both local and remote libraries, user-friendly search results presentation, and the ability for multiple users to query the database simultaneously (Ukpebor, 2022). Evaluation of OPAC efficacy is vital, especially from the user's perspective, to inform managerial decisions and ensure optimal performance (Onuoha, Umahi & Bamidele, 2013). Furthermore, integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly impacted library operations, enhancing the accuracy, speed, and efficiency of information retrieval, storage, and dissemination (Mairaj & El-Hadi, 2020).

Recognizing the importance of ICT skills, particularly in the 21st-century knowledge society, is crucial (Israel & Edesiri, 2018). These skills encompass gathering, processing, storing, transferring, and disseminating information effectively using computers and related technologies (Ukaegbu & Wegwu, 2019). Thus, fostering ICT literacy among students is essential for harnessing the full potential of information resources and technologies in academic settings.

Statement of the Problem

Students' use of the online public access catalogue in any academic library is mainly determined by their awareness of the resource's availability, utility, and significance. Several academic libraries used OPAC to enhance services for their patrons. Despite this, there are still reports from the study of Usman (2023) that students using OPAC seldom. Not many students are using OPAC at the OPAC-designated workstations in academic libraries where OPAC has been implemented and is operational. The OPAC workstations are frequently wholly shut down, but occasionally, students are caught using them to browse the Internet. This study, therefore aimed to investigate ICT skills as a determinant of Online Public Access Catalogue use among students at Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study's general objective is to examine ICT skills as a determinant of online public access catalogue use among students at Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

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1 examine the level of Online Public Access Catalogue use among students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria;

2 asscertain the purpose of using Online Public Access Catalogue by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria;

3 examine the level of ICT skills possessed by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria;

4 Investigate the challenges faced by student in the use of OPAC in the library under study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of Online Public Access Catalogue use among students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the purpose of using Online Public Access Catalogue by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria?
3. What is the level of the ICT skills possessed by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria?
4. What are the challenges faced by student in the use of OPAC in the library under study?

Literature Review

The catalogue serves as an indispensable tool for libraries, crucial for managing their extensive collections and aiding patrons in locating resources efficiently (Swaminathan, 2017). With the emergence of the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), libraries have seen a revolutionary shift in information retrieval methods. OPAC allows users to search for and access library resources remotely, enhancing convenience and accessibility (Fabunmi & Asubiojo, 2013). Its advanced search features enable precise information retrieval, making it a preferred tool for users seeking specific documents. Therefore, the need for its effective utilisation in academic libraries.

OPAC, being the most advanced form of the library catalogue, stores bibliographic records on a computer memory drive, offering numerous benefits over traditional catalogue formats (Makintami, 2016). However, its effectiveness heavily relies on users' ICT proficiency and knowledge. Users must be proficient in utilizing OPAC to harness its full capabilities effectively. Despite its advantages, challenges exist in OPAC utilization, particularly concerning users' search behaviour and lack of knowledge about its features (Wilson & Given, 2015). Adequate consideration of users' searching behaviour and continuous evaluation of OPAC efficacy are necessary to improve user experience and support managerial decisions regarding library catalogues (Onuoha, Umahi & Bamidele, 2013).

Moreover, in the context of the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), ICT literacy has become essential for navigating modern society effectively (Suleiman, Bakin-Zuwo & Salihu, 2017). ICT literacy encompasses skills such as synthesizing information

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from various sources, critiquing information effectively, and facilitating access to information (Olugbenga, 2022). However, studies have highlighted deficiencies in ICT competency among students, emphasizing the importance of incorporating ICT literacy into educational curricula to promote socioeconomic growth and self-actualization (Ogwu & Ogwu, 2015). For effective use of OPAC among students, there is need to tackle the challenges faced by students in the use of OPAC.

Studies have explored the relationship between information technology skills and library patronage among undergraduate students in various Nigerian universities and polytechnics. Tella (2019) investigated the impact of information technology skills on library patronage among undergraduate students in Southwest Nigerian universities. They found a positive correlation between student's knowledge of information technology and their use of library resources. Similarly, Esarada and Okolo (2019) studied the usage of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in South African Polytechnic libraries, revealing that while some students used OPAC frequently, a significant portion either used it infrequently or not.

Further studies by Fati and Aderitimin (2017), Akparobore, Omosekejimi, and Nweke (2020), and Eromosele, Omosekejimi, and Ogo (2021) emphasized the importance of ICT skills among librarians to enhance service delivery, including proficiency in various software applications and library automation systems. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and lack of funding hinder the effective implementation of ICT initiatives in libraries, as highlighted by Sambo (2021), Aboyade and Eluwole (2018), and Oni, Oshiote, and Abubakar (2018).

Studies also examined undergraduate students' awareness and usage of OPAC in various academic settings. Msagati (2016) found that although OPAC is considered an effective tool for information retrieval, its usage among students at Tanzania's Open Polytechnic was limited due to challenges such as inadequate internet access and limited computer terminals. Similarly, studies by Eserada and Okolo (2019), Omosekejimi (2020), Ejitagha and Ivwighreghweta (2020), and Nna-Etuk et al. (2021) revealed varying levels of awareness and usage of OPAC among students in Nigerian universities and polytechnics.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study because of its potential accuracy and valid representation of how the variables interact. The population of this study were three thousand four hundred (3400) registered users for 2022/2023 academic session. The study adopted proportionate probability to size. Probability proportional sampling, usually known as probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling, is an unequal sampling technique in which the probability of selection for each sampling unit in the population is proportional to an auxiliary variable. Thus, 5% of the total population was considered as the sample size, which is one hundred and seventy (170). This is in line with the recommendation of Nueman (2006), who recommended 5% of the population should be over 10000 and 20% for a population less than 1000. The sample size was drawn using simple random sampling techniques to select the students that served as respondents. The instrument that was used for the study was a questionnaire. The data collected for this study was analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution and percentage.

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Results and Analysis

Table 1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	73	56.2
	Male	57	43.8
	Married	14	10.8
Marital Status	Single	116	89.2
	16 – 20 years	8	6.2
	21 – 25 years	66	50.7
	26 – 30 years	52	40
Age (in years)	31 – 35 years	4	3.1
	36 and above	-	-

The information contained in Table 4.1 shows that the distribution according to gender revealed that the majority of the respondents were females (76, 56.2%) while 57 (43.6%) of the respondents were males. This result implied a slight disparity in the gender distribution of library users in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria, as there were more female students than their male counterparts. Regarding marital status, 116 (89.2%) of the respondents constituted the majority were single while the remaining were married. In addition, the data revealed that the highest number of respondents 66 (50.8%) was found in the age bracket of 21 to 25 years, followed by 52 (40%) who were 26 to 30 years age bracket, 8(6.2%) were found to be between 16 to 20, and 4 (3.1%) were found to be between 31 and 35 years. None of the respondents claimed to be above 36 years old. Therefore, it could be concluded that, as of time of this research, the majority of the registered users of Federal Polytechnic Library are young students between the ages of 21 and 30.

Research Question One: What is the level of Online Public Access Catalogue use among students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: **Level of Online Public Access Catalogue use among students**

Statement	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
To find out the location of required books in the library	20 15.4%	33 25.4%	47 36.2%	30 23%	130 100%
To find out whether required books are available in the library	15 11.5%	30 23.1%	40 30.8%	45 34.6%	130 100%
To know about a document without visiting the library	6 4.6%	16 12.3%	48 36.9%	60 46.2%	130 100%
To search for information for my research	4 3.1%	63 48.5%	44 33.8%	19 14.6%	130 100%
To improve my OPAC searching skills	7 5.2%	60 46.2%	48 36.9%	15 11.5%	130 100%
To reserve the book borrowed by someone else	- 	16 12.3%	80 61.5%	34 26.2%	130 100%

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Table 2 shows the level of OPAC use among students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara state, Nigeria. It was revealed that a large chunk of the respondents rarely (36.2%) and never (30%) use OPAC to find the location of required books in the library, while a few (25.4%) respondents sometimes use OPAC to source materials in the library. Also, the majority of the respondents never (34.6%) and rarely (30.8%) use OPAC to find whether the required books are available in the library, while a few (23.1%) respondents sometimes use OPAC to source materials in the library. 60(46.2%) of the respondents rarely use OPAC to know if a document is available in the library without necessarily visiting it, 48(36.9%) rarely use it for that purpose. To search for information for research purposes (63(48.5%) and improve respondents' OPAC searching skills, 60(46.2%) sometimes used OPAC. From the results, it could be deduced that most respondents do not always use OPAC. They used it sometimes and rarely when locating information in the library.

The result is in line with that of Thanuskodi's (2012) study that revealed out of 268, only 31.35% of students frequently used the OPAC, 25.38% of students used OPAC occasionally, 28.89% of respondents used OPAC rarely, and 22.38% of students never used the OPAC. Also, Thanuskodi (2012) revealed that out of 268, only 31.35% of students frequently used the OPAC, 25.38% of students used OPAC occasionally, 28.89% of respondents used OPAC rarely and 22.38% of students never used the OPAC. Moreover, a study by Onuoha, Umahi and Bamidele (2013) on OPAC usage by the students and faculty members of Panjab Polytechnic Library, Chandigarh, revealed that out of 190 respondents, 79 used the OPAC very frequently. Most respondents (111) used the OPAC occasionally, rarely or not at all.

Research Question Two: What is the purpose of using Online Public Access Catalogue by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Purpose of using Online Public Access Catalogue by students

Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
To find out the location of the required document	47 36.2%	30 23%	33 25.4%	20 15.4%	130 100%
To find out whether required documents are available in the library	63 48.5%	47 36.2%	17 13.1%	3 2.3%	130 100%
To know about a document without visiting the library	44 33.8%	63 48.5%	19 14.6%	4 3.1%	130 100%
To search for information for my research	48 36.9%	60 46.2%	16 12.3%	6 4.6%	130 100%
To improve my OPAC searching skills	7 5.2%	60 46.2%	15 11.5%	48 36.9%	130 100%
To reserve the book borrowed by someone else	80 61.5%	16 12.3%	10 7.7%	24 18.5%	130 100%

Table 3 shows the main purpose for using online public access catalogue (OPAC) by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara state, Nigeria. It was revealed that the main purpose of using

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OPAC includes the location of a document (59.2%), knowing about a document without physically visiting the library (82.2%), finding out if a document is available in the library (84.7%), as well as searching and retrieving information (61.4%).

These findings corroborate that of Eserada and Okolo (2019), who reported that the purpose for using OPAC includes the location of documents on shelves, to know whether a particular book is on the shelves or not, to know what a library has on a given author, title and subject, to know about a document without visiting the library. Olugbenga (2022) stated that students use OPAC because they can see the library collections and location of the needed information material on the shelf through the screen and easily access it.

Research Question Three: What is the level of the ICT skills possessed by students in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Level of the ICT skills possessed by students

Statement	VT(4)	T(3)	ST(2)	NT(1)	Total
I am proficient in the use of computers	60	48	16	6	130
	46.2%	36.9%	12.3%	4.6%	100%
I have knowledge of electronic formats e.g. PDF, JPEG	48	60	6	16	130
	36.9%	46.2%	4.6%	12.3%	100%
I have online navigation techniques	44	63	19	4	130
	33.8%	48.5%	14.6%	3.1%	100%
I have the knowledge on Use of electronic library tools e.g. CD-ROM, OPAC, subject gateway etc	50	65	10	5	130
	38.5%	50%	7.7%	3.8%	100%
I have the ability to work in a network environment	47	30	33	20	130
	36.2%	23%	25.4%	15.4%	100%
I have knowledge of installation of computer systems/application software	25	55	30	20	130
	19.2%	42.3%	23.1%	15.4%	100%

Table 4 depicts the level of the ICT skills possessed by students. It was revealed that 108(86.1%) of the respondents responded that they are proficient in using computers and have knowledge of electronic formats. Also, 107(82.3%) of the respondents know the use of electronic library tools such as CD-ROM, and OPAC; 77(59.2%) of the respondents can work in a network environment, while 80(61.5%) of the respondents know the installation of computer system and application software. The study's findings revealed that the level of ICT literacy skills among the Polytechnic of Lagos undergraduate students was relatively high. It was found that most undergraduate students were very good at using the internet and its various features such as browsing, e-mail, etc and accessing information from the WWW. The implication of this study is that students have the required ICT skills to navigate OPAC in the library. It is therefore left for the institution to make necessary preparation for the effective use of OPAC in the library.

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Research Question Four: What is the challenges students face in using OPAC?

Table 5: Challenges faced by students in the use of OPAC

Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
Poor power supply	40	60	20	10	130
	30.8%	46.1%	15.4%	7.7%	100%
Poor Internet connectivity	30	70	10	20	130
	23.1%	53.8%	7.7%	15.4%	100%
Lack of adequate knowledge on the use of OPAC	10	68	22	20	130
	7.7%	52.3%	16.9%	15.4%	100%
Challenges in locating necessary materials	50	65	10	5	130
	38.5%	50%	7.7%	3.8%	100%
Library website interface design	47	30	33	20	130
	36.2%	23%	25.4%	15.4%	100%
Lack of necessary support from the library staff	50	65	10	5	130
	38.5%	50%	7.7%	3.8%	100%
Difference in OPAC interface design	47	30	33	20	130
	36.2%	23%	25.4%	15.4%	100%

Table 5 shows the challenges faced by students in the use of OPAC. It revealed that 100(76.9%) of the respondents agree that poor power supply is one of the challenges facing students in using OPAC in Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara state. Other challenges include poor internet connectivity (76.9%), lack of adequate knowledge on the use of OPAC (60%), challenges in locating necessary materials (88.5%), library website interface design (59.2%), lack of necessary support from the library staff (88.5%) and difference in OPAC interface design (59.2%). The result of this study bolstered the findings of Fabunmi and Asubiojo (2013) in a related study on the awareness and use of OPAC by students of Obafemi Awolowo Polytechnic, Ile-Ife Nigeria and found out that the challenges students faced in the use of OPAC includes; the slow speed of OPAC system, system breakdown and network failure, Inadequate computer system and terminals, lack of adequate space for students, Poor orientation, training and user education, Library staff poor knowledge of the OPAC system, Unfamiliarity with the OPAC system, Poor power supply, Unavailability of some information materials via the OPAC, and Irrelevant search results. Also, findings from the study by Onuoha, Umahi, and Bamidele (2013) revealed that the respondents face challenges when using OPAC.

Summary of the Findings

The study examined ICT Skills as a determinant of Online Public Access Catalogue Use among Federal Polytechnic Offa, Nigeria Students. From the results of the analyses of the research questions, the following were the summary of the major findings.

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1. The study revealed that the students rarely use OPAC to know if a document is available in the library without necessarily visiting the library, searching for information for research purposes and improving respondents' OPAC searching skills. Also, they sometimes use to find out if a document is available in the library.
2. It was revealed that the main purpose of using OPAC is to locate the document. Also, they are proficient in the use of computers and have knowledge of electronic formats; know the use of electronic library tools such as CD-ROM, OPAC; the ability to work in a network environment and knowledge of computer system and application software installation.
3. The study also revealed that the level of the ICT skills possessed by students was high. It was revealed that they have proficient in the use of computers and have knowledge of electronic formats.
4. Also, the study revealed that the students have knowledge of the use of electronic library tools such as CD-ROM, OPAC; ability to work in a network environment and knowledge of installation of computer systems and application software.
5. The study also revealed some of the challenges facing the use of OPAC by students, including poor power supply, lack of adequate knowledge on the use of OPAC, library website interface design, lack of necessary support from the library staff and differences in OPAC interface design, among others.

Conclusion

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is a crucial tool used by undergraduate students in academic libraries to locate materials and access the libraries. This study investigated the attitude and use of Online Public Access Catalogue by Federal Polytechnic Offa undergraduate students. The study revealed that attitude is a crucial factor in the use of OPAC as there is a significant relationship between attitude and the use of OPAC. This is obvious because the love for OPAC will relate to its usage. Students of KWASU have a positive attitude towards OPAC. For better use of the library for research and knowledge, the gateway to its resources is the OPAC. OPAC is a tool that is consulted almost daily when materials are needed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made by the researcher;

1. Efforts should be geared towards teaching polytechnic students the knowledge and skills required to use OPAC.
2. Universities should be equipped with the enabling infrastructure, such as adequate power supply, effective Internet connectivity etc., that will encourage the use of OPAC.
3. There should be regular orientation on the use of OPAC for students as they come to the library. This will enhance the effective use of OPAC for effective service delivery.
4. The design of the OPAC interface should be attractive to students. This will attract its practical use.
5. Polytechnic libraries should formulate policies that would encourage mandatory use of OPACs.

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