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User’s feedback in using ISN web OPAC with “Searching Kit” at the National Sports Institute Malaysia

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Abstract: Improvements for online catalog (OPAC) interface are important to maintain the OPAC reliability to users. The purpose or this paper was to report on a survey conducted to study users’ feedback in using the webOPACs at the National Sports Institute Malaysia (Institut Sukan Negara Malaysia) with an additional interface feature called “Searching Kit”. The “Searching KIT” was developed in-house with 3 new features, i.e. DDC List, Library Map and User Help Screen. Twenty (20) walk-in candidates were identified and participated in this study. Subjects were officers, staffs and athletes from the Institute. They were given training on the advantages of the Searching Kit and how to use these features. They were asked to do some searching tasks which required them to use the Searching Kit. Their feedbacks were taken during and after the search process. The findings showed that, overall, subjects gave positive responses on the new features particularly the Library Map. In terms of browsing using DDC List, 75% of the subjects felt that the DDC list was useful for them. However, most participants recommended the provision of new DDC class numbers for local sports. Most respondents were excited to see the Library Map feature and provided recommendations on how to improve this feature. The Help screen feature also received positive feedbacks with strong suggestions of having the tutorial in video format. In general, this study indicates that enhancements of online catalogs features do have influence on end-users. Local, in-house enhancements are possible and this is most useful for libraries with tight budgets.

Keywords: online catalogs, webopac, interface design

Introduction

Online catalog (OPAC) is a key retrieval tool that connects users with the library collection as it provides users bibliographic data. If library services are judged by the kindness and helpfulness of its librarian, then the quality of library bibliographic data could be judged by the accuracy and stability of its OPAC.

The National Sports Institute Malaysia library has been using OPAC service for almost 11 years. Not much difference has been made to the catalog in terms of its interface and layout. Most improvements have been made at the operation module, for example; report making, etc. Improvement for online catalog interface is important to maintain users’ confidence in the system. Today’s library users are very demanding, and the choices for information resources are plenty on the Web. Without putting some effort on improving online catalog interface design, it is possible that OPACs will become unpopular as library users prefer to ‘google’ or use the library collection through shelf browsing. Abandoning OPAC could
result into under-utilization of library collection as users are not aware of the collection, its status, location, and the potential works for their information needs.

Large and Beheshti (1997), said that the third generation of OPACs, emerging in the 1990s, saw further improvements to design and enhanced search and retrieval capabilities. Butterfield (2003) argued that OPAC research and design in this period were becoming increasingly influenced by the growing dominance of the World Wide Web. It was not until the development of the World Wide Web that we see real pressures from users to develop more sophisticated search and display mechanisms for OPAC. The World Wide Web and perceived universal access to content it provides have raised expectations for OPAC interface design’.

The important features of Web OPAC are (Babu and O’Brien, 2000):

- Graphical user interface (GUI), which is typically thought of as a combination of windows with pull-down or drop-down menus, icons and a pointing device such as mouse or trackball to manipulate Information.
- The usual features of traditional OPAC such as, storing bibliographic and sometimes full text databases; providing direct access to a library's bibliographic database by means of terminal or PC; providing instructional help; display of search results in readily understandable form; sometimes remote access from the library's location; information about community events; providing links to circulation files, reference help etc.; providing search through a variety of access points such as author, title, keyword, subject, periodical title, series, class number, ISSN or ISBN, etc.
- The ability to use hypertext links to facilitate navigation through bibliographic records.
- A move towards emulation of the appearance and search features similar to those found in search engines.
- Linking to full text when available.
- Ability to help bring a convergence in searching of all electronic information available through one interface. e.g. catalogues, CD-ROMS, Internet sources etc..

The library community has not been satisfied with the traditional OPAC, so numerous experiments and endeavors have been going on to reinvent the OPAC in recent years. These works can be divided into several categories, including adding new discovery layers to the traditional ILS, experimenting with new methods of data aggregation, improving the OPAC interaction, and incorporating external services and Web 2.0 technologies.

While integration of library data and services offers a centralized interface and unified user experience, disintegration of library data and services demonstrates its own values and can be supplemental discovery applications. Library datasets can be tailored by languages, user types, and library types on a macro level, and can further be customized by authors, subjects, and topics. A library can have multiple OPAC interfaces, and multiple specialized data representations. A sense of identity and uniqueness can be added to different collections, and can attract various authors, author groups, and user communities (Sai Deng, 2010).
The study

A study was done to investigate users’ perceptions of newly added features to the ISN’s OPAC interface. Twenty (20) walk-in users agreed to participate in using the new features. Each of them was given a tutorial on the new features. Adding the new features was done easily as the necessary source code was available and creating additional new pages was done using simple HTML. The “Webopac testing” button is placed at Sports Information Centre portal, just below the existing “webopac” button (see figure 1). The link is available online and the address is http://webopac.isn.gov.my.

![Figure 1: Sports Information Centre Portal with link to OPAC](image-url)
Figure 2: Present OPAC Interface

Figure 3: OPAC with searching kit interface
Figure 2 shows the present WebOPAC interface and Figure 3 shows the WebOPAC with additional searching kit. The searching kit has three buttons which are DDC list button, Library Map button and Help Screen button which could assist users to in doing searching.

**Feature 1: DDC List (Dewey Decimal Classification List)**

On this page (Figure 4), information about Dewey numbers for common sports that are used in the portal are provided. This list is also currently being used by the catalogers for classifying works in the library collection and building call numbers.

![Figure 4: DDC List Page](image)

**Feature 2: Library Map**

The Library Map (Figure 5) has information about the location of collections to help users locate which shelf to go. ISN has 7 satellite centres throughout Malaysia, i.e in Johor, Pulau Pinang, Melaka, Terengganu, Kelantan, Sarawak and Sabah. Some of Sports Information Centre’s collections are distributed to these centres, so by having this map user will have a clear picture on our collections.
Figure 5: Library Map

**Feature 3: Help Screen**

The purpose of the Help Screen (Figure 6) is to educate users. On this page, users are provided with explanation about library classification/call numbers and subject headings. The information is quite straightforward and in a text format only. The future plans include giving online tutorials, games, and movies. At the moment, we are working on video tutorials for “How to search effectively” and “Tutorial on video collection”.
Findings

\( a. \) Search hits using DDC list

Searching result by using title, subject and call number (by pattern) are compared. Each one of the 33 sports in the DDC list are key-in to observe the OPAC hit. The result show us some constant trend especially at call number searching hits.
Table 1: Searching result comparison

Result shows that searching using call number provides the highest hits in most of the searches. From 33 comparison data, searching using call number got the 24 highest hits. The main reason for this is because of the pure numeric notation of DDC. Language difference should not be an issue. For example, when searching by title, ‘Hockey’ will result into lower hits than the actual material available because local works on ‘Hockey’ especially in video collections are transcribed using its original language, i.e. ‘Hoki’. Searching using call number resolves this problem as all works related to hockey are collocated under 796.355.

In addition, local sports, i.e. Silambam and Wushu received very high hits using call number. Though Silambam and Wushu have no specific classes in DDC, works on both the sports are classified under 796.81 for karate. In general, the DDC list has assisted the users in locating the works they needed.

Table 2: search for ‘silambam’ and ‘wushu’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPORTS</th>
<th>CALL NUMBER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>CALL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SILAMBAM</td>
<td>796.81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUSHU</td>
<td>796.81</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Perceptions about DDC List
From the survey results it shows that 75% from 20 subjects said that the DDC list was useful for them. The remaining 25% gave negative response and suggested that they should be given trainings on how to search effectively using the DDC list.

c. Perceptions about Library Map

Most of the respondents were excited when they were shown the library map. All of them (100%) gave positive response to the new feature. In addition they provided some useful ideas to be implemented. These include; more accurate and nice map; bigger map; map in 3D, and; provide map poster near OPAC.

d. Perceptions about Help Screen

The Help Screen also received positive feedbacks from the respondents. All of the (100%) found the feature to be very helpful. They also suggested that the help feature to be in video tutorial format.

Conclusions

Although this survey was done in a very small library environment, the findings have given useful insights into improving the performance of online catalog as a retrieval tool. The study found that the searching kit has made some impacts on the respondents. For the DDC list, though library users all of them have seen it before as part of the call numbers, they were not aware about the “meaning” of the numbers. With good training on the utility of call numbers as search feature, users would become more effective OPAC searchers. However, the bigger role in on the knowledge and expertise of the librarians themselves who must understand the functions of OPAC and have good training skills.

The feedback received for library map are very positive. Most of them feel that it is a very useful tool for library. In fact, library map is not a new thing in library world. Most library in the west have done it before. For example, Worcester Polytechnic University Library’s catalog provides in the search results page a “location” label which is linked to a list of locations and floor maps (George C. Gordon Library, 2007). However, this feature is not so popular among libraries in Malaysia. This survey has also enlightened the centre into the quality of bibliographic data given to users, particularly in terms of DDC numbers for local sports. Local adaptation has to be made in order to expand the utility of DDC for local sports. Lastly, the centre plan to provide some library trainings through the SIC portal in video formats. This feature is to be directly linked from the OPAC interface. In conclusion, the OPAC, can be a useful tool for the ISN communities not only in finding the materials they need, but also for better understanding about the library services and appreciation of the library’s role.
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