OPAC FROM LIBERTAS AND URICA LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: A REVIEW FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE END USER

by

WAN AB. KADIR WAN DOLLAH

ABSTRACT


INTRODUCTION

The integrated computerised library system has a powerful on-line library catalogue, commonly called OPAC or On-line Public Access Catalogue. An online catalogue can be defined as any computer-based set of bibliographic data that can be accessed by library users working directly at a terminal. An OPAC can be used by a member of the library's public to search the catalogue database in order to see if the library holds a particular work on a particular subject and then be informed of the location of those works. The introduction of the on-line library catalogue enable the users to access the collections in the libraries via OPAC terminals. OPACs may be searched from a terminal within the originating library, at a terminal elsewhere in the organization or remotely through national and even international telecommunications networks.

SYSTEMS CHOSEN

Two OPACs examined were from LIBERTAS library management system with special reference to University of Wales at Aberystwyth (UWA) and URICA library management system with special focus on the National Library of Wales (NLW). LIBERTAS and URICA are among the top 20 systems identified in a survey carried out in Europe by Larsen (1992). Information about supplier and country of origin of the systems chosen are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Software</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIBERTAS</td>
<td>SLS</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URICA</td>
<td>McDonnell Douglas</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BACKGROUND

The library system of the University of Wales at Aberystwyth (UWA) serves teaching and research community in the university. The UWA has about 4700 undergraduate and postgraduate students and about 600 teaching and research staff. The OPAC is seen as the best feature of LIBERTAS and it is heavily used with 27 OPAC terminals in the main library and access from any workstation around the university of the campus network.

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The National Library of Wales which was established by Royal Charter in 1907, is one of the United Kingdom’s five legal deposit libraries. It has a prime responsibility for the collecting and preservation of material relating to Wales. The NLW was an early user of URICA in Europe; a £1.2 million contract was awarded to McDonnell Dugas in 1984 to supply a system, based on URICA, which matched the bilingual requirements of the library by permitting users to input and receive information in Welsh or English. In 1992, the software was transferred to run on an X600 Unix computer at NLW as part of a strategic move to open systems; the new systems cost £500,000.

Point of View of the End User

A librarian from any library system implementing an OPAC will need to make decisions regarding the layout of the screens, format of the messages, details of the record displays and so on. For most patrons or users, catalogs are tools used to find materials. Users are expected to start using the tool and stop using it as soon as they find the information they need. It cannot be denied that users sometimes use the OPAC to look for a known item (e.g. either the author or title or both are known) but more frequently they want to know what the library holds in a particular subject area.

This article will identify the strong and weak points of the OPACs of the two systems chosen from the point of view of the end user. The discussions will be based on Crawford’s opinion who provides much practical guidance, with many examples of OPAC screens and suggestions for good OPAC design. The OPACs investigated for this article were accessed through terminals available in the Department of Information and Library Studies, UWA.

LIBERTAS System

The first of a new session of UWA LIBERTAS OPAC is quite clear as it introduces the library and offering the Main Menu with codes to be chosen. It is clearly stated on the top of the screen the University of Wales, Aberystwyth with LIBERTAS 6.0 Library Management System. The screen is quite attractive but unfortunately it does not welcome the user. A good OPAC design starting screen should welcome users with few words such as ‘Welcome to the online catalog’ and telling the system that is used.

The first screen then indicates the Main Menu which is unambiguous and easy to understand. Included in the Main Menu are Catalogue Enquiries, Your Own Use of the Library, Library News, Change Language, Other Library and Information Systems, and Help (see Appendix Ia). The most important menu from the end user’s point of view in searching for the materials available in that particular library is the Catalogue Enquiries. LIBERTAS OPAC should emphasise on Catalogue Enquiries because other menus would only be seen when the user has enough time. The second important menu should be Library News because the user definitely wants to know about the library collections and the services provided by the library.

LIBERTAS OPAC is simple to use and information is accessible immediately. If we select Catalogue Enquiries, from the first screen, the second screen then offers 9 methods of searching. The user is presented with Quick Author/Title enquiry, Full Author/Title enquiry, alphabetical list of Periodical Titles, Name enquiry, alphabetical list of Names, Subject enquiry, Catalogue Enquiries, Classmark enquiry and Control number enquiry. Two more choices are Return to main menu and Help to make the screen denser. Through these access points, we are able to search author, title and subject easily.

For Author/Title enquiry for example we have only to provide the author’s surname and then the first four letters of each are usually enough. Then, it will come out with brief display on the screen with the records as to how many records available or retrieved. When a known item is retrieved, the first display should include the location, circulation status and call number. However, in LIBERTAS OPAC UWA, we have to use the commands on the bottom of the screen to know the location, circulation status and call number of the material by pressing only LO and the number of record requested. Command language in LIBERTAS OPAC accepts abbreviations as well as words, for example LO for location, BA for back etc.

One weak point of LIBERTAS OPAC that can be identified is the 2 key functions that could cause annoyance to user. An author with multiple works for example, if we want to see next screen we have to use ‘+’ button and the press return. It should be replaced by page up or page down button function to make the search easier.

For the end user who already knows the author or title, it is perhaps confusing to choose either Quick Author/Title enquiry or Full Author/Title Enquiry. The two methods of searching should be combined together because it will display the same material or materials searched. Furthermore, the Name enquiry and alphabetical list of Names are redundant or overlapping between each other and if either one is abolished it will save much of the users’ precious time. Classmark enquiry and Control number enquiry are normally ignored by end users in their
search. However, if any user does not know about the term of classmark or control number enquiry, explanations function (?) can be used.

Subject enquiry is another good and interesting aspect in LIBERTAS OPAC. This enquiry looks for catalogue records containing as many as possible of the subject words we enter. We have to enter brief description of the subject and will be told how many items match our search closely. If we want to add to our search and make it more specific, we can edit or amend this search. LIBERTAS OPAC also provides help screen to assist users in their subject searching because subject searching is more difficult than known-item searching.

For any search made, we have to enter chosen code and press return. For any enquiry from the Catalogue Enquiries, we are able to display materials searched in brief by following the command provided on the bottom of the screen. Users are also told about how many copies of the materials held and how many of them on loan. Also informed are the type of loans whether it is under standard loan or short loan collection. Users are able to reserve the materials on loan by giving user number and if they prefer to do so, even for the materials that have already been booked by others.

The other good point of LIBERTAS OPAC in UWA is that in their search the users are clear where they are. It is mentioned on top of the particular screen, for example when we are searching for title enquiry, it is stated "Title enquiry" at the beginning of the screen. The searcher also will not get lost because they are aware where they are and can go back to another screen or search by choosing the codes given, example '/' to end, or start a different type of search, '?' for explanations, 'B' to go back and do another search of this type and so on.

One important aspect of LIBERTAS OPAC that is admired is its HELP facilities that are always available. In general, most use is made of the help screens at the main menu, for guidance on which type of search to select. The help facilities can give guidance on which search options to choose, and providing information about help available elsewhere. It is felt that only a brief introduction is needed at the main menu, as any online help is read at that stage would most likely be forgotten by the time the user embarks on the search. Help facilities will explain to the user the main menu and also all the codes under catalogue enquires. Help on first screen for example clarifies briefly what is offered in Catalogue enquiries. It is explained that Catalogue enquiries offers the user a choice of ways of searching the library catalog. We may search by author and/ or title and by subject, and we can find the location of books and whether any copies are available for loan.

LIBERTAS OPAC also offers many extra facilities such as what we can see from the Main Menu in the first screen. Besides the Catalogue enquiry, the other menus offered are Your own use of the library, Library news and Change language. In using the library's menu we can, providing the user's number and library security number, able to know list of books we have reserved, list of books we have on loan, list of inter-library loans we have requested and also to see our library registration record.

If we choose Library news, we will have experience of the library. The information we can get include library opening hours, library collections, reference and information services, library publications, loans and reservations, CD ROM and other in-house databases, library's latest news and so on. When we select Change language, it would offer 10 language codes from major languages of the world such as English, French, Welsh, Swedish, Italian and German. The English vocabulary used in LIBERTAS OPAC is also easy and familiar to most users.

**URICA System**

The initial screen of the National Library of Wales (NLW) OPAC seems to serve users well because it provides more information. Besides introducing the library, the first screen shows the date and unit number which makes it more inviting. The users are presented with general information before they can choose the appropriate type of search listed in 8 modes: Keyword (e.g. author/title/subject), Classification (Main Collection), Classification (Celtic Collection), ISBN Enquiry, ISSN Enquiry, Specific Record (BRN), Enter Comments and Finish (see Appendix 1b). From here we have to select our option. The type of search which is very useful to the end user is Keyword Searching. This means the other search options such as Classification, ISBN Enquiry, ISSN Enquiry and so on are confusing and wasteful. Some of the search options such as Classification (Main Collection) and Classification (Celtic Collection) should be combined together to reduce the option or type of search.

The general information provided on the first screen is very much appreciated because it serves as a useful guideline to the user. The general information tells us that we may search the online catalogue using any of the methods provided in the Enquiry Menu. It also indicates that we can choose by entering the corresponding number and always press RETURN after entering our selection in order to send the instruction to the computer. We may request assistance at any time by entering '?' and then
pressing RETURN. The general information also instructs that always enter ‘8’ after we have completed our enquiry.

The first screen of URICA OPAC in NLW is better than UWA LIBERTAS OPAC because it provides more information to the user. Without using the help facilities the user are aware on how to start and end the search.

The most important aspect in URICA OPAC in NLW is the keyword searching. It is easy to navigate where the user can select the type of search by personal name, corporate name, title, uniform title, series title, subject, publisher or all of them. We can type anything that we wish to perform and then the result of how many headings found in every type of search will be known. From here we can select option and it will be listed accordingly.

Searching by personal name, title and subject are normally useful to the end user rather than by corporate name, uniform title, series title, or publisher because they are not familiar with the terms. If we search either by personal name, title or subject, the next screen then tells the headings found. We have to select the line number or numbers and then the brief display would be seen. The information that we can get includes BRN number, author, title, call number and shelf location. From here we can do the next search or view saved screen.

The commands are also clear to the end user in their search where it is easy to decide the desired option. In keyword searching for example, we can select the key ‘X’ to start next search, ‘S’ to view saved screens or press RETURN to continue viewing records. The commands also sometime ask the user to select the line number, return to the next page or going to the next search.

The users are also clear where they are in NLW URICA OPAC because it is mentioned in every screen what type of search they are doing. The user will not get lost in their search since they are aware where they are. URICA OPAC also provides extra facilities but UWA LIBERTAS OPAC offers better services. Help facilities are also available in NLW URICA OPAC when we use ‘for further information’ key. No matter what the term is used, the important thing is that it can give guidance on which search option to select and sometimes clarify certain terms.

It is quite peculiar in NLW URICA OPAC where we can see the welcome screen at the end of the search. ‘Welcome to the online catalogue’ which is mentioned on the ‘finish’ screen where we press code number ‘8’ should be put on the first screen. The user also find that it is hard to get out from ‘Enter comments’ in search number ‘7’ after giving the comments. However, we feel proud when we are given the opportunity to give comments of suggestions on the system.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

It is difficult to justify which one is better between the two systems. The LIBERTAS and URICA OPACs have their own strong and weak points from the perception of the end user. We can conclude that both systems have their own strength in the context of user interface and retrieval systems, but some aspects should be improved. The librarians have an important role to play in the improvement and development of online catalogues in order to provide effective library services. Efforts like OKAPI projects has been carried out and should be enhanced to improve various aspects of OPAC such as subject retrieval in OPACs, automatic cross-referencing, query expansion, spelling correction and so on.

It is also the library professionals who must take the initiative and lead the systems vendors in providing better systems for end users. Progress depends first of all on acquiring a better understanding of users and information-seeking behaviour through user-oriented qualitative research. The Figure below shows a model of information seeking activity in a library and provides a conceptual framework for observing user behaviour.

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**Sekitar Perpustakaan**

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bidang keilmuan dan maklumat. Menurut Y.A.B. Dato Sri Anwar Ibrahim dalam bukunya 'Menangani Perubahan':

"Kelahiran tradisi dan budaya ilmu merupakan salah satu pra-syarat penting ke arah pembinaan sahsiah yang unggal, pembangunan bangsa yang kuat serta pembinaan tamadun yang tinggi. Tradisi dan budaya ini, walaupun dengan konsepsi dan kadar yang berbeza, terdapat dalam semua tamadun yang pernah dan sedang mempengaruhi dunia seperti tamadun Yunani, Islam, Barat moden, Jepun serta Korea Selatan. Jika kita (Bangsa Malaysia) mau berhujung pada yang sama atau menandanginya sedang di budaya dan tradisi ilmu mesti dibina segera. Tidak ada jalan singkat yang dapat dibayangkan" (2).

Secara mudah, Budaya Ilmu dapat dimaklumkan sebagai kewujudan satu keadaan di mana setiap lapisan masyarakat melibatkan diri, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung dalam kegiatan keilmuan bagi setiap kesempatan. Budaya ilmu juga merujuk kepada satu keadaan di mana segala tindakan manusia baik di tahap individu, apakah lagi di peringkat masyarakat, diputuskan dan dilaksanakan berdasarkan ilmu pengetahuan dari zaman tengah kezaman present, pembincangan mahupun syura. Dalam budaya ini, Ilmu dianggap sebagai satu keutamaan tertinggi dalam sistem nilai peribadi dan masyarakat di setiap peringkat. Sehubungan dengan ini, budaya tersebut samada dalam diri individu atau institusi berpangku dalam masyarakat akan memberi keutamaan, bantuan, kemudahan dan pengkiraan yang tinggi kepada sesiapa atau institusi yang melibatkan diri mencari dan menyebarkan ilmu pengetahuan. Selain itu budaya ilmu baik dalam diri peribadi atau masyarakat juga mempunyai ciri yang tidak mengiktraf sitaf jahil, anti-ilmu, atau bebal (3).

"sekrinya kamu inginkan dunia, maka carilah ilmu, dan sekrinya kamu inginkan akhirat, maka carilah juga ilmu dan sekrinya kamu inginkan kedua-duanya sekali, kamu perlu juga pada ilmu".

Peribadi dan masyarakat tidak berbudaya ilmu akan menjadikannya berbudaya jahil atau bebal. Kedua-dua perkataan penuh makna ini telah lama digunakan dalam Islam sebagai lawan perkataan ilmu, manakala bebal digunakan oleh orang Melayu untuk keadaan yang sama senemak dahulu lagi. ‘Bebalisme’ menurut Prof. Syed Hussein Al-Attas ialah "an attitude composed of several traits and whose end manifestation includes ignorance, persistent stubbornness instead of persistent effort, indolance and indifference..... Bebalisme is also authoritarian, non reflective and non-experimental. It is characteristic of bebalisme to expect others to believe in what is suggested without giving ample reasons or explanation when referring to subject which are outside the ordinary range of acceptability (4)."

Seterusnya beliau telah menyimpulkan senarai ciri-ciri 'bebalisme' seperti berikut:-

1. 'He is not able to recognise a problem';
2. 'If told to him, he is not able to solve it';
3. 'He is not able to learn what is required';
4. 'He is not able to learn the art of learning';
5. 'He usually does not admit he is a fool';
6. 'He does not think contextually both in terms of space and time, and in the dynamic interrelationship of factors';
7. 'He reacts only to the immediate and cannot see beyond';
8. 'He has a mind that thinks in term of limited causes and not of successive causes and effects';
9. 'Cannot reflect upon a problem or a situation';
10. 'Not critical of the foundation of his own thinking';
11. 'Not consistent';
12. 'Not analytic in his thinking but descriptive';
13. 'Lacks mental energy and always follows the line of least resistance';
14. 'Cannot speak at a high level of abstraction without contradicting reality' (5)

Asas terpenting kepada pencapaian Budaya Ilmu ialah Budaya Membaca. Disiplin membaca untuk ilmu merupakan satu kusas pembebasan dari pada belenggu-belenggu kemiskinan, kejahilan dan cabaran-cabaran lain yang sedang dialami oleh sebahagian daripada masyarakat kita. Malcom X, pejuang golongan tindas Afro-Amerika, semasa di penjara telah mendapat kesedaran tentang keagamaan dan mendisiplinkan dirinya dengan membaca pelbagai buku agama, sejarah dan falsafah termasuklah kejayaannya menghafal sebuah
Finally, the evaluation of online catalogue performance should be undertaken in the context of the whole information system, taking into account measures from all three components of the system: the user, the catalogue and the documents.

**REFERENCES**


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**APPENDIX 1a**

The University of Wales, Aberystwyth * LIBERTAS 6.0 Library Management System

Code

1. CATALOGUE ENQUIRIES
2. YOUR OWN USE OF THE LIBRARY
3. LIBRARY NEWS
4. CHANGE LANGUAGE
5. OTHER LIBRARY & INFORMATION SYSTEMS
? Help

Enter code and press RETURN:

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**APPENDIX 1b**

-LYFRGELL GENEDLAETHOL CYMRU - NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES - ENQUIRY MENU - General Information

DATE : 23/11/93
unit : 412 RI

You may search the on-line catalogue using any of the methods listed below. Choose by entering the corresponding number and always press <RETURN> after entering your selection in order to send the instruction to the computer. You may request assistance at any time by entering '?' and then pressing <RETURN>. Always enter '8' after you have completed your enquiry.

**CHOOSE THE TYPE OF SEARCH YOU WISH TO PERFORM:**

1. - Keyword (e.g. author/title/subject)  
2. - Classification (Main Collection)  
3. - Classification (Celtic Collection)  
4. - ISBN Enquiry  
5. - ISSN Enquiry  
6. - Specific Record (BRN)  
7. - Enter comments  
8. - Finish

Select Option