

Users' Searching Behavior Patterns in Library OPAC of University of Ruhuna: A Follow-up Study

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Abstract

The use of ILS for library services has been growing rapidly over the years and plays an enhanced role compared to its traditional physical library while providing a wide variety of library services to its users. OPAC is considered as a one of major outcome of ILS while it provides an online bibliography of a library collection that is available to the public. The present research was undertaken in order to identify the mostly utilized search fields by patrons and the searching behavior of undergraduates from different faculties in University of Ruhuna with referencing Library OPAC in relation to user profile during 1st January 2012 and 31st December 2016. The data, collected from the searching history records kept by the patrons' user profiles, were processed and statistically analyzed.

The findings of this study revealed that the OPAC searching was heavily used by undergraduates, i.e. 79.43% out of 17168 total searching frequencies. Furthermore, the highest number of searching (27.34%) was done in year 2013 while searching from the keyword option was become the most popular (56.72%) term followed by the title (17.54%) and author (13.13%) terms. ISBN was identified as an underutilized search field. On the other hand, the highest number of searching (29.02%) was done by the Faculty of Science patrons and then Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (28.69%).

When patrons use keyword option as a searching field, OPAC performs the searching process by matching the requested word pattern in every place in the bibliographic records. As a result, the number of results is in high number and patrons need to put more effort to filter required sources. Patrons can be used other searching fields like title, author, ISBN to obtain required information with minimum effort. Hence, librarians must design user training programs to emphasize the importance and ways of using different types of search fields to obtain specific search results effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: *Academic library, OPAC, Search fields, Patron behavior, Searching behavior*