

## **2.54 Effectiveness of Open Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), in Fulfilling the user Bibliographical Information Needs in the University Libraries in Sri Lanka.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The explosion of computer and communication technologies, which is referred to as information and communication technology (ICT) has affected almost all aspects of human life including library. Libraries have been looking forward for better technologies even before the onset of the computers. Now in the information era, in order to avoid obsolescence of information, library professionals are applying advanced technologies to enable its user community to get the right information at the right time. In order to achieve this objective, libraries are automating their services.

The OPAC is an integrated part of total library system including acquisition, cataloguing, circulation and other auxiliary services. An Online Public Access Catalog or OPAC is a computerized online catalog which provides bibliographical information of the materials held in a library. The user can easily access it at computers within the library, or anywhere he or she likes. OPAC terminals began to replace card catalogs in many libraries in the 1980s. Since mid-1990s, these systems have increasingly migrated to Web-based interfaces and OPAC is becoming a more popular information retrieval tool currently.

OPAC can provide facilities like high quality bibliographic data, greater number of access points, interactive searching, online training, backup facilities, rapid database management system, authority control files etc. However most Sri Lankan libraries do not use this facility which is the problem this study.

Main objectives of this research were identification of user bibliographical needs, problems related to the library automation software, identification of problems of user and those of the library staff adopting OPAC system.

Primary data was collected using questionnaires and personal interviews. The purposive sampling method was used to select the six university main libraries.

Data collected in this research revealed inadequate computer literacy and non-familiarity with OPAC as the major causes of the above problem. Inadequate knowledge regarding bibliographical data search strategies, deficiencies with regard to terminals, problem related to library automation software were the other causes of the issue.

To overcome these problems both staff and the users need to have a high level of computer literacy. They also must have a sufficient knowledge on the nature of the components of bibliographical databases. Selecting the suitable library automation software and promoting uniformity between university library automation activities are the other reforms necessary in this connection.