

## **2.41 An empirical study of using OPAC, with special reference to the library of University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

OPAC is an acronym for Online Public Access Catalogue and it is a database of bibliographical records describing the library materials. It allows searching by name, title and subject and offers online access through public terminals. Among different physical forms of catalogues OPAC is the newest and the most sophisticated catalogue format.

OPAC is still at its infancy at the library, University of Kelaniya, though it has been established in 1959. Until 1997, only the card catalogue system was in use. In 1997 the library developed a computer catalogue by WINISIS and later in 2002 it developed OPAC by software named Libsuite. Within two years that system collapsed due to various unidentified technical problems and lack of the vendor's support. Again in 2007, it has taken efforts to implement a computer catalogue by software named LibSys. This is an empirical study done on the use of OPAC in the Library of University of Kelaniya.

The key objectives of this study are to identify the parameters of using OPAC and to evaluate the effectiveness of the OPAC in the library of the University of Kelaniya. The research methodology followed was the critical investigation of the system and key interviews conducted with users. The major findings of the study revealed that collection of books was not fully covered by OPAC and the periodicals were not covered at all. Lack of maintaining authority control files, lack of a rich transliterate method, lack of 24 hours accessibility and also OPAC searching is complicated due to lack of user guidance and support. Based on the findings of the study. The researcher suggests that user friendly features are vital, technical support needed for users by interface itself and by library staff and advancement of searching is needed to improve the level of OPAC. The above mentioned findings and proposals are essential to enhance the usage of the OPAC of the library, University of Kelaniya. Seemingly user satisfaction was at minimal level and also higher priority should be given for standardization of the system.

**Key words:** OPAC, University of Kelaniya, Libsys, Libsuite, Winisis