

Chapter 9

Library Catalogue in the Internet Age

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ABSTRACT

The library catalogue has represented stagnant technology for close to two decades. An ideal Library catalogue should enable the end users to search and find material/resources without the help of a librarian. The introduction of Web 2.0 has helped to improve the basic functionality of the library catalogue and help it to adapt to the new trends. Web 2.0 has opened the climate for collaboration and participation where users no longer only receive but also create and share content. In the Internet age today the Library Catalogue can function like a portal and this function can be exploited by redirecting the users to other useful information. System designers are continuously trying to adopt new trends in OPACs. In the 21st century such a shift from the simple catalogue to the web enriched advanced catalogue is anticipated and welcomed.

INTRODUCTION

The primary function of a Library is the management of accumulated knowledge, the Library basically function as a storehouse of knowledge which includes books, periodicals, newspapers, government documents, pictorial reproductions, motion pictures, phonographic records, manuscript, maps and microforms.(Kumar, 2013) The Library catalogue is an intermediate interface which familiarizes its users about

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the material available among its vast collections; it provides fast and easy access to the material, for selection, for location, and for easy retrieval. The two prime tools that aids in this process of Library management are Classification and Cataloguing. Classification enables systematic arrangements of reading materials by means of Class number, whereas the Cataloguing enables in organizing, identifying and locating the required documents.

The primary purpose of the library catalogue is thus to provide access to the reading material and put it to maximum use. Libraries have been providing this service since long. Over the years the Library Catalogue has evolved with the advent of technology; it has been transformed from Clay tablets of ancient times, to the two decades old traditional Card Catalogue, to the computer based online public access catalogue (OPAC) to the web enabled Web OPAC and now is poised to take a giant leap in the direction of Mobile Catalogue in the form of Web Application. Though the form and medium of catalogue has changed over the years, but the basic purpose of educating the users and directing them to refer to library shelves has remained the same. The functional features of catalogue have improved several folds and are being transformed from librarian domain to user domain. (Sanjailal, Padmavathi & Seetharam, 2011)

With the advent of World Wide Web (WWW), the use of search engine to find information has become a daily activity for most users. Before the onset of web, searching of electronic databases was a complex process, usually carried by information professionals. Search engine has become a vital tool for the retrieval of information; this has become possible due to the search interface provided by popular search engine. User's expectations have increased and they now demand self-service from intuitively usable search engine that deliver the right results, quickly. As the users expect this from search engines, they also expect this from library catalogues. The search engine and the library catalogue both serve the same purpose and that is of information retrieval. The mechanism associated with search engine relates to information retrieval across the web, whereas the library catalogue performs the search in an available collection. The search engine harness a range of modern information retrieval techniques to provide relevant result for their users, library catalogues are lagging somewhat behind. The key search technique that is used in the Library Catalogue is of Boolean operators, which has many limitations and which uses operators like 'AND', 'OR' and 'NOT' to combine search terms, which is the key information retrieval technique used in library catalogue as mentioned above whereas techniques like Vector Space Model that is used in many search engines has got many advantages. (Kinstler, 2013)

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