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The Use of the Library Catalogue by Undergraduates

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The Use of the Library Catalogue by Undergraduates

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Introduction

An information institution or a library tends to be prominent or popular for its organized rich collection and effective services. Organization of resources is attained through cataloguing and classification. Classification is a part of cataloguing. Effective and modern cataloguing by a person emanates from devoted, keen interests, long, arduous experience, and studies and knowledge in modern international developments obtaining in the field. This is, otherwise, called specialized up-to-date technical knowledge (Saiful-Islam, 2008). Academic libraries collect material to support the teaching and research objectives of their parent bodies. The library serves both the teaching and non teaching staff of the university, researchers from other academic institutions, and students. Experience has shown that the majority of users of academic libraries are students (Ebiwolate, 2010).The library collection is organized to give easy access to material. According to Maloney (2004) the role of the library is to organize information resources and services in a way that supports user needs. Cataloguing and classification are basic processes in organizing information. Cataloguing is the process of describing material so it can be identified, while classification is the assignment of a call number that places material in order by subject. According to Opaleke, Olayemi, and Aina (2006) classification is a necessary device in organization. It directs the users to a specific subject, and groups books on the same or related subjects. The library catalogue is an essential tool. It is an index or a key to the collection, containing an entry representing each item (Clark, 2000). The catalogue also tells where in the library a book is located (Apotiade, 2002).

Background of the Study

The Dhaka University Library (DUL), established in 1921 with its parent organization, is the largest academic library of the country holding over half a million books on different subjects. To provide better and faster access to library collections, DUL started the Dhaka University Library Automation Project (DULAP) in 1998. As part of the project, the Library has installed an integrated library software GLAS (Graphical Library Automation System). *Presently, "Interim Solution" is used for automation program. Consequently, this program will bring a greater benefit for students, researchers, faculty members and staff as well as the whole nation?????*

Literature Review

A catalogue is record or list of books, periodicals, journals, pamphlets, monographs, audio-visual aids and other materials of a particular library, or a group of libraries (when union catalogue), or a private collection containing specified items of bibliographical information, viz. author, title, edition, imprint, collation, etc. in automated, microfiche, card or printed form arranged in classified or alphabetical order according to any standard catalogue code or rules, i.e. AACR, ALA, LC, etc. (Rowley, 1998). A catalogue is a list of things exhibited, articles for sale, school courses offered, etc., usually with descriptive comments and often illustration. A library catalogue serves the same purpose. It is a file of records for a library's collection (List 1998, cited by Ojedokun 2007). It is important to both library users and library staff. Its functions include giving a comprehensive record of materials owned by the library, listing what the library possesses by a certain author, on a given subject, and with a certain title, and enabling library materials to be located easily (Clark, 2000). The catalogue provides multiple access points to the library's collection (Osiode, 1987).

In spite of these purposes and characteristics, the use of the catalogue is very poor in most Bangladeshi university libraries. Fister (1992) states that undergraduates find the university library threatening and doing research intimidating because they do not have library skills. The only solution to this problem is prolonged and intensive user education and current awareness services. According to Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo, and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004), the university library faces a number of challenges in its user instruction program, yet it is through user education that librarians' work is made easy and students' effort reduced. If the library is for the use of all, then all must be able to use the catalogue to access the library materials. According to Ranganathan, libraries are for use. Therefore we must be sure that whatever we do serves the ultimate purpose of the library (Littlefield 2008).
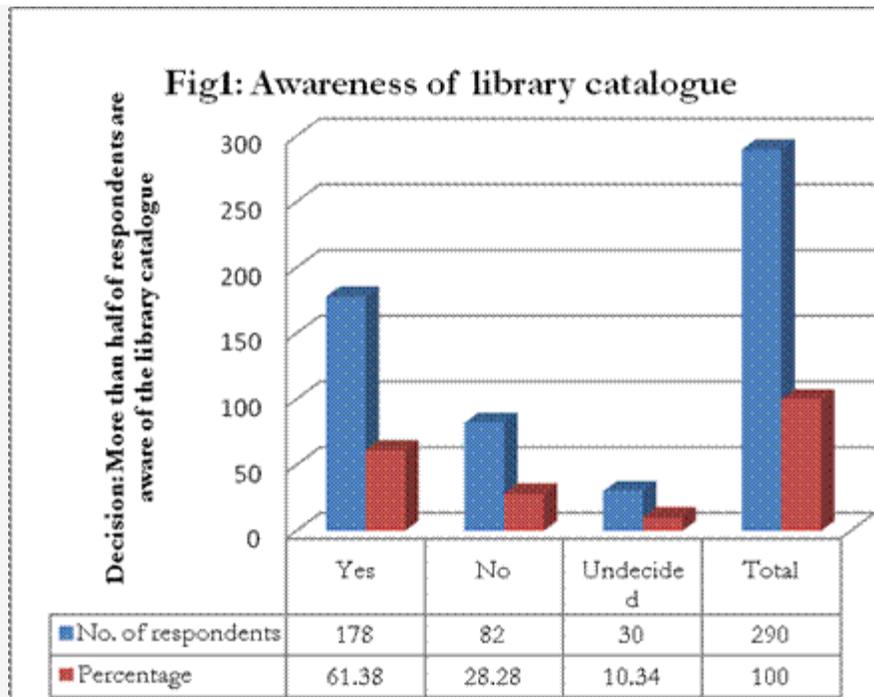
Objectives of the Study

This study aims:

1. To determine the extent of use of use of the catalogue by undergraduate students to locate and retrieve books in the Dhaka University Library (DUL).
2. To discover problems and constraints militating against the use of the catalogue by the undergraduate students of DUL.
3. To discover why undergraduate students preferred to search for materials directly in the shelves.
4. To discover ways to make the use of the catalogue easier for undergraduate students.

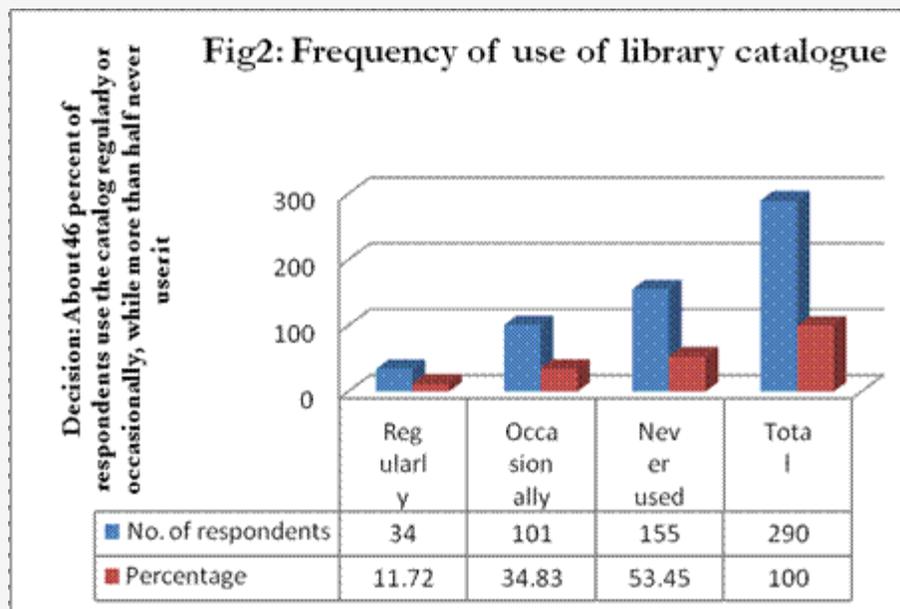## Methodology

This study was conducted at Dhaka University Library, Bangladesh. The study employed descriptive research, using a questionnaire as instrument for eliciting information on the use of the library catalogue among students. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed randomly, of which 290 were returned and used for the analysis. Simple percentages were use
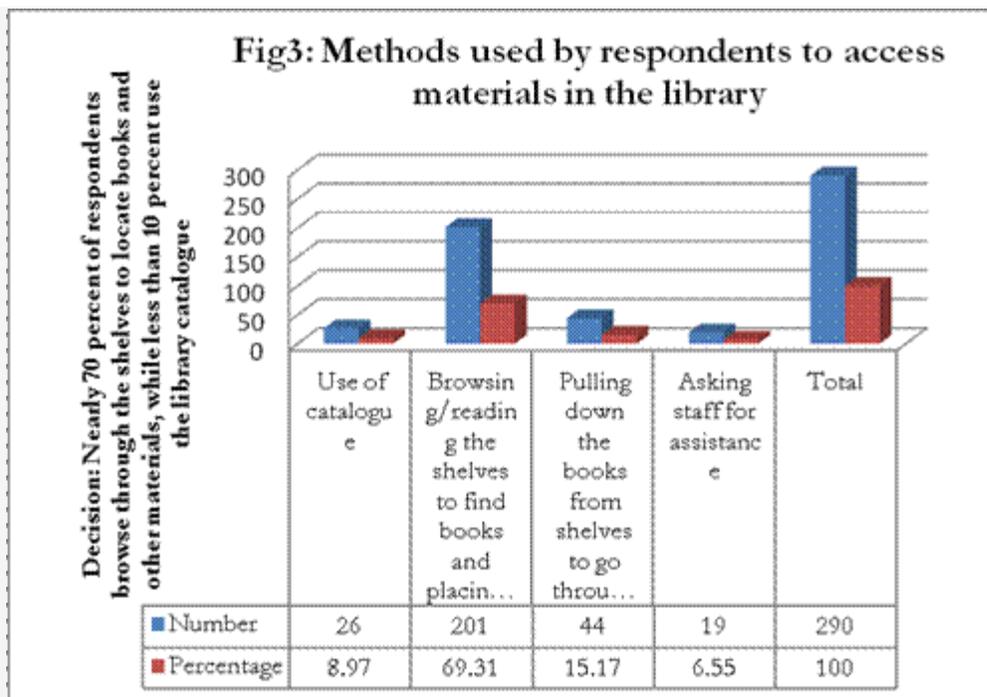
Findings and Discussion

Fig1: Awareness of library catalogue

	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
No. of respondents	178	82	30	290
Percentage	61.38	28.28	10.34	100

The above Figure1 shows that 61.38% (178) students are aware of the library catalogue, 28.28% (82) are not aware of the library catalogue and 10.34% (30) are undecided of the library catalogue. Finally we can decide that more than half of respondents are aware of the library catalogue.

Fig2: Frequency of use of library catalogue

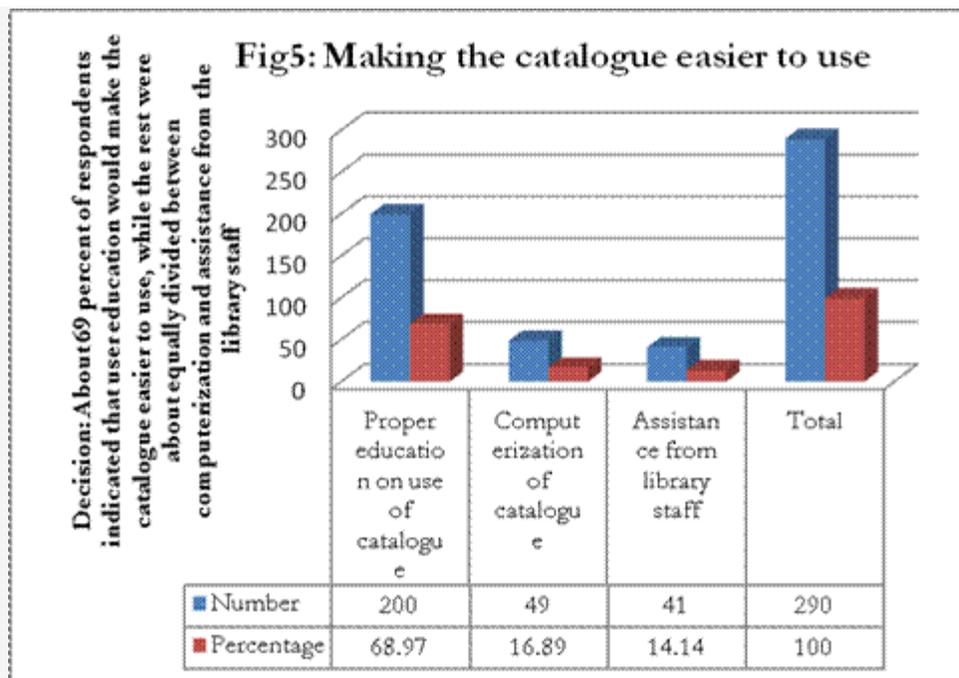|	Regularly	Occasionally	Never used	Total
No. of respondents	34	101	155	290
Percentage	11.72	34.83	53.45	100

The above Figure2 shows that 11.72% (34) students are use the library catalogue regularly, 34.83% (101) are use the library catalogue occasionally and 53.45% (53.45) are never used the library catalogue. So, it is clear that about 46% of respondents use the catalog regularly or occasionally, while more than half never user it.

Fig3: Methods used by respondents to access materials in the library

	Use of catalogue	Browsing/reading the shelves to find books and placin...	Pulling down the books from shelves to go throu...	Asking staff for assistance	Total
Number	26	201	44	19	290
Percentage	8.97	69.31	15.17	6.55	100

(Vertical axis label) Decision: Nearly 70 percent of respondents browse through the shelves to locate books and other materials, while less than 10 percent use the library catalogue

From the above Figure3 we can say that 8.97% (26) of students use the catalogue to access materials in the library, 69.31% (69.31) students browsing/ reading the shelves to find books and placing back in the shelves, 15.17% (44) students pulling down the books from shelves to go through them and 6.55% (19) students asking staff for assistance in the library. That's why it is evident, nearly 70% of respondents browse through the shelves to locate books and other materials, while less than 10% use the library catalogue.

Fig4: Difficulties in using the catalogue

	Lack of proper users education	Lack of skill	Undecided	Total
Number	206	78	6	290
Percentage	71.03	26.89	2.08	100

(Vertical axis label) Decision: More than 70 percent of respondents lack proper users' education, while nearly all the rest say that they lack the necessary skills
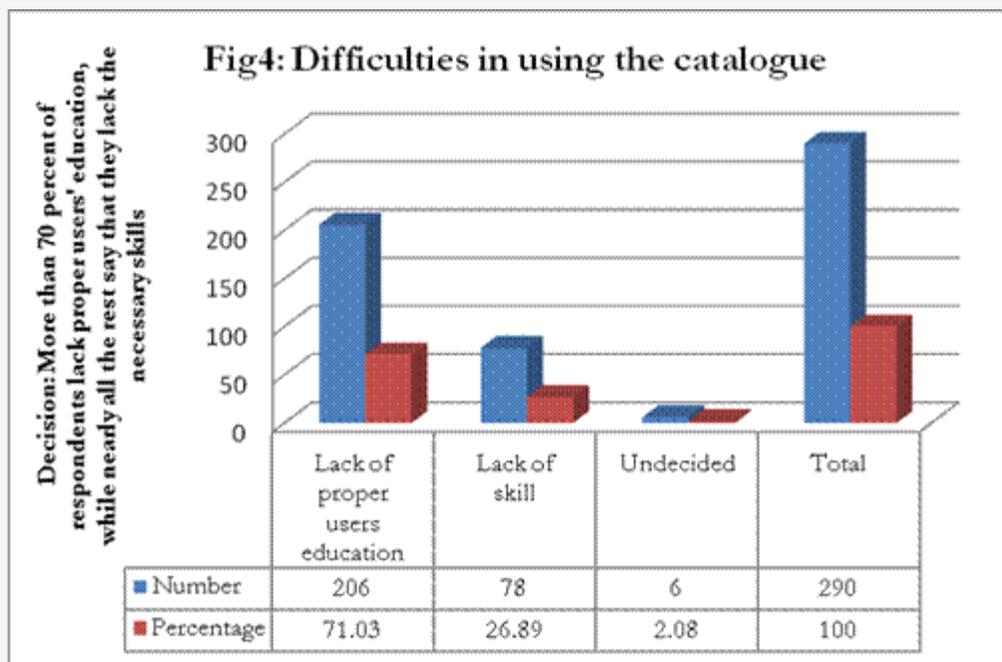
In the above Figure4 there are 71.03% (206) students have lack of proper users' education, 26.89% (78) have lack of skill and 2.08% (6) are undecided. Finally we can say that more than 70% of respondents lack proper users' education, while nearly all the rest say that they lack the necessary skills. This corroborates Ezomo (1988), who attributed lack of use to users not given the necessary user education. It also supports the finding of Fister (1992) who found that students do not have library skills.

Fig5: Making the catalogue easier to use

	Proper education on use of catalogue	Computerization of catalogue	Assistance from library staff	Total
■ Number	200	49	41	290
■ Percentage	68.97	16.89	14.14	100

The above Figure5 shows that about 69% (200) of respondents indicated that user education would make the catalogue easier to use, while the rest were about equally divided between computerization and assistance from the library staff. This corroborates Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo, and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004), who found that, while university libraries face a number of challenges in user instruction programs, the benefits are worth it.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for improvement in the use of the catalogue in Dhaka University Library.

1. A proper user education program on the use of catalogue for the retrieval of books and other information sources should be organized and made mandatory for all users. Such a program should be coordinated by the university librarian and other qualified librarians in the institution.
2. A regular orientation program should be organized, including guidelines on using the catalogue.
3. The university librarian should organize demonstrations on the use of the catalogue every semester and wide publicity should be give to create awareness among users.
4. University authorities should see that only qualified librarians provide library user education.
5. Guidelines on use of the catalogue should be prepared and displayed where users can easily see them.

Conclusion

The study reveals that a majority of the students are not aware of the library catalogue and its uses. As a result, a majority of respondents have never used the catalogue. Students preferred browsing through the shelves to locate books, which can lead to frustration and which has caused many to view the library as just a reading place. High quality user education is the solution to the problems encountered by students in using the catalogue. As revealed in the study there is no proper user education program in place at the Dhaka University Library. A majority of students are in favor of user education to ease and facilitate the use of the catalogue.

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