Users familiarity with subsystem's "Prirodoslovlje" Online Union Catalogue

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1.Introduction

Due to changes in information world, initiative, the system which will gradually transform libraries to a powerful information centres, finds response in Croatia, so that in 1995 the first modular subsystem of Croatian Science Information System, "Prirodoslovlje" (Natural sciences) was set up (STOJANOVSKI, 1999). The co-operation began with ten, and has recently reached twenty member libraries. They identified the reasons library might find it advantageous to utilise the union catalogue. Creation of Online Union Catalogue (OUC) -http://nippur.irb.hr/Search/ became one of the most important aims. Minimal technical and professional conditions were realised. Local databases were updated by library applications, CDS/ISIS and CROLIST software packages for monographs and Sand Plus for serials. Collected databases were unified, indexed and then made available through standard Web interface. The union database is maintained by using mSQL software free for academic purposes. "Whatever their physical form, and however they are maintained, the function of union catalogues remains constant to reveal the total document resources of an area of subject, and thus to aid in satisfying users' requests and in balanced integrated book selection" (ROWLEJ, 1987). To recognise users' requests and satisfaction with library services, library always needs to know as much about the community it serves as possible. The methods are distinct.

As appropriate method for feedback information about Online Union Catalogue from end users, the interview was used.

2.Methodology

To meet the aim standard poll was carried out. The ten questionnaires were posted to each of fifteen affiliated libraries in order to interview users. It lasted three months, from January to March 2000. Four libraries are special libraries in institutes, one is museum's library and the other ten are faculties' libraries. The questionnaire consists of nine questions which concern users professional position, using period, frequency of sessions, satisfaction with searching options and

performed results, reasons for using catalogue and whether they are informed about member libraries, as well.

3.Results and discussion

3.1.About users

The respond to survey was in two directions. The first, librarians are the only persons who pursue information retrieval, therefore nobody have answered. Eight libraries have such situation. The second showed the appropriate, expected respond. 94 questionnaires returned fulfilled because few libraries multiplied questionnaire. Within this number there are three categories of users, 42 academic teaching staff, 31 graduated engineers and 21 student. Twenty users (21 %) have never used the OUC although one of them is familiar with member libraries. Despite of such situation increasing number of users from 1996 y. to 2000 y. is obvious due to contribution of student population and engineers, as well. The academic teaching staff (ATS) shows almost uniform distribution through years. Graduated engineers distribution shows general increase in OUC usage. What are the reasons of inadequate usage of OUC? There are diverse reasons, like poor access to information, the absence of technical possibilities or classic origin of information preferences etc.. But, users were informed by librarians, wide population of potential users were informed at Info /Interliber 1998 with presentation of Croatian Science Information System and NISKA, as well. Also the brochure about purpose and aims of subsystem “Prirodoslovlje” was printed and distributed to users through libraries. Paper about central online catalogue of serials was presented to librarians (STOJANOVSKI, 1999). Was it all enough to encourage users? It leads us to the lack of technical support necessary for the access. According to serial “Most” No23 (1998) 79% of 123 faculties at Croatian universities have local area network, 58% have only one PC room, 30% 2-5 PC rooms and 7 % more than 5 PC rooms. 85% offer student access to Internet, 93% have WWW servers and 26% FTP servers. 66% of them uses Internet for class lectures. A great number of faculties have high percentage of professors who have users’ accounts while 38% have 0-20 % student users accounts. All this illustrates existence of the trend of introduction of information technology in community, but amount of telecommunications and communications support varies from faculty to faculty. It is interesting that for few respondents to whom the questionnaire was the first information about the OUC, tried their first access to it. They made comment like: we have newer searched before but we will do the search from now on. The questionnaire was here a kind of stimulus. It implies the need for frequent announce which could increase the number of users.

The next question was attributed to users real needs for certain numbers of sessions per month. Most of the users do the search once per month, the smaller number 3-5

times per month, 12.7% two times per month and 10 % more than ten times per month. The difference between user categories in 2-6 times per month sessions is great where students shows the lowest number. They do the search mostly once per month. 10% of users, which have more than 10 sessions per month, associate with ATS and graduated engineers. The only assumption could be that students do not have enough opportunity for network access.

3.2. Catalogue evaluation

On evaluating number of search options 54.3% users are satisfied and 22.3% are not. The proportion is almost the same in relevance of combine search versus simple search. The ATS users show greater dissatisfaction than other two users classes.

In next question users estimate the retrieval fastness. 51% expressed their satisfaction and 26% think that it has to improve. All classes have similar proportion of affirmative and negative answers.

The following question was attributed to retrieved results display. It is marked as very well in all user classes. 65.95% users appreciated it and 11.7% consider it as incomplete.

To summarise previous four answers about OUC, it could be said that users are generally content with it. “The information quality in IR system ascertains its relevance of specific users need” (HORVAT, 1995). The OUC has catalogues of books, serials, doctoral, master’s and graduate theses. It could be searched by author and title (whole or fragmental) and by combining them with the ISBN, subject, edition, authority, through whole catalogue or partially through particular member library. Searching results are in form of list. Its present form, Web interface, is new one. It has changed several times, every time bearing new improvements. This process will continue in future too. Because of this, we try to compare it with few foreign online catalogues, as follows: http://sunsite2.berkeley.edu:8000 of the Berkeley university libraries; http://catalog.loc.gov the Library of Congress Online Catalogue; http://copac.ac.uk the London university library; http://saturn.olis.ox.ac.uk the Oxford University libraries’ online catalogue and http://z3950gw.dbf.ddb.de Die Deutsche Bibliothek online catalogue.

Most of them have more searching options and different combinations of them. In some cases the searching goal is better focused if searching is provided by title then by author i.e. Oxford University libraries’ online catalogue. Some offer the area of subject browsers. Their searching results are arranged in form of lists or in tables. They show large number of approaches in online catalogues creation where OUC has its own place following modern trends in it.

3.3.Reasons for consult OUC

The answers to this question set very clear distinction between student population and others. Students use OUC when preparing exams. The others use it for continual scientific improving, writing scientific papers or both. The use of digital library systems of various types is an educational resource for use within the context of teaching and learning activities with two broad possibilities: application of digital libraries as a tool to augment conventional teaching and learning processes and the use of such systems as a building block within the context of creating of virtual university environment (BARKER, 1998).

There is no doubt our academic community needs and uses existing online catalogue.

3.4.Who are the member libraries?

The last question was a kind of curiosity. Not only curiosity, of course, because by knowing member libraries one could know the scientific area of science OUC is covering. 62.77 % users do not know this information and 37.23% know it. This is just supporting information for helping users to be more comfortable using libraries' collections. It should be stressed once again that periodical announcement and any other effort in spreading information about OUC could increase number of users.

4.SUMMARY

To recognise users' satisfaction with library services, in our case subsystem's "Prirodoslovlje" Online Union Catalogue, standard poll was carried out. Fifteen libraries interviewed users by questionnaire concerning users professional position, using period, satisfaction with searching options and performed results, reasons for using catalogue and whether they know which the member libraries are. From 150, 94 questionnaires returned fulfilled because in eight libraries librarians are the only persons who does the search. Other respondents are 42 members of academic teaching staff, 31 graduated engineers and 21 student. Twenty of them have never used OUC. The respond to investigation is relatively low. It outlines rough picture of opportunities for users to gain an access to the electronic resources and so to OUC. They can have it at faculties PC rooms, libraries or at home. Unfortunately, the differences between institutions and users are great. Undoubtedly, within the context of digital library system as a collection of a bearing artefacts, items of which are available for selection and use by its population of users, population of users mast have access to it (BARKER, 1998).

The conclusion could be that whether through computerization or through libraries as powerful information centres, the existing electronic resources have to be more accessible to users to which periodical announcement about electronic origins of information could also help.

References

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Table of results

Whole population-n=94

1.**Professional position**-Academic teaching staff : 42 (44.67 %)

- graduated engineer : 31 (32.98%)

- student : 21 (22.34%)

2. *Starting year*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
1996	5.32%	9.5%	3.23%	-
1997	12.7%	19.05%	12.9%	-
1998	19.5%	21.43%	19.35%	14.3%
1999	17.0%	19.05%	12.9%	19.0%
2000	22.34%	14.29%	25.8%	38.1%
newer	21.3%	16.67%	22.58%	28.57%

3.*Number of sessions per month*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
1x	30.85%	23.8%	29.0%	42.86%
2x	12.7%	14.3%	19.4%	-
3x	4.26%	4.7%	3.2%	4.7%
4x	9.6%	7.14%	12.9%	9.5%
5x	7.4%	9.5%	6.4%	4.7%
6x	1.1%	2.38%	-	-
>10x	10.6%	16.67%	6.4%	4.7%

4.*Does OUC have enough searching options or not* ?

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
YES	54.26%	69.0%	38.7%	47.62%
NO	22.34%	16.67%	29.0%	23.8%

5.*Do you wish searching options to be combine?*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
YES	58.5%	47.62%	70.97%	61.9%
NO	18.1%	30.95%	6.45%	9.52%

6.*Evaluation of search fastness.*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
Enough	51.06%	57.14%	41.9%	52.38%
To small	26.5%	23.81%	35.5%	19.0%

7.*Searching results display is:*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
GOOD	65.95%	66.7%	64.5%	66.7%
INCOMPLETE	11.7%	14.3%	12.95%	4.7%

8.*Reasons for OUC usage*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
Prep.exams	18.08%	2.4%	9.67%	61.9%
Preparing papers	41.49%	61.9%	35.5%	9.5%
Scientific improv.	40.4%	50.0%	51.2%	4.7%

9.*Do you know which the member libraries are?*

	Whole population	ATC	Graduated engineers	Students
YES	37.23%	45.3%	41.3%	14.3%
NO	62.8%	54.8%	57.5%	85.7%