Next Generation OPAC for Academic Libraries Management: A Perception

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Abstract. This paper descries the information expectations of library users using Online Public Access Catalogue in a new era of information technology. Advanced features should be available for library users in the next generationOPAC to meet their information needs precisely. New Generation of information technology thinks far from today's searching tool of library catalogues. A serious consideration is required for improving OPAC and its searching feature of information. This paper will look at the present feature of the OPAC and expected features for searching information in academic libraries.

Keywords: Next generation library catalogue, web 2.0, library 2.0.

1   Introduction

"It has been suggested in the literature that the current generation of library customers favor using internet search tool, predominantly Google over library catalogues. This may because users perceive these services to be more user-friendly, quicker and easily accessible" (Lewis, 2008; Sadeh, 2007). In the information age where every moment has been witnessing of change and libraries too are embracing this significant change to transform its face and purview. Before the advancement of Information and Communication Technology the nature of searching information were deferent and now the whole scenario has been transformed in academic libraries. Although, the concept is not new to librarians but its features already being discussed and implemented in library catalogues. " The real transformation of OPAC started in late 90's when OPACs embraced the internet technologies and the integrated Library systems started using the internet as a main medium of access to the catalogue. The amalgamation of different utilities and features clearly suggest that "in fact the OPAC was probably the inspiration for many of the cutting edge services we find on the internet today" **(Fox 2007)**. "The impending evolution of the OPAC is undoubtedly the result of the evolution of the web and internet services. The influence of web 2.0 tools and techniques especially concepts such as media on demand, social networking, tagging, blogs, wikis and news feeds seems to be influencing the

outlook of the future online library catalogue" **(jetty et all 2011)**.However, it is necessary to discuss over the concept of next generation catalogue and how the expectations of library users can be materialized in new platform of OPAC.

1.1   Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is a second generation in the development of the World wide Web, conceived as a combination of concepts, trends, and technologies that focus on user collaboration, sharing user generated content, and social networking (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/web-2-0). It is described as a medium in which interactive experience of accessing information has been focused.
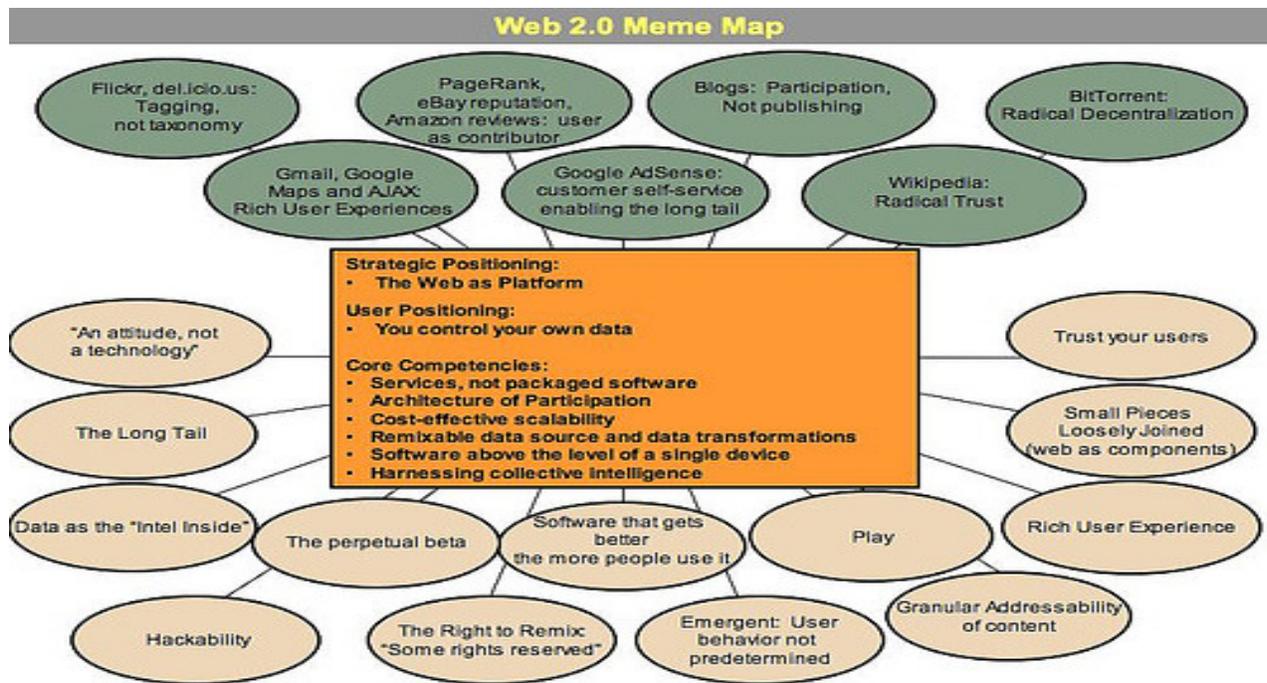

Figure 1: web 2.0 and its scope

1.2   Library 2.0

"It is a model for library service that encourages constant and purposeful change, inviting user participation in the creation of both the physical and the virtual services they want, supported by consistently evaluating services. It also attempts to reach new users and better serve current ones through improved customer-driven offerings. Each component by itself is a step toward better serving our users." **(http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2010/05/technology/library-2-0/#_)**

2.   Next Generation Library Catalogue

The phrase "next-generation library catalogues" refers to the new OPAC designs, which aim to provide better functionality in terms of library collections and services, and provide a better search experience to users **(Breeding, 2007**). Users expect more information application from library OPAC.

2.1   Present catalogue and its issues:

Today's library user has become a quite web savvy. The experience of a library user on web and in searching information has become moderately better. The existing catalogues seem not to fulfill their information needs; therefore the catalogues must be driven by advance level of functionalities which targets the user group's information needs, ways of searching and more. Here, some of the shortcomings of present catalogues are enumerated as:

- ♦ Complex search interface that might not be sufficiently intuitive
- ♦ not consistent with the well-established user interface conventions
- ♦ Unable to rank the results according to relevancy or interest
- ♦ limited in scope: does not include i) article level searching ii) online display of article content iii) search and display of content from local digital library collections: photographs, manuscripts, local newspapers, genealogical materials, and the like iv) Contents of an institutional repository.
- ♦ limited to print materials and are less able to address electronic content
- ♦ Unable to deliver online to the users
- ♦ lacks social networking features in engaging library users" **(Kumar, 2008)**

2.2   Why Next Generation OPAC

It is been seen in almost all areas of development that one replaces another one bypassing of times. As "library is a growing organism" and that is why it embraces all kind of suitable developments running in trends for its areas. The present libraries catalogues are not lived up to the standards of users expectations. And this may lead to decreasing footfalls in the libraries and adverse effect on user's interest for searching and using information available in the library. Almost all search engines for example Google, Bing, yahoo (Common search engines) and area specific searching catalogues like World Cat, Indcat, SOPAC etc are being provided the most

inviting and interesting features of searching information with supportive solutions. Therefore, libraries are responsible to look after its users expectations of desired information, formats, sources etc. By providing maximum options and features into a library catalogue, libraries will definitely get success in retaining its current users and can invite more patrons for maximum use of library, as the ultimate goal of libraries is to serve its patrons at utmost level of satisfaction.

3.   Features of Next Generation OPAC

In the era of Amazon and Google libraries are too sincere about what to offer to their users. Next Generation OPAC ensures almost all the possible ways to search the information, its formats, suggestions, sources of information, grammar etc. Features of next generation OPAC's are:

3.1   *Multiple choices for search*

This has been observed in most of the catalogues that they do not provide the post – search option. "Endeca is cataloguing software that enables 2.0 functionalities with which an OPAC can make meaningful post search outputs. It is successfully implemented in North Carolina State University Libraries at http://www2.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/search (Figure 2). Endeca provides a faceted browse to the library catalogue. It provides several post search choices with which a record can be viewed clearly on the results screen page. An Endeca OPAC display does not enable tagging, annotation, or user aggregation services such as recommendation engines. The result of the search can be narrowed by subject, genre, and format; narrowed by call number range; brief view and full view of the title details; sort by relevance and so on."(**Sridevi Jetty &others**)
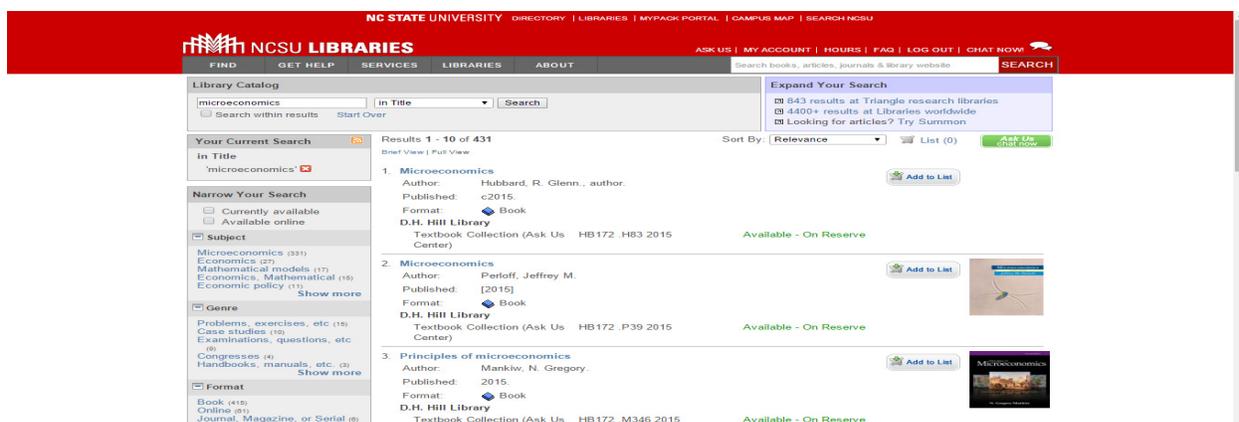

Figure2: Endeca-North Carolina State University Libraries
(https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/endeca/)

3.2   *User Interface*:

    User interface is considered one of the significant feature in next generation catalogue to attract the users of library. University of Illinois at Urbana –Campaign's library catalogue is proving user centric interface in figure 3. In which a user is allowed to create his/her account, can share the bibliographic details, mobile library access and more.
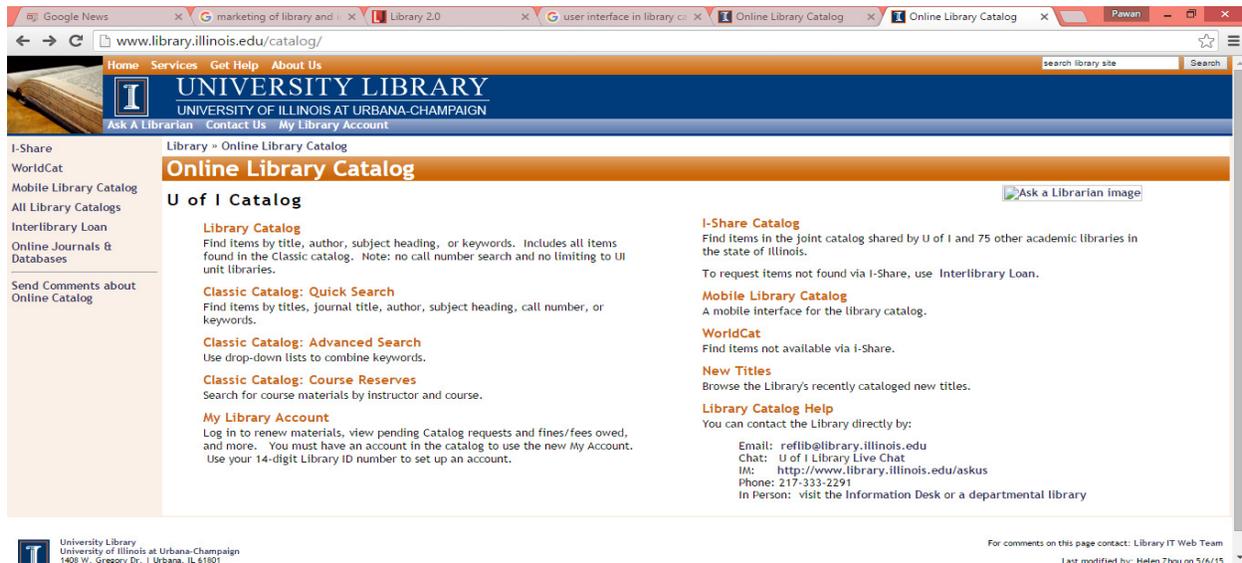

Figure 3: University of Illinois at Urbana –Campaign
(http://www.library.illinois.edu/catalog/)

3.3   *Faceted Browsing*:

    "Faceted browsing provides the user with an overview of their search results via a list of categories or facets, from which they can select sub-facets to refine their results. These facets are derived from the item's metadata record and generally encompass categories such as author, subject and format" **(Emanuel, 2011)** .This has observed that faceted navigation attracts more users and provides easy accessible platform to those library users who do not know how to get their appropriate information.

3.4   *Tagging*:

    Tagging allows users to attach keywords to item records, which may enhance personal retrieval and improve the browsing experience for other users, particularly when they are seeking items on specific topics according to popularity or currency **(Anfinnsen et al., 2011; Sadeh, 2008).**

3.5   *Reviews***:**

Reviews of books and other useful reading materials help to the students for doing research and finding the right resource for study. The relevancy of resource lies of reviews too. Therefore, Next generation OPAC may allow the users to get this important information.

3.6   *Basket or e-shelf functions***:**

New generation OPACs often have the function for the users to save material such as search result to a basket or e-shelf. For example, the e-shelf features in Primo allow the users to save a list of items record. It also allows the users to: write notes; e-mail and print bibliographic details; save search queries; and pus the information in to reference management tool (**Lewis,2008)**

3.7   *Spell Correction:*

A "Did you mean…?" feature also checks queries against terms indexed within the local database to determine if another possible term has more hits than the original term in order to provide the user the option to resubmit the search with a different spelling. Various sort options are supported, including date, title, author, and "most popular."(Kumar, Vinit 2008)

4.   Conclusion

Issues of present OPACs have paved the ways for new changes in next generation catalogue. User's expectations from library have become high. Although, some of the libraries are working to fulfill the information needs by offering the best ways of searching information. However, Improvement in present catalogues is very much needed. Those libraries are offering the catalogues which are not designed as per the user's needs, not considered as next generation catalogue. By providing one point information of user's query and related information options for user's information search can only be the parameters of generation next catalogue. It is a visionary change in current catalogue which is waiting for its accomplishment yet.

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