ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand the foreign postgraduate students’ OPAC using behavior at the University of Malaya Library (UML). The study attempts to investigate their ability in using OPAC, their knowledge about the OPAC, the reasons that affect or reduce their effectiveness in using OPAC.

A questionnaire survey was chosen for this study. Sixty written questionnaires were distributed, and forty-two questionnaires were returned.

The study revealed that most of the students have come to study at the University of Malaya from developing countries with various levels of OPAC using abilities. The majority of them have indicated that there are no OPAC facilities in their home countries. Results indicated that OPACs are mostly available in university libraries. The majority of the respondents had not used the OPAC facilities in their country of origin before coming to the University of Malaya. All respondents have used the UML’s OPAC and they used it to find book and journal titles but did not use it often for other reasons. The most popular search types are title search, subject search, author/title keyword search, and author search respectively. The most frequently conducted search is the title search. The results showed that the majority of the respondents found that usage of OPAC is easy. The most obvious reason they gave is that the instructions in OPAC are clear. They also stated difficulties, and the most obvious difficulty is never used OPAC facilities before. The results also indicate that
the students are moderately successful in locating items. They claimed that the UML’s OPAC have helped in their studies and it is attractive. The most popular OPAC learning methods are through self-study and from the library staff. Most of them did not receive any training on use of OPAC at UML and for those who attended the training programme, the majority of them noted that it was successful.

The study found out that the students are not aware of other facilities that are available in OPAC. They often conduct simple searches such as keyword searching and tend to conduct known item searches since they are unaware of other features available.
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