# RESEARCH ARTICLE

## OPAC IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY- A STUDY

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
|---|---|
| | The present study is undertaken in St. John's College, Anchal in order to know the use of OPAC by students. The main objective of the study are to assess as to what extent the users are using OPAC and to find out the purpose of use of OPAC. Majority of the respondents (i.e., 162 which is 75%) use OPAC alone for search. 15 respondents (6.94%) use all types of catalogues according their needs and circumstances A big number of respondents (192, i.e., 88.89%) use the OPAC/Web OPAC for searching mainly Books. Out of 216 respondents 98 (45.37%) prefer Title search using the OPAC/Web OPAC. Subject search, Any Word/Name search and Author search are given first preference by 53 (24.54%), 48 (22.22%) and 17 (7.87%) respectively. |

## INTRODUCTION

Library catalogues originated as manuscript list, arranged by format or in a rough alphabetical arrangement by author or title. Printed catalogue sometimes called dictionary catalogues, began to be published in the early modern period and enabled scholars outside a library to gain an idea of its contents. In the end of the 20th Century the Online Public Access Catalogue was developed. Online Catalogue has greatly enhanced the usability of catalogues thanks to the rise of Machine Readable Cataloguing MARC standard in the 1960. Rules governing the creation of catalogue MARC records include not only formal cataloguing rules like AACR2. OPAC is the modern and flexible form of the catalogue. Harrod's Librarian Glossary defines Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) as "the catalogue of a library or information centre made available to users online and generally providing a variety of additional facilities such as loans information, online reservations and library news. With the demise of card catalogue the need for stressing the online public Access part has disappeared and they are now frequently just catalogues"(prytherch,2005). OPAC is the modern and flexible form of catalogue, usually instantaneous and sophisticated access to any recorded information within a computer. OPAC began to appear in libraries in the early 1980s.

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In the new system, data can be spread within computer and them the required entry can be retrieved immediately through OPAC system in any format. The OPAC quickly gained wide acceptance among the public who preferred them to their traditional card catalogue.

Online Public Catalog must provide searching and locating features for your online public access catalog. Specifically, OPAC offers the following key features.

- Patrons can perform various levels of searching such as Browse, Heading, keyword, Control number, and Expert.
- Patrons can select which index they wish to search such as title, author, and subject.
- Patron empowerment such as searching/viewing of own patron record.
- Filtering of searches
- Browse searches are accumulated on tabs.
- Access to record views such as Full, MARC, Holdings.

The present study is undertaken in St. John's College, Anchal in order to know the use of OPAC by students. The population taken for this study is the students of St. John's College, Anchal. The total number of students including UG and PG is 1283. Since the size of the population of students is very large, a sample of 450 students (39.16%) is taken for this study. Proportionate number of students from each department and each batch were randomly selected for this study.

## Objective of the study

### The main objective of the study are

- To assess as to what extent the users are using OPAC
- To find out the purpose of use of OPAC

## Literature Review

Kumar (2015) studied the use and usage of OPAC in public libraries in Chandigarh City, India.  Attempt has been made to know the usage of OPAC in public libraries in terms of; users frequency, purpose of use, search pattern, search approach, usage of help tips and help, problem faced and satisfaction level.  Total 289 questionnaires out 300, duly filled by the respondents were received and analysed using the simple percentage approach.  The final result revealed that there is lack of computer skill and awareness on part of users, lack of proper orientation and cooperation from the library staff. . In the last suggestions have been made on the basis of the study for the effective and proper utilization of OPAC and its services.

Sarika, Reena, & Rupali, (2015) Investigated the use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) by the students of various universities of Mumbai & Navi Mumbai districts of Maharashtra state of India. The survey research method and questionnaire as a data collection tool was applied for the study. It was observed that almost all respondents were using the OPAC and it was mostly used to find out study material only. Most of the students preferred to search OPAC by author name. Nearly half of the respondents were confident in searching information in OPAC. Students recommended that a complete specification of the books should be provided. They also suggested that spell check and book review as a additional features should be added to the existing OPAC.

## METHODOLOGY

The methods used for data collection are mainly literature review, questionnaires, observation and informal conversation with the librarian and the library staff.  A questionnaire with different questions was prepared for collecting data from the students.   The questions are included in the questionnaire based on the objectives of the study.  Observation method was used for verifying the data collected through questionnaires. The investigator personally visited the library many times in order to ensure that the answers given in the questionnaire are true to facts.

## Analysis

### Population and Sample

Data were collected from the students using questionnaire. The total number of students in St. John's College Anchal is 1270.  Since the population is too large to manage, a sample of 300 students (i.e., 23.62% of the total population) were taken for the study. The investigator spent two days in the college library and distributed questionnaires to the first 300 library visitors irrespective of department, year, gender, etc.   The total population and the sample selected are given in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 Total Population and Sample**

| Category | Total Population | Sample Taken |
|---|---|---|
| Students | 1270 | 300 (23.62%) |

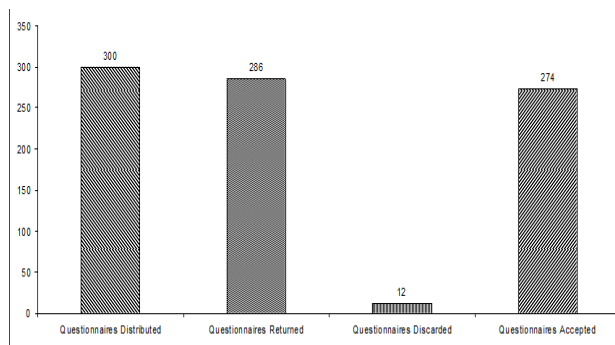## Number of Responses

The questionnaires distributed among the students and the responses received are given in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2  Number of Responses**

| Category | Questionnaires Distributed | Questionnaires Returned | Questionnaires Discarded | Questionnaires Accepted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students | 300 | 286 (95.33) | 12 (4.2%) | 274 (95.8%) |

Table 5.2  shows that out of 300 questionnaires distributed among the students 286 were returned.  Out of these filled questionnaires 12 (4.2%) were discarded due to the serious mistakes they contained such as marking both options for "Yes" or "No" questions, writing unnecessary comments which show that they have not taken this questionnaire seriously, etc.  The questionnaires finally considered are 274 and it is 21.58% of the total population and 91.33% of the sample selected.



**Figure 1. Column Diagram Showing the Number of Responses**

## FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY VISIT

The following Table 4.3 shows the frequency of the library visit by the respondents.

**Table 5.3 Frequency of Library Visit**

| Sl. No | Frequency of Visit | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Every Day | 37 (13.5%) |
| 2 | 2 – 3 Times in a Week | 64 (23.36%) |
| 3 | Once in a Week | 95 (34.67%) |
| 4 | Once in Two Weeks | 52 (18.98%) |
| 5 | Rarely | 26 (9.49%) |
| Total | | 274 (100%) |

According to Table 5.3, students who visit the library those visiting the library once in a week form the biggest group (95, i.e., 34.67% of the sample population).   64 among the respondents (i.e., 23.36%) say that they visit the library at least two times a week.   Those visiting the library once in two weeks (i.e., 52, which is 18.98% of the sample) come at the third place.  37 students (i.e., 13.5%) visit the library daily. The smallest group (i.e., 26 which is 9.49%) is formed of those visiting the library rarely. The above table makes it clear that majority of the students visit the library at least once in a week.
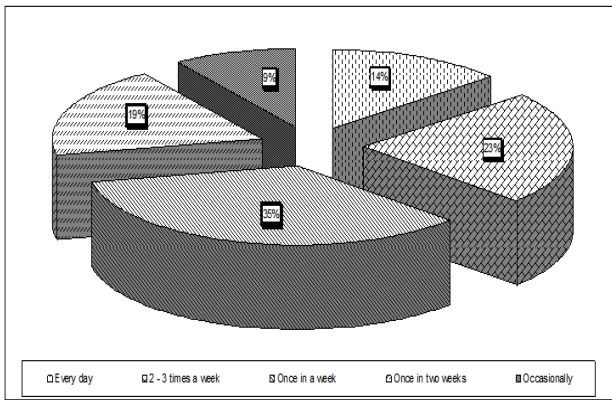
**Figure 2. Frequency of Library Visit**

## Use of lending and reference services

Users come to the library to get different types of services such as circulation, reference, reading room, internet, reprography, etc. Since this study is focused on the use of OPAC, the investigator wanted to know about the use of lending and reference services by the students. OPAC is mainly aimed to know about the documents available for borrowing and reference. Those who come to the library for purposes other than the use of circulation and reference services do not have the need of using the library catalogue.

**Table 5.4 Use of Lending and Reference Service**

| Sl. No | Services Used | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yes to Lending Service Alone | 74 (27%) |
| 2 | Yes to Reference Service Alone | 18 (6.57%) |
| 3 | Yes to Both | 148 (54%) |
| 4 | No to Both | 34 (12.4%) |
| Total | | 274 (100%) |

34 (12.4%) out of the 274 users do not use circulation or reference service. That means they do not have the need of using the library OPAC. Hence, those who do not use the circulation and reference services are excluded from the study at this stage and the sample population considered hereafter is only 240.

## Use of library catalogue

The respondents who said that they make use of the circulation and reference services were asked if they use the library catalogue for searching the documents available in the library. The answers given to this question are given in the following Table 5.5.

**Table 5.5 Use of Library Catalogue**

| Sl. No | Response | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yes | 216 (90%) |
| 2 | No | 24 (10%) |
| Total | | 240 (100%) |

Out of the 240 respondents, 216 (90%) use the library catalogue for knowing the availability of the documents of their interest in the library. 24 (10%) respondents do not use the library catalogue; they directly go the stack or reference section for taking documents. The group of 24 'catalogue non users' are eliminated and the sample considered hereafter is only 216.

## Type of catalogue used

Card Catalogue, OPAC and Web OPAC are available in the college library. The respondents were asked to indicate the type of catalogue they usually use. This question was in view of eliminating those who use card catalogue alone from the study.

**Table 4.6 Type of Catalogue Used**

| Sl. No | Type of Catalogue | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | OPAC alone | 162 (75%) |
| 2 | Web OPAC alone | 3 (1.39%) |
| 3 | Card Catalogue alone | 0 (0%) |
| 4 | Card Catalogue, OPAC and Web OPAC | 15 (6.94%) |
| 5 | Both OPAC and Web OPAC | 36 (16.67%) |
| Total | | 216 (100%) |

Majority of the respondents (i.e., 162 which is 75%) use OPAC alone for search. 15 respondents (6.94%) use all types of catalogues according their needs and circumstances. Three among them (1.39%) use Web OPAC alone. There is no one who uses Card Catalogue alone. Hence it is very clear from Table 5.6 that all the 216 respondents use OPAC or WEB OPAC. The most preferred type of catalogue is OPAC.
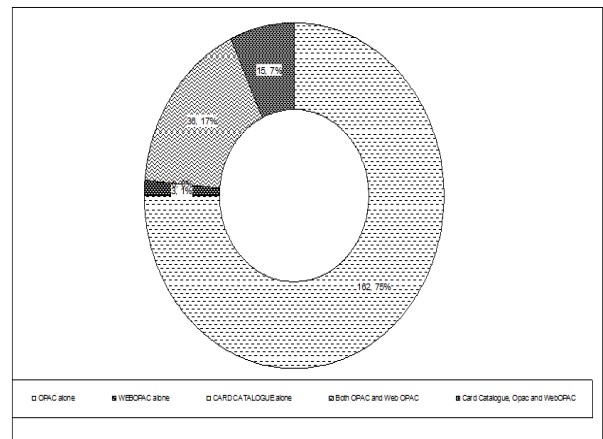


**Figure 3. Doughnut Diagram showing the Type of Catalogue Used**

## Type of materials searched using opac/web opac

The responses to the question regarding the type of materials searched using the OPAC/Web OPAC are given in Table 5.7.

**Table 5.7. Type of Materials Searched Using OPAC/Web OPAC**

| Sl. No | Type of Materials | Number of Respondents according to the Order of Preference | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I | II | III | IV |
| 1 | Books | 192 (88.89%) | 24 (11.11%) | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Reference Books | 24 (11.11%) | 72 (33.33%) | 119 (55.09%) | 1 (0.46%) |
| 3 | Journals | 0 | 18 (8.33%) | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | CDs and Digital Resources | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Any Material on a particular Topic | 0 | 102 (47.22%) | 97 (44.91%) | 17 (7.87%) |
| Total | | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) | 18 (8.33%) |

**First Preference**

A big number of respondents (192, i.e., 88.89%) use the OPAC/Web OPAC for searching mainly Books. The rest of the respondents (24, i.e., 11.11%) give first preference to searching Reference Books using the OPAC/Web OPAC.
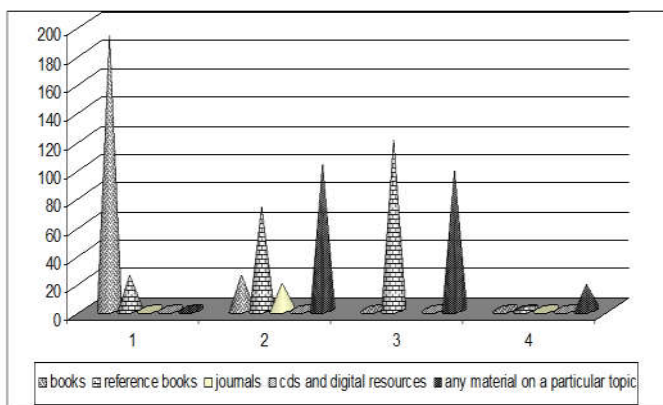
**Second Preference**

102 (47.22%) of the respondents give second preference to any material on a particular topic. Reference Books, Books and Journals are given second preference by 72 (33.33%), 24 (11.11%) and 18 (8.33%) respondents respectively.

**Third Preference**

Reference Books (119, i.e., 55.09%) and any material on a particular topic (97, i.e., 44.91%) occupy the third place in the order preference.

**Fourth Preference**

17 respondents (7.87%) give fourth preference to any material on a particular topic. Only one respondent (0.46%) give fourth preference to Reference Books. The College Library has a good collection of more than 200 educational CDs. But it can be found from the table that none of the respondents search solely for CDs or Digital Resources in the OPAC.



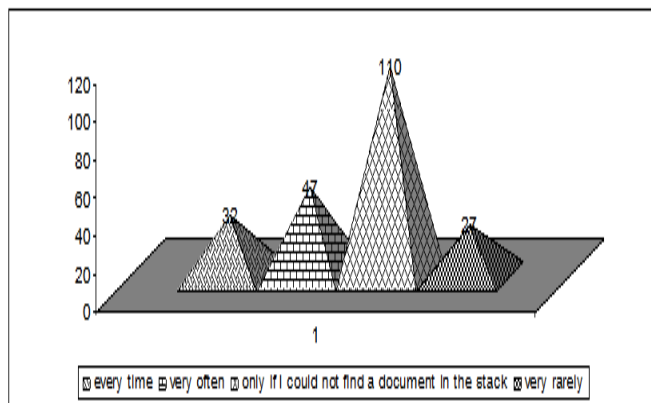**Figure 4. Cone Diagram showing the Type of Materials Searched Using OPAC/Web OPAC**

**Frequency of Using Library OPAC/WEB OPAC**

**Table 5.8. Frequency of Library Visit**

| Sl. No | Frequency of Visit | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Every time when I come to the library for borrowing/referring book(s) | 32 (14.8%) |
| 2 | Very often | 47 (21.8%) |
| 3 | Only if I could not find a document in the stack | 110 (50.9%) |
| 5 | Rarely | 27 (12.5%) |
| | Total | 216 (100%) |

Table 5.8 shows that more than half of the sample population (110, i.e., 50.9%) use the OPAC/Web OPAC only if he/she could not find a document in the stack. 47 respondents (21.8%) uses the OPAC/Web OPAC very often. Those who use the OPAC/Web OPAC every time when they come to the library for using circulation or reference service come in the third position (32, i.e., 14.8%). One eighth of the sample population (27, i.e., 12.5%) uses the OPAC/Web OPAC rarely.



**Figure 5. Pyramid Diagram showing the Frequency of Library Visit**

**Searching Field**

**First Preference**

As shown in Table 5.9, out of 216 respondents 98 (45.37%) prefer Title search using the OPAC/Web OPAC. Subject search, Any Word/Name search and Author search are given first preference by 53 (24.54%), 48 (22.22%) and 17 (7.87%) respectively.

**Second Preference**

87 (i.e., 40.28%) respondents say that their second preference in searching OPAC/Web OPAC is Title. For 71 (32.87%) the second preference is Author. Subject and Any Word/Name search are preferred by 33 (15.28%) and 25 (11.57%) respondents respectively.

**Third Preference**

Subject (99, i.e., 45.83%), Author (92, i.e., 42.59%), Title (24, i.e., 11.11%) and Any Word/Name (1, i.e., 0.46%) come at the third position in the order of preference of OPAC/Web OPAC search fields.

**Fourth Preference**

Fourth preference in the selection of search field is given to Any Word/Name by 139 (64.35%), Author by 36 (16.67%), Subject by 31 (14.31%), Title by 7 (3.24%) and Call No. by 3 (1.34%) respondents.

**Fifth Preference**

Among the respondents 209 (96.76%) give fifth preference in the selection of search field to Call Number, 4 (1.85%) to Publisher and 3 (1.39%) to Any Word/Name.

**Sixth Preference**

Publisher (212, i.e., 98.15%) and Call Number (4, i.e., 1.85%) only are given sixth preference by the respondents.

**Table 5.9 Searching Field**

| Sl.no. | Searching field | Number of Respondents according to the Order of Preference | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I | II | III | IV | V | VI |
| 1 | Author | 17 (7.87%) | 71 (32.87%) | 92 (42.59%) | 36 (16.67%) | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Title | 98 (45.37%) | 87 (40.28%) | 24 (11.11%) | 7 (3.24%) | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Subject | 53 (24.54%) | 33 (15.28%) | 99 (45.83%) | 31 (14.35%) | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Call No | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 (1.39%) | 209 (96.76%) | 4 (1.85%) |
| 5 | Publisher | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 (1.85%) | 212 (98.15%) |
| 6 | Any Word/Name | 48 (22.22%) | 25 (11.57%) | 1 (0.46%) | 139 (64.35%) | 3 (1.39%) | 0 |
| Total | | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) | 216 (100%) |

## Effectiveness of locating documents using OPAC/WEB OPAC

**Table 5.10 Effectiveness of Locating Documents Using OPAC/Web OPAC**

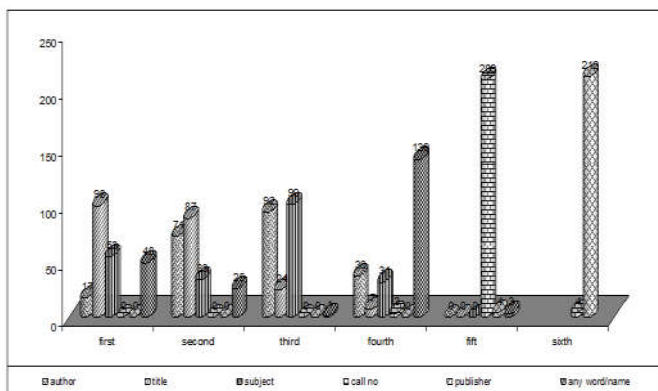| Sl. No | Helpfulness of the OPAC | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yes | 216 (100%) |
| 2 | No | 0 |
| Total | | 216 (100%) |

Table 5.10 makes it clear that there is no difference in the opinion that the OPAC/Web OPAC is effective in locating documents.

## Rate of success in locating documents using OPAC/Web OPAC

**Table 5.11 Rate of Success in Locating Documents Using OPAC/Web OPAC**

| Sl. No | Rate of Success in Locating Documents using OPAC/Web OPAC | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 100% | 32 (14.81%) |
| 2 | 75% | 109 (50.46%) |
| 3 | 50% | 52 (24.07%) |
| 4 | 25% | 18 (8.33%) |
| 5 | Less than 25% | 5 (2.32%) |
| Total | | 216 (100%) |

109, which is more than half of the respondents (50.46%), are 75% successful in locating the documents using the OPAC/Web OPAC. Those who are 50% satisfied come in the second place (52, i.e., 24.07%) and those who are 100% satisfied (32, i.e., 14.81%) are in the third place. Level of success is 25% for 18 (8.33%) respondents. A small group of five (2.32%) respondents say that they are only less than 25% successful in locating documents using OPAC/Web OPAC.



**Figure 6. Cylinder Diagram showing the Choice of Searching Field**

## Training in Using OPAC/WEB OPAC

Table 4.12 explains the answers to the question regarding the training the users got for using the OPAC/Web OPAC.

**Table 4.12 Training in Using OPAC/Web OPAC**

| Sl. No | Training Given by | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Library Staff (during library orientation programme) | 167 (77.31%) |
| 2 | Other Students | 21 (9.72%) |
| 3 | Using Printed Instructions | 0 |
| 4 | By him/herself without any help | 23 (10.65%) |
| 5 | Still rely on library staff or students to use the OPAC | 5 (2.32%) |
| Total | | 216 (100%) |

Majority of the respondents (167, i.e., 77.31%) say that they were taught to use the OPAC/Web OPAC by the library staff during the library orientation programme. There are 23 respondents (10.65%) who learned to use the OPAC/Web OPAC by themselves without the support of any others. 21 respondents (9.27%) were given guidance by other students in using the OPAC/Web OPAC. There are 5 respondents (2.32%) who are still incapable of using OPAC by themselves and therefore relying on others for using the OPAC/Web OPAC.

## Asking assistance to the library staff during opac/web opac search

**Table 4.13 Asking Assistance to the Library Staff**

| Sl. No | Seeking Assistance from the Library Staff | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yes | 93 (43.06%) |
| 2 | No | 123 (56.94%) |
| Total | | 216 (100%) |

Majority of the respondents (123, i.e., 56.94%) do not ask any assistance from the library staff during OPAC/Web OPAC search. Rest of the respondents (93, i.e., 43.06%) seeks assistance whenever needed.

## Satisfaction in the assistance given by the library staff

The responses to the satisfaction of the respondents in the assistance given by the library staff during OPAC/Web OPAC search are given in Table 4.14.

**Table 5.14 Satisfaction in the Assistance Given by the Library Staff**

| Sl. No | Satisfaction in the Assistance | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Fully Satisfied | 45 (48.39%) |
| 2 | Somewhat Satisfied | 33 (35.48%) |
| 3 | Not Satisfied | 15 (16.13%) |
| Total | | 93 (100%) |

45 (48.39%) responded that they are fully satisfied with the assistance provided by the library staff during OPAC/Web OPAC Search. 33 (35.48%) are somewhat satisfied whereas 15 (16.13%) are not satisfied with the assistance given by the library staff.
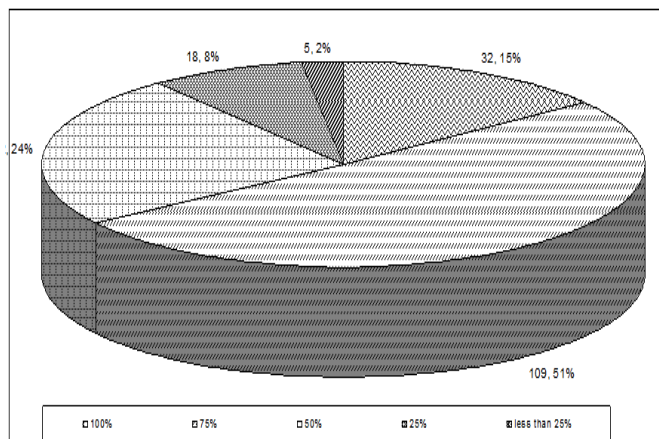


**Figure 7. Pie Diagram showing the Rate of Success in Locating Documents Using OPAC/Web OPAC**

## RESULTS

### USE OF OPAC

- It is found that majority of the student use the OPAC in ST.JOHN'S College.
- A big number of student really on OPAC after having failed to locate documents in the      library. There detractively go to stack and search books in the shelf.
- Many of the student make only simple search using the OPAC. Almost all are quite unaware of advanced search options.
- Very few students' access web OPAC.
- *6.2 Purposes of use*
- Majority of students use OPAC to search only books and reference work.
- None of the students use OPAC Searching digital resources.
- Many are satisfied with the support given by the library staff in the use of OPAC.

## Conclusion

The OP AC is mostly used by students and librarians, academic staff. The user usually comes to the OPAC with a particular need for information. This is due to the fact that students, research scholars and academic staff seek up to date information about the material of the library. Findings revealed that most of the users are satisfied with the OPAC and its services but they are not aware of all its services. As OPAC must cater for a wide range of users, most whom do not have skills in online searching, researchers will continues to identify the problems and find their solutions, especially in subject searching which as of now offers more problems than promises. So far the focus has been on the recognition of the problems at the indexing and searching stage but the future attempts appears to be aimed at developing user friendly interface and knowledge based systems wherein users' obligations regarding search strategy search logic etc.

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