

NEXT-GENERATION CATALOGUES: HOW ARE THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN KENYA FARING?

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Abstract

The library catalogue has changed over the years from a card catalogue to its electronic successor, the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), to what is called the next-generation library catalogue, sometimes referred to as the library 2.0 catalogue or 'the third-generation catalogue'. The purpose of this study was to investigate the current state of catalogues in academic libraries in Kenya and to evaluate whether these libraries have incorporated features of the next-generation catalogues in their OPACs. The study applied a checklist of features commonly identified as characteristics of the next-generation catalogue to examine whether the OPACs of university libraries in Kenya are comparable to the next-generation library catalogue. The findings of the study showed that libraries in Kenya have made some progress towards transforming their OPACs to the next-generation catalogue but have not reached the ideal. None of the OPACs has all the features evaluated. Progress has been made with features, such as enhanced content, simple keyword search and faceted navigation. However, none of the catalogues has federated searching capabilities. The study also found out that close to half of the libraries which have their OPACs available online are using Koha as their Library Management System (LMS). This article provides valuable information for library policy makers interested in modernising their catalogues or acquiring discovery tools for their institution. The article may also be a useful tool for evaluating OPACs modules of the integrated LMS, especially for libraries that are in the process of selecting a suitable LMS.