CHAPTER - VI

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The following suggestions and conclusion have emerged out of the interpretation of the data dealt with the Chapter V. The suggestions offered by the researcher are in consonance with the objectives and hypotheses enumerated in Chapter I of the work.

The review of literature on OPAC studies and the findings of the present study of the three libraries namely BCL, MIT and RECT reveals that users have shown positive attitude to this new form of library catalogue namely OPAC. Although, they expressed certain problems as discussed in Chapters - IV and V concerning their experience with OPAC system environment, working environment and coverage in OPAC, the ways and means to overcome the problems and means for improvement are suggested in this Chapter.

The suggestions have been presented as follows:

6.1 Suggestions, in general, common to all the libraries under study
6.2 Suggestions for the improvement of OPAC in BCL.
6.3 Suggestions for the improvement of OPAC in MIT
6.4 Suggestions for the improvement of OPAC in RECT
6.1 SUGGESTIONS COMMON TO ALL THE LIBRARIES UNDER STUDY

6.1.1 There is an urgent need to plan for future revisions for OPACs under study which is essential in view of the potential development particularly in the area of subject retrieval techniques.

6.1.2 Efforts are to be made to convert and rejuvenate the existing OPACs as more user friendly and an efficient information retrieval tool.

6.1.3 It is suggested to provide direct browsing facility in all the OPACs under study so as to enhance the retrieval performance of the existing systems.

6.1.4 It would be more feasible that some of the new developments in the design of OPACs shall be incorporated such as creation of workstations, and the application of improved software technology to enhance the potentiality of all the online catalogues to provide improved access to library materials.

6.1.5 The user system interaction with richer dialogue, online assistance, online guidance to enhance the ease of use and retrieval effectiveness of the existing OPAC systems under study need to be improved.

6.1.6 It is suggested to use controlled vocabulary tools such as thesaurus, schemes of classification in the preparation of indexes in order to facilitate the search by terms not explicitly given in the title of the
document. In other words use of vocabulary control devices would have a positive impact in enhancing the subject retrieval capabilities of the OPACs can be searched only with the keyword in the titles.

6.1.7 It is suggested that the OPACs under study can develop a community information module that will facilitate the libraries to mount local information data base, there by it is possible to enhance the usual coverage of OPAC to library holdings.

6.1.8 The OPACs in the libraries under study shall be designed to index every intellectual work in the collections not only books and periodical holdings but also articles in periodicals held by the library, pamphlets, maps, government publications, standards, patents, technical reports, theses and dissertations and the whole range of the materials acquired by the respective library.

6.1.9 The OPACs under study could provide on-screen explanations and examples that illustrate the differences between keyword searching and subject heading searching.

6.1.10 The staff of the libraries under study have to serve as better liaison in instructing and reorienting the users. In addition to the present system of providing formal instructions, online help screens and staff assistance as and when required, they may consider the launching of "peer instructions¹" which is important in learning the OPAC that provides a better level of user satisfaction.
3.1.11 There is an urgent need in all the libraries under study for an improved user instruction and inclusion of subject indexes with more cross references coupled with software based solutions such as spell checkers, programmes, flip personal names and improved index browsing screens.

3.1.12 In order to convert the existing OPACs to take active participation in intellectual exchange, it is suggested to develop a voice and tone that reflect both institutional persona and accomplish quick rapport with users.

6.1.13 The OPAC terminals in all the libraries under study may be connected with most sophisticated printers so as to enable the users to print the search results.

6.1.14 The OPAC systems under study have to make necessary changes to display related word lists directing the users to more general terminology. In other words, when users enter subject headings that are not assigned to any library materials, the OPAC shall display a list of terms broader than the entered heading with an explanatory message.

6.1.15 The OPAC systems under study have to enhance its capabilities so as to show a list of subject headings alphabetically adjacent to the entered term, class number areas and the number of books found in each class number area.
6.1.16 It is suggested that the designers of the OPACs in the libraries under study shall develop interfaces that differentiate by the kind of search being performed as well as the level of experience of the users performing the search.

6.1.17 It is suggested that the OPACs of these libraries under study may provide online access to them on the INTERNET.

6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF BCL OPAC

6.2.1 Necessary training by the staff may be given periodically or as and when required by the users to facilitate them to gain familiarity with the proper use of Boolean logic technique while searching the OPAC.

6.2.2 The OPAC system environment of BCL has to incorporate the features such as "alteration of search according to users wish", "ability to print search results" and "ability to tell the status of the books" in the library more explicitly.

6.2.3 It is further suggested that the OPAC of the BCL has to upgrade the system environment with the features such as "ability to search the codes", "ability to change the order of items displayed" and "ability to view list of words related to search".

6.2.4 The existing working environment of OPAC in BCL has to be upgraded with better lighting facilities, maintenance of silence and other physical facilities.
6.2.5 The BCL shall at once revoke the orientation programme which has been hither to suspended, that would enhance the quality of working environment and would yield an improved and result in an improved users' satisfaction.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF MIT OPAC

6.3.1 Efforts are to be made, by the library staff to create awareness among the users about the existence of OPAC in the library by placing the same in the appropriate locations with more terminals spread at various points in the library and also at various teaching departments.

6.3.2 The MIT has to commence periodical orientation programmes to facilitate the users in order to gain acquaintance with the OPAC system.

6.3.3 The OPAC of MIT shall incorporate the features such as Boolean logic search facility and search through codes and acronyms.

6.3.4 The MIT OPAC system environment has to be enhanced by upgrading the features such as "ability to search the codes", "alteration of search according to user wish", "ability to view the list of words related to the users search" and "ability to print the search results" so as to make the system environment more effective and user friendly.

6.3.5 There is need for OPAC to link its data base with its parent organisation namely Anna University library data base which is being
created. It is reliably understood that the Anna University library has made enough facility for the data base creation. It is further suggested to inter link the terminals through LAN environment.

6.3.6 The existing working environment of MIT OPAC has to be upgraded with better physical facilities such as lighting, printer and instructional materials.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT RECT OPAC

6.4.1 The OPAC of RECT shall incorporate the features such as Boolean logic search facility and search through acronyms and codes.

6.4.2 It is suggested that more number of terminals are to be housed at number of points in the library.

6.4.3 The RECT OPAC system environment has to be enhanced by upgrading the features such as "ability to tell the status of books", "ability to search codes" and ability to change the order of items displayed in order to make the system environment more effectively.

6.4.4 It is further suggested that the RECT OPAC has to be upgraded with better physical facilities, such as lighting, printer and improvement in the existing practices of providing orientation.
6.5 CONCLUSION

The online catalogue is not only an instrument of change in today's libraries, it is also ever changeable. Automated library system in general and specifically, online catalogues will continue to be provided and enhanced from a variety of sources; in-house development, library consortia and commercial firms. This will result in adversity of online catalogues for the years to come.

It would seem that any future developments in online catalogues cannot be divorced from developments in IR system and Vice-Versa. There is much room for improvement and development in online catalogues and librarians have an essential role to play in that development.

There are at least three roles open to librarians in today's dynamic community of OPAC research and development:

a. Engage in research and local OPAC use studies or evaluations.

b. Keep well-informed and help to disseminate knowledge gained through research; and

c. Directly influence the path of commercial design and development through one's guy beverage point as a system evaluator, system selector and, ultimately, system purchaser through formal system specification and procurement process.

With the adoption of new Information Technologies like online catalogue the soul of librarian will, by necessity, change.
Libraries in the near future, to capture the user enthusiasm in libraries, will use OPAC as a power base to provide improved access to information retrieval systems. The perfect system will not result over night. However, it will not result without making "librarians" and "users" as a part of the development process. This will be an exciting but complex experience for the users and the librarians, while looking for OPACs in 21st century.

6.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study, being empirical and pragmatic in nature, has had its limitations and consequently could not touch upon a number of issues related to the OPAC.

Therefore naturally it give rise to certain topics which can be further studied in detail with reference to OPAC. They are listed below:

1. Exploring the ways to improve the subject content of the record on the testing of enhanced records in the OPAC environment.
2. Use of classification schemes for enhancing subject access in OPACs.
3. Use of standard subject heading list for enhancing subject access in OPACs.
4. Subject search and retrieval performance in OPACs.
5. Effects of networking in spreading the use of OPACs.
6. Standards for the design and development of OPACs.

The above studies will constitute a comprehensive analysis of OPAC.
REFERENCE