

Library catalog and online public access



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

An Online Public Access Catalog (often abbreviated as OPAC or simply Library Catalog) is an online database of materials held by a library or group of libraries. Users search a library catalog principally to locate books and other material physically located at a library. Although a handful of experimental systems existed as early as the 1960s, the first large-scale online catalogs were developed at Ohio State University in 1975 and the Dallas Public Library in 1978. [1]

These and other early online catalog systems tended to closely reflect the card catalogs that they were intended to replace. Using a dedicated terminal or telnet client, users could search a handful of pre-coordinate indexes and browse the resulting display in much the same way they had previously navigated the card catalog. Throughout the 1980s, the number and sophistication of online catalogs grew. The first commercial systems appeared, and would by the end of the decade largely replace systems built by libraries themselves.

Library catalogs began providing improved search mechanisms, including Boolean and keyword searching, as well as ancillary functions, such as the ability to place holds on items that had been checked-out. At the same time, libraries began to develop applications to automate the purchase, cataloging, and circulation of books and other library materials. These applications, collectively known as an integrated library system (ILS) or library management system, included an online catalog as the public interface to the system's inventory. Most library catalogs, then, are closely tied to their underlying ILS system.