A listing is presented of 17 documents in the ERIC database concerning the Online Catalog (sometimes referred to as OPAC or Online Public Access Catalog), a computer-based and supported library catalog designed for patron use. The database usually represents recent acquisitions and often contains information about books on order and items in circulation. The ERIC documents consist of papers, journal articles, and newsletters published (with one exception) since 1988. They are listed alphabetically by author under the following categories: planning for the online catalog, description of specific OPACs, user studies, and online subject access. (KC)
ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGS
AN ERIC FACT SHEET
OCT 82
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ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources
Syracuse, N.Y.
Libraries are converting their catalogs from the traditional card catalog to COM (Computer Output Microform) and/or to the Online Catalog. The Online Catalog, sometimes called OPAC or Public Online Catalog, is a computer-based and supported library catalog designed to be accessed via a terminal so that library patrons may directly and effectively search for and retrieve bibliographic information. The assistance of an intermediary such as a specially trained member of the library staff is not usually necessary.

OPACs are to be distinguished from other bibliographic databases and retrieval systems such as ERIC on DIALOG, ORBIT, or BRS, or MEDLINE, or PSYCHINFO because they are free to be used in the library and elsewhere. The database usually only represents the recent acquisitions of the library, or a group of libraries. Oftentimes the OPAC will contain information about books on order, items in circulation, etc., thereby giving more information about library items than the card catalog could ever provide.

Many university, college, public, and special libraries -- and yes, even school libraries -- have installed online catalogs. There is a great deal of variety between and among these libraries and the design of their online catalogs. A recent publication in the OCLC Library, Information, and Computer Science Series describes a dozen different versions of OPACs, concentrating on the most important feature, "The User Interface." (Hildreth, 1982)

The professional literature of computers and library science is covering this new development quite thoroughly, covering such topics as the following:

1. Planning for the Online Catalog
2. Descriptions of Specific OPACs
3. User Studies
4. Catalog Design, Data Storage, and Related System Considerations
5. Online Subject Access

Many pertinent references on these topics appear in ERIC. The following list highlights some of the most recent reports and the thoughtful papers which address the issues involved.
The ERIC database contains abstracts and availability information for many of the following relevant items:

### Planning for the Online Catalog


Hildreth, Charles R. Online Public Access Catalogs: The User Interface. Dublin, OH: OCLC, 1982. 280p. $18 (Order from OCLC, Dept. 630, Box ONB, Columbus, OH 43265.)


### Descriptions of Specific OPACs


### User Studies


### Catalog Design, Database Storage and Related System Considerations


### Online Subject Access


ERIC documents (ED numbers) may be ordered from ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210.

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