



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES IN MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract:

This paper emphasizes the various roles of academic libraries during the pandemic situation like COVID-19; it also identifies the advocacy role that Library Professionals have taken up. It traces the number of digital platforms available around the world. It also promotes the use of social media/networks. Many libraries can support the entire community in their scholarly endeavours. The role of the libraries is to trace down information as per the user requirement, act as an information disseminator, and organizer of knowledge through the varied information pools. During such situations the Library Professionals can show their expertise with the assistance of experience in addition to the varied skills they need. Almost all Libraries can provide E-contents, information links, their commitment to customer service. As a result the role of Libraries defines the whole community a new way of doing work and gets the information remotely in the period of a lockdown/pandemic situation. This study helps the academic libraries and library Professionals to improve their skill set as per the tough conditions and serve the information like a responsible citizen of the country. In this paper, the researchers provide a brief introduction to different information channel support in information dissemination.

Keywords: *Academic Libraries, COVID-19, Coronavirus, librarian, Digital information, Pandemic.*



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Introduction:

Covid-19 Pandemic has overwhelmed the entire world, and India also has burnt of the same. Presently all over the globe has been witnessing much panic and discussions are going on the medical emergency caused by the deadly disease namely Corona virus what is termed as "COVID-19". The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), was reported on December 8, 2019 in Wuhan city of China, has spread rapidly around the world, sent billions of people into lockdown. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus epidemic a pandemic. As the world responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, most Governments have temporarily, closed all educational institutions. These nationwide closures have impacted 90 per cent of the world's student population. Localized closures in other countries have affected millions of additional learners. Large number of countries was affected by the dangerous disease. India saw its first corona virus case on January 30, 2020 according the WHO. As a part of it the Prime Minister Modi has announced



Janata Curfew on 22 March 2020 at the nation level and subsequently declared national lockdown for 57 days lasting to 17th May 2020 and it is was continued in some of affected areas, with a view to prevent the effect of this virus on humanity. It is evident that its arrival is changing and influencing everything in all spheres of life and education in not an exception. The news, both print and electronic media, is full of stories about the need to reduce social contact and stay at home is a safe means. The measures include closing of all educational institutions including libraries, airports, rail and road transports, restricting on the social gathering and propagating to observe social distancing restricting of certain services by the governments. In light of rising concern about the current COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of universities across the world have either postponed or cancelled all campus events such as Classes, Research, Teaching Extension activities, workshops, conferences, sports and other activities and almost all education institutions are engaging classes through online. Faculty members are already in the process of transitioning to online teaching platforms. In this situation, there is a need of hour to highlight the potential impact of the terrible COVID-19 outbreak on the education systems as we as academic Library Services.

Objectives:

The main objective of the study is to find out the facilities and services provided by the academic libraries during COVID-19 pandemic through multiple modes:

Type of facilities and services provided to the users.

The mode of dissemination of services during the period.

What are the Preventive measures taken to combat coronavirus?

Scope of the Paper:

This paper reflects on impact of covid-19 during a pandemic in the context on academic libraries in dissemination of library services to the end users. Impact of Corona virus (Covid-19) Lockdown Period on Libraries. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments around the world are making efforts to mitigate the immediate impact of academic institutions closures, particularly for more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, and to facilitate the continuity of education for all through remote learning. As the corona virus pandemic rapidly sweeps across the world, it is inducing a considerable degree of fear, worry and concern in the population at large and among certain groups in particular, such as older adults, care providers and people with underlying health conditions, for the reason, schools, colleges and universities as well as the libraries attached to educational institutions have all been shut down. These affecting students and learners who are not able to attend classes or go to libraries to their books and learning materials. Following post pandemic, libraries should prepare themselves for reopening when lockdowns will be lifted. IFLA has framed guidelines regarding such transitioning through post COVID-19 pandemic. I have discussed such issue and analysed the health risks to library staffs constantly exposed to contagious infections, and mentioned measures that should be in place to handle post Covid-19 scenarios. Shutting



down libraries has a tremendous impact on the academic user communities that we serve. In this lockdown period librarian must try to keep upgrading to its users probably by using online tools. On the same way lockdown period effects on the routine work of the library also lockdown period affects all the library works like acquisition, cataloguing, Circulation serial control on campus library series etc. Always librarians are already being with user community by providing many services to its users and it doesn't have to stop just because of our buildings are closed at the moment. We can make the difference by using social networking sites. Today, librarians are expected to manage digital libraries, organize digital knowledge and information and disseminate digital information owing to the fact that we are all have become a global village as result of the internet.

Emergence of Digital Technology:

In response to COVID-19 mandates, teachers, students and librarians globally are being forced to transition to an online-only environment, as many prominent schools, libraries and universities are closing their campuses. Through this transition, all parties within the educational system are being challenged to quickly adapt to this new environment, with librarians being responsible for ensuring all library resources are available from a remote location. Today we live in a world of instant global communication. Everyone is well known with the technological developments that have come with dazzling rapidity. New techniques for recording and transmitting texts, sound or visual images have proliferated. Digital technology has created prodigious capacities to store, disseminate and retrieve knowledge. This technology provides unprecedented possibilities for communication between people as well as for the development of academic libraries and the exploitation of works all over the world. Electronic resource collections indeed are going to become the essential mainstay of every library's collection.

Type of Services Library Services:

In all the sector of education, online learning has emerged to address the restrictions imposed in the wake of coronavirus pandemic and considered as a feasible option to overcome the challenges. Consequently, libraries have been exploring the collection of potential e-resources and providing remote access to those which may be of interest to the fraternity in support of academic and research activities. Many libraries have provided direct link on the home page to increase the visibility. While many libraries have significant digital services, some even have introduced multi-mode access to e-resources in order to deal with the demand.

Remote Access of E-resources:

The main aim of any academic library is to enhance and strengthen the teaching, learning and research process by installing seamless document/information delivery system and around the country all libraries of higher education system have been working hard to provide services and access to collections to the users who have been displaced due to COVID-19. While all the libraries under study have provision of remote access to subscribed e resources, many have taken a lot of effort in leveraging and expanding



existing online services. Notably almost all libraries have displayed step by step user guide on remote login to get access to the licensed E-resources.

Free and Expanded Access:

In response to the uncertain and difficult time, some publishers are providing expanded access to e-resources (access to additional materials than subscribed by the library) including e-books, e-journals, e-databases etc. for a limited period during this pandemic. Libraries have highlighted the links of these free and expanded e-resources on their portal to facilitate visibility of these options available for users. This has enhanced the possibility of users availing the virtual services and hence, visiting library portal frequently. Almost all the libraries have facilitated access point to provide digital version of the newspaper and magazine that can be read using any convenient handy digital devices.

Open Access Resources:

Beyond this, there are many scholarly freely available resources available notably National Digital Library of India (NDLI), Shodhganga, CeRA Consortia a repository of electronic thesis and Dissertation, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), AMS Free online books, book boon, Directory of open Access books (DOAB) and many more, and most of libraries have brought together all such resources onto a single page and made these available for their users in anticipation to the information need.

Resources Related to COVID-19:

Access to licensed electronic resources is subject to the terms and conditions under which they are procured. As the scientific community across the globe is racing against time to develop a definitive treatment for the disease, access to as and as quickly as possible published literature to accelerate the ongoing research is the need of the hour. Notably, a lot of commercial publishers and vendors have taken a significant initiative and have provided open access to materials related to COVID-19. Many libraries have facilitated access by making it easier to log-in and access materials from outside of official networks. National Digital Library of India (NDLI), an IIT Kharagpur initiative throws open its services to all, providing special COVID-19 related literature and information ranging from research writings, projects, funding, start-ups, datasets, multimedia contents under a single section 'COVID-19 Research Repository'. Almost all the academic libraries were proactive in promoting and amplifying the use of these useful resources by highlighting NDLI link on their website homepage.

Role of Academic Libraries under Pandemic:

Libraries are passing through difficult times as the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us to change our lifestyle and reshape our daily routines. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of electronic resources and internet access as a key to education.

Libraries can also provide information about Corona virus, its precautionary measures and tips on work from home. It's time to librarian to show their professionalism energy, creativity and drive in each service, further just say yes to all the queries raised by user community and find the online solution without entering



the physical library. In the lockdown period doing something is better than doing nothing so stand up, step up and lead by saying YES.

Librarian may called as Cybrarian in this lockdown period, because ICT tools are the only way to serve the user community, and now a day's all educational institutes are partially opened and managing information services to the user communities either online or on campus.

The change in the information related field particularly in collection, storing, processing and dissemination of information which have resulted into the evolution of digital library services.

Academic libraries website act as virtual front door and libraries have had to rethink their websites now that they represent the primary path of interaction for patrons. The library websites to evolve to be more users friendly, responsive and customizable.

Role of Publishers under Pandemic:

In response to the COVID-19 epidemic, many academic publishers have granted free access to their resources. In addition, the tufts libraries are currently working remotely, which means that there have been some changes to the services we can provide. The purpose of this guide is to organize and provides convenient information to help your find these resources and other tufts library services during this challenging time. The main page contains information about how the libraries are responding to the situation and also links to how to make use of our resources remotely. The free and expanded access page has links to textbooks, e-books, and journals that have been made temporarily available to access. Links to publishers, journals and other resources related to COVID-19 are freely available are on the Resources related to COVID-19 page. Finally, since this is a stressful time for everyone.

Renew Books Online:

Do not worry about overdue books during this time. The library will adjust all due dates so that there are no fines on your library account, including interlibrary loan materials. If you have any library materials borrowed, please continue to keep them. If you are still near campus, please feel free to return the books to the Hirsh Health Sciences Library book drop near the library services Desk, located on the 4th floor of the MedED building. The MedED building is currently opened to card swipe, however, things are evolving rapidly, so please see the library's website and blog for updated information. If you are away from campus, you may also mail the books back to us at the address below. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us!

Inter Library Loan (ILL):

We are doing our best to get you access to what you need. With staff working remotely, getting scans from books within the library is suspended. However, you can request articles and book chapters through ILL and we will try to get chapters or possibly whole e-books, but it depends on who is able to fill the request. Learn more about Inter Library Loan. Preventive Measures in academic libraries against Covid-19 Pandemic Library staffs are at equal risk of getting exposed to contagious disease like COVID-19 in a much



similar but analogous manner like healthcare worker for both deals with people. So academic, school, public, community and special libraries must adhere to the rules and regulations in order to maintain post COVID-19 preventative measures. The guidelines as protocols have been outlined by the IFLA as Follows:

- Access to liquid soap or hand wash/hand sanitizers with warm water should be maintained before entering the library.
- Special precaution should be in place on loan (circulation) desks in a circulation or lending section here books are borrowed or returned. Circulation section, therefore, should take enough precautions to avoid getting infected.
- During lending or borrowing of books in the circulation section, special systems should be in place to sanitize library cards as well as books returned to the library.
- Reading rooms must be cleaned and sanitized before and after library hours.
- Computer rooms and computer accessories should be kept clean.
- Library staff and users/patrons need to be aware of whether they are feeling unwell or ill or show any signs of COVID-19.
- Social distancing should be maintained within the reading rooms and overcrowding must be avoided and
- Limiting the number of users to the library.

Since libraries are public gathering places and people from all walks of life come to visit public libraries in search of information and knowledge, library staffs are equally exposed to contracting contagious infections like H1N1 or COVID-19. Librarians, on the other hand, have a definite role to play regarding safety measures that they should adopt to minimize the risk of exposure to Covid-19 like infections. As Friedman and Friedman elucidates, transitioning out of Covid-19 lockdown is an important aspect of developing a zone-based social distancing. On account lockdowns due to Covid-19 Pandemic, libraries have developed planned ideas regarding access to their materials via online mode. Online access to digital contents and materials have made it possible for students and learners to search and retrieve accessible materials like journals, periodicals, books, thesis materials, magazines and other materials for their educational needs. Since public libraries, school libraries, academic and college libraries have all been shut down to prevent gathering of people who could transmit Covid-19 infection among them, it has become necessary for libraries to opt for alternative modes of operation. They tend to remain “active” without being “open”. For, libraries are sources of knowledge, and as such knowledge must be accessible to the patrons. I have already discussed on the issue to post-COVID-19 scenarios when libraries are like to open to the students and the public. This could raise concern regarding the risk of spreading contagious infections. Several outlined measures as guidelines have been formulated by the IFLA when libraries prepare for their re-opening.

Role of Librarian:

In this era of information explosion where thousands of bits of information are chunked out on daily basis,



librarians are expected to collect, organize, store and disseminate the information for consumption of the users. In the current global pandemic, there are new ways to deliver information both real and fake; it is left for librarians to sort out the real information for their users to avoid misinformation. It is expected that librarians work independently to deliver service-oriented, researcher-centred application, instructional programmers, projects and services. The librarians may be indispensable in the era of the information dissemination because they play a distinctive and dynamic role in providing easy access to authoritative information at the right time and disseminating to the user in appropriate formats based on local user needs. Librarians must also possess high level of security to prevent hackers from users' personal details and the type of information they accessed. Librarians should serve as catalyst for the effective dissemination of information to promote true knowledge. Librarians should serve as catalysts for the effective dissemination of information to promote true knowledge. Librarians should disseminate information via existing and digital media platforms to educate users. For better dissemination of information, especially in a time of great need for accurate health-related information resources in an ever-increasing digital environment, libraries should establish working relationships with health agencies and communication organizations with the objective of cooperative developments of collections, referrals and information shared and learning for users and a new breed of reimagined librarians

Conclusions:

It is observed that, many academic libraries share information only about the library itself; however, there is an opportunity for information to be provided that will benefit patrons and likely reduce their anxiety about this pandemic. Librarians should not overlook their unique skill and the important role they may play in curbing the spread/impact of diseases like COVID-19 by combating fake news/misinformation and providing reliable information to patrons. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated sudden a druidical change in delivery of library services, as strict social distancing and lockdown measures were imposed in the early phases of the pandemic. The Internet and web technologies have created a new and unparalleled environment and enabling the libraries to enhance and strengthen the research, teaching and learning even in this difficult an uncertain time. The concept and practice of providing remote access of e-resources by libraries is not new, but the user-friendly way adopted by many libraries and the number of resources made available by them during the pandemic is exemplary. Considerable planning by the library professionals will be required even after the open of educational campuses. It wills imperative to reassess every existing service and re-design it in view of the government protocols to deal with the situation. Following strict social distancing measures visit to library could be restricted when institutes re-open. Users may demand for additional digital resources if the situation does not improve much for a longer period to time. The points discussed in the article are aimed in providing evidence which can be the basis for sound decision making while selecting any new features or refining he existing features in the services to be planned even after post COVID-19 which will at least reduce the gap that students are likely to experience



if restriction to visit the physical facilities of the libraries will continue even after re-opening of the institutions. While many academic libraries in India are still struggling to build a strong electronic platform to render their services, adoption of tech-led holistic approach is the only way out which can help tide over the challenge and kept the libraries functioning without a halt. Libraries have acted smart even this time and evolved as a continuous learning factory. It can be said from this study that libraries are emerging as new genre of knowledge hubs capable of playing a vital role in supporting our nation to settle into a new normal situation.

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