

Reengineering of Libraries in Covid-19 Pandemic Scenario: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Santosh Kumar Tunga

Librarian

Rishi Bankim Chandra Evening College
Naihati-743165, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India
E-mail: tungask@rediffmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-5534-4861

***Abstract** - At present the whole world is going through a critical phase of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown environment. Corona virus has threatened and affected almost all spheres of our living and livelihood. Every academic institution including libraries and information centres has been affected with Corona virus. The new normal, social distancing, masks, gloves and washing of our hands are here to stay in the world. Even all restrictions are lifted, until corona vaccine is discover and implemented. The present study attempts to provide a better understanding of the measure to take into account when reopening the libraries and library services required for the post-pandemic academic library reopening phase. With a proper understanding of the pandemic, academic librarians can perform well in library re-opening time and similar pandemic conditions in the future and provide a better post-pandemic experience for library users in the library re-opening. Library staff and all the stakeholders shall have a general understanding of the pandemic. Academic librarians can lead all the safety protocols, policies, getting touch with the latest updates about the pandemic, disinfection practices in the library.*

Keywords: Academic Librarians, COVID-19, Corona Virus, E-Resources, Library and Information Centres, Libraries.

Introduction

At present the whole world is going through a critical phase of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown environment. Corona virus has threatened and affected almost all spheres of our living and livelihood. Every academic institution including libraries and information centres has been affected with corona virus. The libraries across the globe are striving hard to cope with the emergent situation. As the locks down phrases are related to bring in normalcy, the libraries are also gearing up for reopening and resumption of activities. In this pandemic situation, all libraries have been the gateways of relevant information and knowledge for conducting research and development on the related subject areas. The academic libraries and information & reference services started to gain importance by providing researchers the opportunity to explore scientific research, while prevention of the disease. The new normal, social distancing, masks, gloves and washing of our hands are here to stay in the world. Even all restrictions are lifted, until corona vaccine is discover and implemented. The present study attempts to provide a better understanding of the measure to take into account when reopening the libraries and library services required for the post-pandemic academic library reopening phase. With a proper understanding of the pandemic, academic librarians can perform well in library re-opening time and similar pandemic conditions in the future and provide a better post-pandemic experience for library users in the library re-opening.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown on Libraries

Libraries are facing challenges and restrictions in the lockdown environment. State and Central government and also local authorities regularly are taking different approaches in time to time, sometimes ordering the full closure of all academic institutions including libraries and information centres. In this situation existing library professionals may take following preventive measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 through the libraries:

- Libraries are closed
- Restrictions to students, faculties and research scholars
- Handling of library materials
- Provider library services remotely
- Mobile learning
- Online class/online webinar/online workshop/online quiz/online meeting
- Sharing library e-resources
- Increasing use of digital library materials

Preventive Measures and Guidelines for Libraries in COVID-19 Pandemic

The academic library should formulate an integrated pandemic prevention protocol to serve the library users with delightful post-pandemic reopening experience as follows:

- Library users wear face mask always
- Library staff will have face mask and gloves in case of handling returned library materials
- Circulation counter and reference desk staff will use face shield, mask and gloves
- Regular cleaning library
- Avoid touching nose, mouth and eyes
- Wash hands with soap and water
- Use 70 % alcohol-based disinfection

Re-opening Strategies for Libraries

The continuum of library services during lock down situations and post pandemic scenarios should be practice with proper care and understanding, especially during post-pandemic conditions when re-commencing activities in an academic library after the lock down situation. Prevailing COVID-19 pandemic has provided an eye-opening lesson for academic librarians to re-think the way they perform and in what ways they can prepare for post-pandemic re-opening of the library as follows:

- Post lockdown period will be completely different environment than it was before lockdown. The library rules and regulations, guides, brochures, study room facilities, outside visitors, guests, the staff and student relatives, there will be restrictions to everyone. There will be required to change the library policy, rules and regulations, to make sure that every library user and the library resources should be safe in the library.
- Putting limited numbers of students, faculties, research scholars, staff and other visitors using the library at any one time, and see that how to enforce these, as well as identifying locations in and around the library where people may gather closely together, for example using one-way (if possible) entrance and exit separate. Limiting

furniture, closing the reading rooms, or continuing to postpone programs. It is also advisable to clean the toilets frequently for safety purpose.

- The library staff must have a habit of wash regularly their hands frequently, access to safety materials such as gloves and facemasks, and that hands sanitizer is available at the entrance of the library as well as next to equipment such as computers, electronic on/off switches, land line telephone in the library.
- Promoting online services and resources in order to control on numbers looking to visit the library
- Remove, rearranging chairs, tables and other furniture to accommodate social distancing.
- Developing the online system of overall collection development of e-books, e-journals, e-theses & dissertations, e-databases and provide access through remote without human contact
- The library rules should be revised and it should be clearly communicated to all students, faculties, research scholars and other library members via e-mail, SMS alert, YouTube and the electronic board.
- The library system is in transition phase at least up to the end of COVID 19. To protect the staff from the coronavirus, the necessary equipment should be provided and training is an essential factor. The equipment includes transparent screens if necessary, providing the furniture in such a way that minimum distance with the students and the library users should maintain. Promoting work from home whichever is possible in this way numbers of the staff, students and other library users can be put under control.
- Focusing on regular cleaning processes, short breaks should be provided for library exclusive for cleaning purpose. The attention should be given for intensifying cleaning to the plastic, metallic surface where the virus appear for longer period, except the surfaces of copper and hard paper where the virus appear for short period.
- It is needed to clarify that if situation of spreading COVID 19 founds rapidly due to the opening the library, it may close at any time for the safety of all with or without notification and it will be reopen after the situation come normal and safe or at least under control.
- To create awareness on social distancing, safe hand hygiene, public health, safe handling library materials, disinfecting of library materials and utilization of available social media.

Important Links for Free/Open E-Resources

As part of social distancing and staying in the confines of our homes, we may utilize our valuable time productively by engaging with open access resources for broadening horizon of learning. Following is the list of some best resources with their access link:

E-Books

SUBJECTS	NAME	URL
All Subjects	Doabooks	https://www.doabooks.org/
All Subjects	Free ebooks	https://www.free-ebooks.net/
All Subjects	Gutenberg	https://www.gutenberg.org/
All subjects	Pdf drive	https://www.pdfdrive.com
Arts & Science	Ebook Lobby	http://www.ebooklobby.com/
Audio Books	Librivox	https://librivox.org/

Children Books	Bookspics	http://bookspics.com/
Children Books	Children	http://en.childrenslibrary.org/
Computer Science	Computerbooks	http://freecomputerbooks.com
Computer Science	Onlineprog	https://www.onlineprogrammingbooks.com
Literature	Authorama	https://www.authorama.com/
Literature	Planete	https://www.planetebook.com
Literature & History	Pdfbooks	https://pdfbooks.co.za/
Sacred Books	Sacred	https://www.sacred-texts.com

E-Journals

Subject	Name	URL
Chemistry	Royal Society of Chemistry	https://www.rsc.org/journals-books-databases/open-access/
Engineering	IEEE	https://open.ieee.org/
Medicine	Medcrave	https://medcraveonline.com/oajs
Medicine	SCI Med Central	https://www.jsmedcentral.com/journals.php
Medicine	Symbiosis	https://symbiosisonline.publishing.com/journals.php
Science	Elsevier Open Access Journals	https://www.elsevier.com/about/open-science/open-access/open-access-journals
Science	Indian Academy of Science	https://www.ias.ac.in/
Science	NISCAIR	https://www.niscair.res.in
Science	Springer Nature	https://www.springernature.com/gp/open-research/journals-books/journals
Science & Medicine	BioMedical Central	https://www.biomedcentral.com/journals
Science & Medicine	Science OA Content	https://www.scienceopen.com/#open-access

E-Theses & Dissertations

SUBJECT	COUNTRY	NAME	URL
Agriculture	Italy	AGRIS	http://agris.fao.org/agris-search/index.do
Agriculture	India	Krishi Prava	
All Subjects	India	Shodhganga	https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in
All Subjects	UK	OATD	https://oatd.org/
All Subjects	UK	Ethos	http://ethosbl.uk/Homedo
All Subjects	UK	NDLTD	http://www.ndltd.org/
All Subjects	USA	Theses Canada	https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/services/theses/pages/theses-canada.aspx
All Subjects	USA	Stanford	http://library.stanford.edu/guides/find-dissertations-and-theses

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses):

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is a free web-based distance learning program that is designed for the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed students. A MOOC may be patterned on a College or University Course or may be less structured with Open-access features, such as open licensing of content, structure and learning goals. For examples:

SUBJECT	NAME	URL
All Subjects	Academic Earth	https://academicearth.org/
All Subjects	Class Central	https://classcentral.com/
All Subjects	Coursera	https://www.coursera.org/
All Subjects	EdX	https://www.edx.org
All Subjects	Harvard	https://online-learning.harvard.edu
Engineering, Science & Humanities	NPTEL	https://nptel.ac.in
Arts & Science	Open Yale Courses	https://oyc.yale.edu
Arts & Science	Saylor	https://www.saylor.org
All Subjects – School, UG & PG	SWAYAM Online Courses	https://swayam.gov.in
All Subjects	UGC-UG/PG MOOCs	http://ugcmoocs.inflibnet.ac.in/ugcmoocs/moocs-courses.php
All Subjects	University of the People	https://www.uopeople.edu/tuition-free/what-is-tuition-free/

Open CourseWare

An open CourseWare (OCW) is a free and open digital publication of high quality College and University-level educational materials. These materials are organized as courses, and often include course planning materials and evaluation tools as well as thematic content. For examples:

- a) Consortium for Educational Communication-Learning Object Repository (CEC-LOR): www.cec-lor.edu.in www.cec-lor.edu.in/search.asp
- b) e-Content Courseware in UG Subjects: <http://cec.nic.in/cec/>
- c) e-Gyankosh: A National Digital Repository, copyrighted by IGNOU share digital learning resources: www.egyankosh.ac.in
- d) e-PGpathshala: Gateway for free e-books and curriculum based e-content upto PG level in 71 subjects. It is an initiative of MHRD under its NME-ICT being executed by the UGC: <https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in>
- e) GIAN (Global Initiative of Academic Network) Courses: <http://www.gian.iitkgp.ac.in/>
- f) IIM Bangalore Online Courses: <https://www.edx.org/school/iimbx>
- g) Indo-German e-Gurukul on Digital Libraries: <http://drtc.isibang.ac.in/mmb/>
- h) MIT Open Courseware: <https://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm> <https://ocw.jhsph.edu/>
<https://www.nd.edu/>
- i) NCERT Online Textbooks: <http://www.ncert.nic.in/textbooks/testing/index.htm>
- j) National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL): www.nptel.iitm.ac.in <http://youtube.com/nptelhrd/>

- k) SWAYAM: Massive Open Online Courses, MHRD: <http://swayam.gov.in>
www.swayamindia.com
- l) UNESCO-SALIS e-Learning Portal: <http://salisonline.org>

Challenges and Opportunities of COVID-19 Pandemic

- Paradigm shift from physical to online environment
- Change of mindset among library staff and library users
- Increase in use of internet and also use of digital library materials
- Improvement in Information & communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure
- Too many online webinars/workshops/quiz/meetings
- Restricted movement –save fuel and no pollution
- Better environment and reduced pollution
- Thermal scanners, hand sanitizer, face shield, masks, gloves, disinfecting spray & wipes etc.

Recommendations

The above identified challenges could be solved through the following:

- To create awareness and teach to library users to improve their digital skill development
- Arranging training for library users on accessing and use of available e-resources
- Also arrange training for library staff to increase skill on handling e-resources
- The access to computers is seen as essential task for searching, retrieving, copying, and studying purposes. So for safely purpose, it has been suggested in COVID 19 pandemic period that the users should use their own laptop and common computers used for students and others should made inaccessible.
- The close physical contact is the major cause of catching the coronal virus, and only way to avoid the virus is ‘social distancing’ – keeping a safe distance between two persons in order to reduce the risks of COVID 19 from one person to another. The recommended distance differ from country to country but appears not to be below 1 meter i.e. about 3-4 feet, and more than that may be better.
- Maintaining culture so as to manage the available web 2.0 facilities effectively
- Colleges, Universities and UGC should take an active role in providing ICT facilities to digital libraries
- Proactive training of librarians to acquire 21st century skills to adopt to the changing web 2.0 environment
- Educating the library users on the issue of copyright law and violation

Conclusion

Most of the libraries in India have closed down with assumption that the COVID 19 pandemic chain will break and slow down or come under control. But day by day the numbers of active cases and the deaths are increasing. Further every Indian State and Union Territory has different scenario. The Government is in the process of reopening the educational institutions in near future, ultimately the libraries have also required re-opening with well-prepared strategies. The unique strategy will not useful for the vast country like India where the intensity of the pandemic varies from place to place. Hence the author has suggested different strategies. Academic Libraries on the web have become more competent

and confident in terms of resource management and digitalization. Information societies are seeking information in digital format, therefore, library services depends upon skilled professionals. Library plays vital role in data acquisition, storage, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of information among the library users. This Article has brought out opportunity to learn recent technological advancements in order to maximize the usage of library resources and services in worldwide lockdown and pandemic situations prevailing in the country. This discussion will provide an overview on preventive measures and current trends in libraries to play proactive role in the present and post pandemic situation. Integrated pandemic prevention practices can lead the academic library to provide a delightful re-opening experience for all its stakeholders. Library staff and all the stakeholders shall have a general understanding of the pandemic. Academic librarians can lead all the safety protocols, policies, getting touch with the latest updates about the pandemic, disinfection practices in the library.

References

1. American Library Association (2020). Pandemic Preparedness. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/tools/atoz/pandemic-preparedness>
2. Asif, M. & Singh, K. K. (Jan-June, 2020). Trends, Opportunities and Scope of Libraries during COVID-19 Pandemic. *IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology*, 5(1), 24-27.
3. Australian Library Association (2020). Australian Government Responding to COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://www.alia.org.au/australian-libraries-responding-covid-19>
4. Fernando, I. D. K. L. & Jayasekera, P. K. (July, 2020). Re-opening the Academic Library in the Post-pandemic Season: A Lesson-Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka*, 23(2), 47-70.
5. Government of India, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (2020). COVID-19 in India as on 27th November, 2020. Retrieved from www.mohfw.gov.in
6. Government of South Australia (2020). Local Government Libraries: Road Map to Reopen the Libraries-COVID-19 South Australia Factsheet. Retrieved from https://www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/_data/assests/pdf_file/0003/196635
7. International Federation of Library Association (2020). COVID-19 and the Global Library Field. Retrieved from <https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries>
8. Mestri, D. D. (Jan-June, 2020). Reopening Libraries in COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Recommendations. *IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology*, 5(1), 16-23. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.18231/j.ijlsit.2010.004>
9. National Library and Documentation Services Board (2020). Guide lined for Opening of Public Libraries. Colombo.
10. Singh, K. K. & Asif, M. (2019). Emerging Trends and Technologies for Digital Transformation of Libraries. *IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology*, 4(2), 41-43
11. World Health Organization (2020). Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Technical Guidance: Humanitarian Operations, Camps, and Other fragile Settings as well as Refugees and Migrants in Non-humanitarian and Non-camp Settings. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technicalguidance>

