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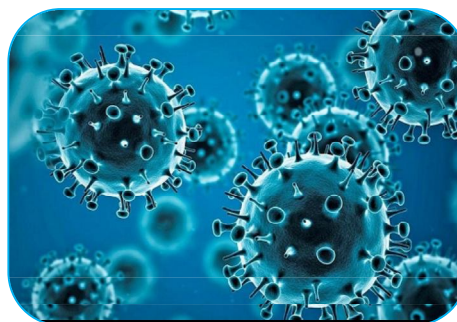


COVID- 19 AND LIBRARIES: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT:

We are all very much aware about repercussions of Covid-19 on education field, as almost all libraries had to be closed, which included almost all kinds of libraries. Globally in almost 34 countries all educational institutions remained closed, while as in remaining countries libraries were working with limited potentials and human resources due to Covid-19 directives partially closed. As per survey of UNESCO University Libraries all over the world were affected with Covid-19 symptomatic recurrence. It seemed first time in so many decades in modern times that not only libraries but even human life to have confined to their homes. When the world over was passing through this critical phase, Librarians as well as libraries faced challenges as well as opportunities to overcome such situation, which was crucially studied either.



KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Libraries, Library services, Challenges and opportunities, Digital services, work from home culture, copyright, Digital awareness.

INTRODUCTION

In order to overcome challenges before Libraries, almost 50 libraries all over India were studied virtually for interviewing Librarians scattered in various parts of this nation. It revealed prominently that all educational institutions with these libraries came up to resolve this issue by providing option of Online Education potential through Audio-Video media. Thus though libraries remained closed physically, most of contents and data were made available to all students and researchers. Some teachers were trained to operate their daily classrooms through the virtual classroom platform. The effects or side effects will be evident in time past Covid years. This had created a boom of Internet era over which virtual education was totally dependent; thereby reliance was over the internet service providers. Obviously the student class from rural India, who either cannot afford or who have very limited or poor network availability thereby hampering their routine education. Due to which Smart phone came into essential commodities cadre, but still possessing a smart phone and penalty of monthly network package for continuing the online education seemed quite a difficult task for poor families and their children. Thus researcher also tried to evaluate online resources and quality as well as internet connectivity through interaction. While evaluating scenario of libraries, educational institutes in pretext of Covid-19, preferred agenda was as under-

- 1) Challenges posed before Libraries due to epidemic Covid-19.
- 2) Opportunities opened up before Libraries due to Covid-19.
- 3) Predetermine remedial measures to overcome Covid-19 in future.

Presently virtual libraries are available to all students and researchers 24 x 7. Library being core pump house of knowledge transfer, in pretext of physical library closure it posed a lot many challenges in Covid-19 epidemic scenario.

Covid-19 and challenges

Library Services without existence:

Due to challenge of existence of human being in epidemic fearful atmosphere, symptoms & causes being unaware, almost all families were confined to their home. For developed countries though substitute for physical library was digital platform, its availability was not that tricky, nor locked down was last resort to overcome Covid-19. But for developing countries, it was quite challenging for the population explosion, diversified standards of living and remote terrains for connectivity issues for internet users. Though digital platform played a crucial role in catering online education, primarily Reference Service, Bibliographic instructions, usage of e-resources, electronic journals and books, past examination papers and Institutional repository to support the learning, research and tracking activities in higher education institutes. And also under Covid-19 circumstances library web pages, e-mail, online public announcements and social media platforms further provided extensions of libraries.

Reassessment of Library Budget -

In developing countries like India, ignorance and indifferent attitude of Government towards education and increasing number of teachers resulted into financial crunch before educational institutions. In spite of repositories the reliability of such Institutions about quality education has not improved. In countries like Norway and other European countries, to save time and labor, libraries are coming together to compile reading material subject wise over unique site. Most of the publishers are providing their material on digital platform online. At the same time lot of discussions are undergoing ways to claim copyright. While as America had shown much liberal attitude over their library budgets, while as European countries have escalated their library budgets further in view of Covid- 19. Thus it has revealed the necessity for strengthening financial status and budget availability for libraries and liberalization in internet service providers to make their rates affordable to common man.

Managing 'Work from Home' Culture:

It is still disputed issue, whether the new concept for libraries regarding digitization will be applicable and beneficial or not? Whether physical operations of library have any substitute after Covid-19 pandemic condition? But University of South Carolina LIS School in Europe had digitized its training and study material, while as KLA had also expedited Indian Federation of Health Science Library Associations digitization and online reference material availability on digital platform.

Reassessment of Library Resources:

Libraries have motivation for strengthening future of students and researchers even in critical situation like Covid-19 because its knowledge pool can help in assigning mind power, come out of any depression or enlighten memory and energies student, researcher for upliftment of social, economical and political life, through its unemployment, poverty and attitude to commit suicide. Hence libraries have its aspects to enlighten life of an individual to seek new horizon for livelihood and take leap in critically negative situations.

Reaffirm and streamline Ganges of Educative Atmosphere:

Covid-19 pandemic and integrated world into global village of knowledge, as lot many experts of various topics been motivated to impart zest to educate and live community world over through

online education techniques. Virtual class rooms came into existence to provide audiovisual lessons, lectures, video conference, homework, assignments, e-mails and some other social media platforms to make out the gap into continuous education process. Thus now library can provide offline as well as online support to education system.

Implementation of Law:

While offering on campus/off campus facilities, chances of copyright violation are much more, but now most of the publications have started offering various materials digitally at affordable prices. Now question of copyright infringement seemed crucial which needed to overcome and help their authors to get royalty towards their livelihood. This prime issue is under constant discussion by the Libraries Associations.

Digital Awareness:

Crave for knowledge can be quenched through the digital platform. But today technocrats have capacity to crack the copyright material, which is unethical and can cause cream intellectuals to be grounded for short of funds for their life. So there needs to have proper synchronization between technology and community, so that continuous education process could go on simultaneously the intellectuals should not starve. Thus the online platform should not be a source of watching movies, online games, browsing news telecasts but should become a knowledge hub for upgrading levels in various subjects and think beyond mere entertainment.

Covid-19 and Opportunities

Different types of programs arranged by libraries in all over world....

National Library of India, continued support to its interns with a series of webinars.

Meanwhile, it has developed a search engine for OERs for researchers and children and young adults. All types of library have promoted their digital services, many libraries already had a strong digital presence; many others have now moved to create one in order to continue serving members, the share of libraries offering online programming jumped from 12% of respondents to 86%. Organizing virtual exhibitions and other learning tools, Promoting its digital content that can be used to support education, running weekly concerts online, Providing free e-Books, highlighting content focused on learning new skills, to bring literacy programming online. Providing services remotely, building on its Simply E app, running online book clubs, sharing book recommendations, working closely with schools and even broadcasting content, brought its library and information literacy instruction online, to work to find out new ways of delivering teaching effectively, to help students continue to study and pass their exams, providing a remote lending service for researchers giving access to electronic resources, promoting online story times, Library Association CILIP has launched its National Shelf Service, Created 'story walks', with pages of books spread around cities in order to get people reading and walking, to stay in touch with their users, and even to run art projects, literature festivals online. Creating a new app with freely available content, developing new training materials for users to help them make the most of these possibilities, training to help students make best use of digital tools available to them, virtual IT training, other core services, such as help for people needing to apply for benefits, or look for jobs, providing printed forms for people needing to apply for unemployment assistance, job-search support service available online for free to help users continue to benefit despite lock-down restrictions, a virtual transcription in order to engage people at distance, to access podcasts while in-person events are not possible, to provide an 'author on your screen' service, to create theme virtual escape rooms, many of which have been taken up and used by teachers to support education, to keep children involved in reading and to help out parents with keeping them entertained, set up a Harry Potter-theme digital escape room, produced a booklet, series of competitions for users, sharing book reviews and other information through social media, promoted poetry therapy as a means of enhancing users' well-being , running video competitions to encourage young users to share digital skills with parents and grandparents, series of tutorials on how best to use

library materials, consultation via Whatsapp and video conferencing, libraries in a number of countries have been able to work with newspapers, radio stations and other communications channels in order to raise awareness,

CONCLUSION:

Time would tell whether we are amid sea or at seashore, so that would confirm chances of living if not properly tackled. It could be an opportunity for beginning of the new modern tech world or challenge to our existence itself. Hope to seek new horizons of knowledge to show novel ways of livelihood by leaving behind old traditional ways to live with. Discussions could help integrate modern techniques to incarnate new era students, efforts and hardship to achieve their goals. Today we are very much unsure, about viability of this online education to continue in future, to save petroleum's, to rely on green energy, switch on virtual platforms, to restrict physical travelling for meetings, policy discussions, etc. thereby reducing undue pressures on metro city infrastructure management, to curb their air, sound water pollution levels for natives to live peaceful and healthy life. Let us hope for the best, for better affordable online educative platforms easily accessible to every corner of India, to let educate, fetch and live happily ever.

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