A Survey on Mysore University Library Resources and Services during Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the experience of a Mysore University Library in the context of service and facilities catered to the user community during the COVID-19 Pandemic situation. This paper also describes various measures taken by the library to render conventional and digital services as and when required by the users.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Mysore University Library, Library Service, Library resources, E- Resources.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities and colleges. Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19. According to UNICEF monitoring, 106 countries faced nationwide closures and 55 are implemented local closures, impacting about 98.6 percent of the world's student population.

In response to Education Institution closures, UNESCO recommended the use of distance learning programmes and open educational applications and platforms that schools and teachers can use to reach learners remotely and limit the disruption of education.

Education Institution closures in response to the pandemic have shed light on various social and economic issues. Measures have been taken to ensure continuity of learning in educational institutions including universities.

In India, the education system in the country has been debating about digital transformation for more than a decade. The pandemic situation provided the platform to shift traditional teaching and learning system to digital learning and to adopt advanced technologies and innovative ways to deliver/access information, share knowledge, and ease learning.

As libraries are social institutions within an academic system that provide numerous personal and specialized services to their user community, during the pandemic libraries around the world faced the unexpected situations. Libraries have found it difficult to decide which service to offer and method to disseminate information/ information resources to the user community, to impose minimal restrictions or to full closure. Libraries struggled to render its services ensuring the safety of users and staff but library professional has proven its adoptability for the transformation or transition in the context of services to user community over a decade of centuries by continuing curating its traditional services and expanding the digital services

Need for the study

COVID-19 has impacted immensely to the education sector worldwide. A developing country like India which is marching to equip education to reach all corners of the nation via digital platforms is relentlessly trying to come up with a solution to resolve the problem driven by the sudden pandemic. It is need of the hour for the educational institutions to strengthen their knowledge and Information Technology infrastructure to be ready for facing COVID-19 situations. The pandemic has brought a revolution not only in the online teaching of higher education but also in the effective ways academic libraries can deliver their services virtually. The present study will help to know the steps and initiatives taken by Mysore University Library in the Covid-19 crisis period.

Statement of the problem: The present research topic is entitled "A survey on Mysore University Library Resources and Services during Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities"

Definition of the concept: COVID-19: Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first known case was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The disease has since spread worldwide, leading to an ongoing pandemic which is leading to crisis in the field of education, economy and compelled the human society to maintain social distancing.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To enlighten various resources and services rendered by Mysore University Library during the pandemic.
- ✓ To highlight challenges created by Covid-19 and offer suggestions for improvement of resources, services and facility in the library to cater the needs of users.

Scope and limitation: This study is based upon the survey research method of Mysore University Library during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. This study examines the role of Library services and facilities rendered by Mysore University Library.

REVIEW LITERATURE

Most of the related literature was studied from peer-reviewed open-access journals on the present topic. Bhati & Kumar (2020) highlighted the various roles of library professionals during the pandemic situation. They have identified the supporting role that Library Professionals have taken up in their study. Their study found that digital

library is in more demand and Library Professionals/ Information Professionals must be ready to meet the requirement of the reader.

Burns (2020) explored in his study that school librarians' ability to develop and deliver integrated library lessons, Orientation programmes/ User education programme under remote teaching and learning conditions. The study gave a glimpse into this context and suggested a few steps to help school library educators identify the preparation required in coursework to effectively implement blended learning practices as well as identify perceived barriers and opportunities for implementing effective remote school library practice.

Guo… et al (2020) found that during this pandemic crisis, the majority of the libraries in China have changed their service focus either partly or solely providing remote access to electronic resources, including free electronic resources, virtual references and research support services. Print resources were altered to e- resources. Mehta & Wang (2020) described the experience of Bridgewater State University library during the COVID-19 pandemic by illustrating the challenges that the Pandemic has posed to its digital services. One of the best practices adopted in the BSU library is to keep developing a digital library experience that enhances remote and distance learning through seamlessly accessing library e-resources and digital library services off-campus, actively integrating digital content and services into LMS and collaboratively connecting the BSU academic community.

As declared universally that Librarians should serve as catalysts for the effective dissemination of information to promote true knowledge Okike (2020) 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 re-imagined librarians.

Tammaro (2020) studied the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Library systems in Italy. He also opined that COVID emergency pushes for a transformation of libraries and a new vision of service, which focuses on new relationships with communities.

As stated by Asif & Singh (2021) Mysore University Staffs were successful in handling the assignments like rendering services/ facilities and resources. During this crisis period the professionals were given awareness on preventive measures and current trends to enhance knowledge and skills to quote a few awareness programmes were conducted on Federated search on Knimbus, Anti-plagiarism software- Drillbit, Remote access software- Remotelog and Myloft, EBSCO and Scifinder databases. Preventive measures were taken to make sure the safety of staff and students by ensuring staff were vaccinated and followed SOP.

Devan...et al (2021) studied the traditional and digital services rendered by Fr Moses Library during the Covid -19 pandemic and explored various roles of libraries to support the information need of the academic community during Covid-19 and the best practices such as providing responsive library website services and use of social media platforms etc.

Deol & Brar (2021) explored the role of libraries and the library staff to be played during the emergency circumstances of the community spread of the virus of the COVID-19 worldwide. They have opined that academic libraries can provide its services through online open access as well as procured e -resources to teachers, students and research scholars to fulfill the academic needs.

Henson & Spitler (2021) surveyed to know the business students at Research One (R1) university access library resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that there is an increase in using computers and online resources like LibGuides by the students.

Library professional is one of the professionals challenging for the transformation and transition and adopting its challenges once a decade of years and continuing to curate traditional print services along with digital library services to fulfill the needs of its users. Shastri & Chudasma (2021) studied the level of ICT skills, competencies, usage of technologies, challenges, and services offered by library professionals of Gujarat state, during the lockdown period and how library professionals provided services and resources to users during Covid-19.

Zhou (2021) studied academic libraries in China and Italy. The study described that the COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled the need for digital transformation strategies and programs for libraries. The study also highlighted the general trends in library transformation that can help to identify the promising areas of library work in support of online education programs.

Mysore University Library facing the challenge

Mysore University library is being one of the oldest and largest University Library in the country has contributed to the knowledge development of the Institution. The Library is at its best especially in procuring and providing quality information resources collections and services to the researchers, students and faculty of the University of Mysore.

Even in this pandemic situation, The Mysore University Library is working by minding social distance and hygiene environment. Library authorities have consulted with the higher authority of the University regarding both reopening plans and policies to govern staff and patron access to and use of the Library resources.
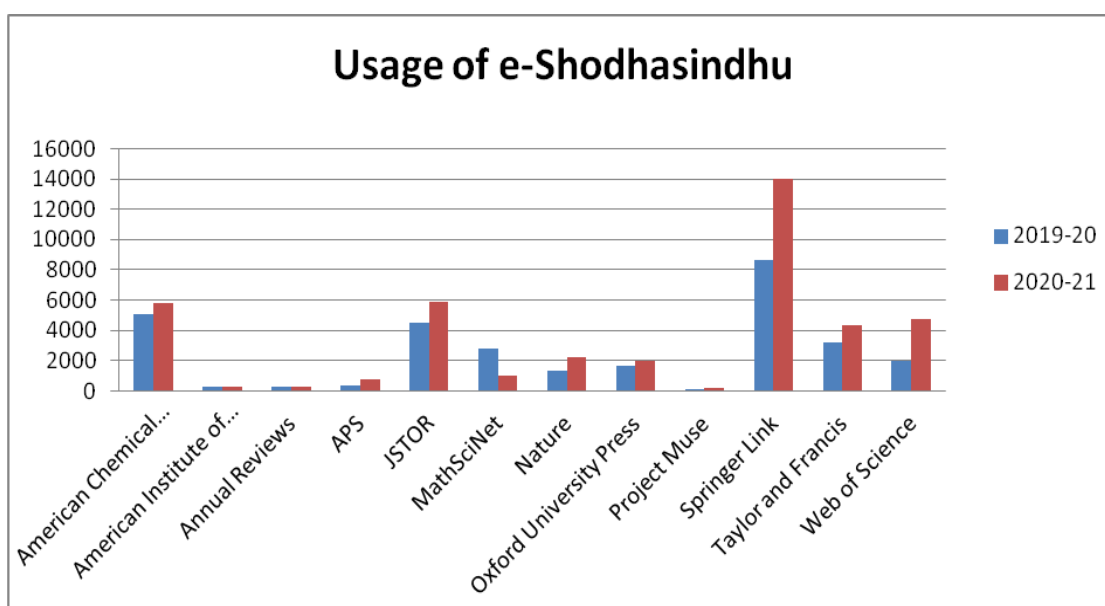
Library with 50% of the existing staff kept open for rendering emergency services online, if required offline by adhering to SOP. Every staff was checked for thermal screening before entering the library and hand sanitizers were kept at the entrance of the Library. The Library ensured that all the staff was vaccinated. Services like the issue of No-due certificates for the research scholars were rendered uninterruptedly, Plagiarism check service was provided both offline and online by following social distancing and sanitizing respectively. Stack verification and Stock rectification were conducted in the stack area during this period by entrusting nominal staff to ensure social distance.

In the later stages, students of the final semester and research scholars who are submitting theses and faculties who were retiring from their services were allowed to return the already issued books to the library for issuing of No due certificate. The University Librarian by consulting and discussing with higher authorities of the University of Mysore decided to wave off the overdue fine charges for the books which were issued before lockdown. Research scholars who were approached for reference services were allowed inside the library after proper thermal screening and ensuring that the person is wearing the mask and following SOP.

Implemented quarantine policies on returned books, regular cleaning processes, followed protocols to respond immediately if someone with symptoms is identified in the library

University Library is providing a wealth of digital content to the teaching, learning and research needs of users. Users with authentic user ID and password are allowed to access digital resources and services like e-resources, Institutional Repositories, etc. E-Shodh Sindhu consortia from Inflibnet has witnessed a drastic rise in the usage of remote access of e-resources.

Summary of usage of e-Shodhasindhu provided resources for (University of Mysore)		
Resource Name	**2019-20**	**2020-21**
American Chemical Society	5062	5811
American Institute of Physics	292	306
Annual Reviews	252	268
APS	373	774
JSTOR	4515	5912
MathSciNet	2831	1016
Nature	1359	2189
Oxford University Press	1672	1953
Project Muse	150	174
Springer Link	8654	13978
Taylor and Francis	3187	4314
Web of Science	2022	4777

Reference services were rendered on request by mailing the scanned print resources. University Library provided off-campus access to the databases like indiastat.com and Manupatra by enhancing subscription specified period for the benefit of users during the pandemic. Intimation of new arrivals of books was sent regularly through e-mail to faculty, research scholars and students and home-delivered the requested books in person.

Mysore University Library's website was updated and upgraded both in appearance and contents during this crisis period to cater to the needs of the library users. Links to the open-access were updated and upgraded to provide enormous e-resource services. Residential access to e-books was provided to the users.

Mysore University Library is the first University in Karnataka to establish a Learning Resource center for the visually challenged with large-scale assistive technology. During pandemic Mysore University Library has arranged many services like rendering remote service for visually challenged faculty and students by lending Angle daisy book reader, In addition, Mysore University Library provided an audio version of lessons of different discipline for students and also an audio version of Newspapers using Google Group.

The Covid-19 pandemic situation has revealed that the role of the Library Professionals is one of the most important to serve the user community, especially education and research institutions. To enhance the education of the students and research scholars library professionals managed to provide information resources and services through Remote Access, Electronic Resource Management System ERMs/IRs. The various online resources and services like webinars, Orientation programmes, User education programme, workshops, and seminars have been marketed or created awareness among users through Social Networking tools. Mysore University Library staff were also educated and trained to enhance the ICT skills by organizing various web-based seminars and online workshops so have to render various remote services to the users.

Hence, though the pandemic crisis was unexpected worldwide our professional staff successfully handled the resources & services to the various needs of the users and trustworthy to the parent Institution towards academic integrity.

As sudden pandemic crisis occurred over worldwide there opened multiple challenges Martzoukou (2021) in the field of education, learning and accessing or dissemination of resources which paved sudden confusion among teacher, librarians and students to get adopted to the sudden change in professional learning process respectively

Mysore University Library as for the situation has given more scope for rendering digital services to its users by organizing more Online Orientation Programme, webinars, workshops and residential access to e-books (earlier limited to campus-wide access only) and also frequently updated the links of open-access resources focusing on academic resources.

As a sudden pandemic crisis occurred worldwide there opened multiple challenges Martzoukou (2021) in the field of education, learning & accessing or dissemination of information resources which paved sudden confusion among teachers, librarians and students to get adopted to the sudden change in professional and learning process respectively.

Mysore University Library as for the situation has given more scope in rendering digital services to its user as Okike (2020) in his study describes that the role of a new breed of the re-imagined library is rendering service to its best by discriminating information and services. Hence it is our privilege to disclose that Mysore University Library professional staff is a new breed of re-imagined librarians by disseminating information resources and services in a time of crisis to a time of great need to its user

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 Pandemic has raised a need to go for digital strategy to overcome the situation. During the pandemic situation the level of awareness on ICT, competencies usage of technology challenges and services were enhanced/increased among Library professionals. The urge to learn was Inevitable and unveiled the need for digital transformation strategies and programs for the Libraries that waved path to library transformation and to promise certain areas of library work in library premises.

Mysore University Library is proud to handle this unexpected circumstance efficiently and still be able to offer a healthy level of services to the user community. Even if the COVID-19 crisis stretches longer, University Library is ready to take efforts on maximum utilization of online platforms so that users can achieve their academic excellence.

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