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## STRATEGY OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS DURING COVID-19

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**Abstract:** *The COVID-19 is a widespread global health crisis of our time and one of the most significant challenges we have faced. The Pandemic spread in the different continent like waves, as of September 21, 2020, 965,199 deaths attributed to the virus worldwide. Routine lives of people have positively been affected, and different business has stopped everywhere. Educational Institutions got closed; many countries have adopted various strategies to reduce the widespread disease. Librarians and Libraries are looking for proper solutions to provide the patrons with the best possible services during this critical situation. The objective of this paper is to highlight different strategy for libraries and librarians to promote library services in any pandemic. A literature review undertook through the databases of Scopus, Pubmed, Google Scholar and Baidu by using COVID-19, Library services in Pandemic and remote access etc. The result shows that librarians should abreast themselves with the latest strategies that are helpful to patrons in any pandemic. Some key strategy like providing health awareness programmes, research support and fulfil research demand of patrons. It seems that Librarians, like medical and paramedical staff, should ready themselves to provide researchers with the best possible services during COVID-19.*

**.Keywords:** Global Health, Library services, Pandemic Disease, Covid-19, Librarianship

**Research Area:** Social Sciences

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The current COVID-19 is one of severe acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2 and widespread disease of 2019, and spreading across the globe with an alarming rate. The disease was detected in November 2019 at Wuhan China for the first time. Several major countries are in lock-down and are responding to this disease by adopting different strategies (Hussain, Abid 2020). As of September 21, 2020, there were 31,254,734 cases and more than 965,199 deaths attributed to the virus worldwide (World Meter 2020.). The COVID-19 is a pandemic and global health crisis of our time and one of the greatest challenge we have faced. The virus has spread to every continent of the world.

Countries are trying to reduce the spread of the virus by adopting different precautionary measurement like limiting travel, quarantining citizens, and cancelling large gathering such as sports, schools and academic institutions where people are gathering on a large scale. The COVID-19 is much more than a health crisis. It has a devastating social, economic and political turmoil that will leave deep scars. We are in uncharted territory many of our countries are unrecognizable now, and many countries are deserted as people stay indoors either by choice or by government order. Shops, theatres, playgrounds, restaurants and many public places have been closed to spread this pandemic further. People are losing jobs and

income every day and thinking that when normality will be return. The International labour organizations estimate that could loss 195 million jobs if the pandemic did not control as soon as possible. (UNDP, 2020).

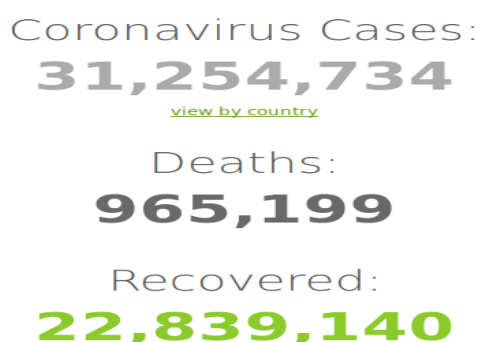
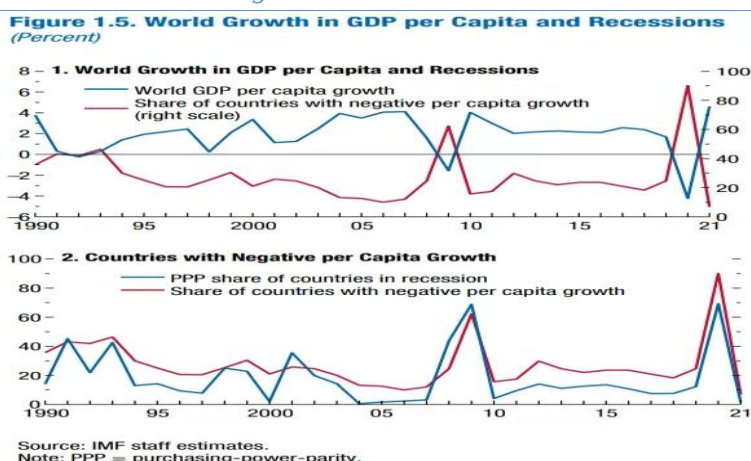


Figure 1: Screenshot Shows Coronavirus cases taken from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

Different strategies worldwide adopted to mitigate this widespread disease. Some precautionary measurement has been adopted at a global level like social distancing, restriction to non-medical care, and closure of different business etc. Despite these strategies, the disease is spreading and lead to a public health crisis. COVID-19 is a virus that can cross species barriers and become human pathogens. It has been argued that COVID-19 is originated from animal reservoirs like domestic animals, bat, mice, etc. At the same time, many cases cause mild illness, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus, which affects the lungs and causes death at an alarming rate (Ye et al., 2020). The COVID-19 is inflicting high and rising human costs worldwide, and as a result, it is impacting economy activities severely. It has not only disrupted the world businesses but also leads the world to lower GDP in the coming future. It has grumbled the world economy badly, and it is said that the economic crisis during the COVID-19 is worse than the financial crisis 2008-09. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) presented a model of Great Lock-down, which represent the GDP of the world during COVID-19 by 3% in 2020. Still, its managing director now thinks the gloomy outlook could be too optimistic. The coronavirus pandemic is set to leave 170 countries with lower GDP per capita by the end of the year. Still, the projection "may be a more optimistic picture than reality produces," Kristalina Georgieva told the BBC in an interview. (Ben, Winck 2020 )



**Figure 2:** Screenshot taken from International Monetary Fund

The Library across the world are sources of research activities and are in doubt that which services should opt for clientele restrictions. Government around the world have decided different approaches; many states are in favour of full closure institutions while others are indicating that life should continue as usual. (IFLA, 2020)

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

### *Covid-19-Response of Librarian*

Librarian's role is unique in any pandemic included COVID-19

1. Public health awareness through informed research relevant to pandemic
2. Research support for the researchers and faculty relevant to Pandemic
3. Fulfilling Research Demands of Library users during the pandemic

#### *1. Public Health Awareness through informed research relevant to COVID-19*

The first and foremost duty of Librarians is to inform the public regarding Covid-19 through scholarly research. In this regards, librarians will use their professional's experience by educating the masses regarding health issues such as social distancing, remote working, online health consultations and remote working etc. In this regards, librarians can make aware public by using relevant literature (Heymann, Shindo, 2020). Numerous topics are embedded for awareness campaign regarding COVID-19 such as using masks, hand-washing and uses of sanitization etc. These preventive measures can protect many peoples from controlling the spread of COVID-19. Some other precautionary measurement like a history of recovered people and advises for nutrition and lifestyle, which can be used to reduce the risk among masses. Librarians should also highlight the importance of social distancing among people. In this case, he/she must educate peoples to stay at home and keep a social distance from family, colleagues and other strangers. He/She should also educate the masses for possible quarantine measures. The quarantine was used as an effective measure to control all kind of diseases, such as influenza etc. (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020). Last but not least, the librarians can advise their members to avoid misinformation through social media like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp etc. The librarians should advise their members to

share trustworthy and reliable information and to prevent rumours and fake news during pandemic disease.

## ***2. Research support for the researchers and faculty during Pandemic***

The librarians can support the medical and paramedical staff by educating them through the latest development regarding, diagnosis kits, vaccinations and relevant studies published in medical journals and well-known databases. They must direct their research staff to free access items relating to COVID-19.

## ***3. Fulfilling Research Demands of Library users during pandemic***

As people are in lock-down and can not move freely somewhere, they want, especially in the libraries. In this regards, the library staff must fulfil the demand of library users, helping them in their research assignment. They must continue support to their users in terms of reference services, document delivery services, literature search and systematic reviews. They must also provide support to researchers in difficult time via zoom, Google classroom, Skype and google hangouts etc. and fulfil their research demands wholeheartedly.

### **3. LIBRARY CLOSURE POLICY**

Libraries and librarians around the world are facing hard choices that which kind of services should opt for library patrons in these critical situations. Many institutions are closing their services while others are providing standard services. Many governments around the world believe to closure all institutions included libraries for public gathering; however, some governments are indicating functional benefits in regular routines. Even more, the government are leaving the decision up to the heads of institutions (IFLA, 2020)

**Partial restrictions:** Many governments in the world have restricted themselves to avoid large gathering and are instructing peoples to adopt precautionary measurement to protect hygiene by disinfecting the hard surface. Peoples in circulation places avoid toys and virtual reality headset. Many libraries are closing their study spaces where people are sitting for a longer time. Some librarians avoid entrance inside the libraries by ensuring that library staff will work remotely via digital mode.

**Minimal service:** Many countries have minimized their services and warning people to avoid risk and are closing their most affected regions. In these situations, libraries offer circulation services via book drops and are experiencing with drive-through pickup or only allow those peoples who already have pre-booked. Many libraries provide quarantine services upon returning the books. There are many libraries offer remote services like e-learning, e-lending and remote teaching etc.

**Full closure:** In many countries, the librarian has been restricted to stop their services to avoid risks. In such situations, librarians are ensuring their patrons that staff will work from home and will solve their queries until the next order from the government. Librarians have been assigned different task by using their information management skills to support their patrons in health and social services. Many librarians are communicating their patrons with a different mode like mobiles, email and zoom meeting services. They educate their users through video links and other tools to use the ebooks and other electronic material for

research. They offer digital services and aware them with the help of guidelines (Maurer, 2020).

#### **4. STRATEGY OF REMOTE SERVICES**

Librarians are trying to develop a remote services strategy by promoting their digital services. Many librarians like Bibliotheque Nationale de France have organized a virtual exhibition which helps patrons to get their desired material through remote access other examples of Spain National Library which offer digital contents to support patrons in their educational needs. Some other libraries like National library Morocco are providing free e-books, and the public library of Denmark has provided its contents on the website. Granby Library in Quebec, Canada have shown their collections while the New York Public library is running online book clubs for the entire researchers. Ghana Library authority has also promoted digital access alongside essential health information (Wang & Lund, 2020).

Numerous schools around the world provide material in digital format that allows users to use them with the help of their parents one such example is Al-Abbas Holy Shrine Library which provides remote lending and Electronic material to access. Many schools are offering online storytelling such as CILIP has launched its National Shelf Service at the U.S., which offers storytime for speakers.

Many other strategies have also been devised to promote access to e-books by increasing borrowing limits such as in Denmark, and some free apps have been formulated for freely available contents. In other countries like the Netherlands, librarians are reassigning budgets to pay for more electronic contents.

Many people across the globe are not familiar with digital tools. Huesca, Spain have developed new training material to use library resources up to maximum level. Some other services like looking for jobs are worth-mentioning tools designed by the U.S. to provide in Miami-Dade and Hillsborough country to help them in jobs (IFLA, 2020).

The library of Congress has organized a virtual transcription to engage people in distance learning while other libraries provide access to podcasts at Norway. Other libraries at Dutch National Library have provided author on your screen services, and various libraries have created crowds-sourcing material in the library journal (Library of Congress, 2020).

A Public library at Vega La Camocha Spain has set-up a book-themed Gymkhana to keep children involved in readings. Some libraries in the U.S. are working for local children in their artistic work and have produced quarantines to help them in poetry slams and writing competition, etc., one such example is Arlington Public Library. Danish Libraries at Portuguese have set-up an online Ask-a-Librarian reference shelf, helping patrons in their educational needs.

In many academic libraries, some efforts have also been made to provide remote access; for example, East-West University in Bangladesh has offered online book requests through call-in hours. The University of Malaya at Malaysia has prepared a poster which explains online discovery regarding Covid-19. An Armenian University Abu Papzian University Library has given the number of Librarian to contact remotely. The National Library of Estonia has

provided sign up in person for users to register themselves for online access. The Public Library in the Turkish Ministry of Culture has shown its contents online; similarly, the National Library of Morocco has also demonstrated its collection. In the U.S, there is a call on libraries which connects users to WIFI online. Some libraries use Zoom subscriptions to communicate with users through these applications. Some libraries in Spain, like Huesa, are encouraging students online to write and share their stories to cope with the pressures in Pandemic (IFLA, 2020).

After the closing of offices and library services at the global level, librarians were facing tremendous challenges on how to manage remote working effectively. In such a situation, some advanced training and tools were required for library practitioners to provide their patrons with the best possible services. Although numerous publishers have provided material online via internet, still it is unclear how long librarians will cope with these challenges for longer-term impacts. Some associations at global level share ideas to overcome these challenges one such example in the United States are the topic through webinars in Latin American, another example is Blue Shield Australia about how to continue with conservation during pandemic and lockdown.

## **5. RESOURCES VS SERVICES**

Many libraries are transforming their services from traditional libraries to modern information networks for example in Denmark and U.K. the lending limits of material have been increased to meet their educational goals, similarly, in France, the reallocation of budgets for electronic books have also been increased to meet the needs of their researchers. Numerous publishers and vendors have made their material freely available during COVID-19. Some publishers have given login and password for online material during the pandemic. Macmillan and Penguin publishers have devised the easiest ways for public libraries to buy and access ebooks for lending. Similarly, some audiobooks have also been made available for public access. The Internet archives have also made an effort by providing large volumes to support researchers in this challenging time. Hathi Trust is also giving access to lending their material out in digital formats (Ali & Gatiti, 2020).

Many libraries provide access to online educational materials; one such example is Open Education Resources Commons, library team has made a splendid offer for the entire society, one other example is UNESCO Education's division, which offers educational resources and sound recording online from the past. There are numerous online Media and information literacy skills, which educate users to use these resources up to maximum level one such example is MOOC which hosts online learning platform through Commonwealth learning. Several universities are also providing information literacy skills online to help their students to carry out their research online. One such example is Hawai'i Loveland Colorado libraries in the U.S., offering online courses around this pandemic. The rightsholders in Brazil have taken vital steps to promote online research and educational skills of their patrons through the public domain.

Several groups and association are doing a marvellous job by promoting online materials with the help of online publishers, and one such example is an International coalition of Library consortia and LIBER. Similarly, the Association of University Libraries directors in



France have also requested to publishers to provide online material without charges. JISC in the United Kingdom has provided some Open Access material which is highly encouraging steps for World Intellectual property. Similarly, IFLA has also devised some policy plans for intellectual property laws for favour access. To secure better access some other groups and associations are working together to impart best services; few examples are Australian Library Association and Libraries Ireland who negotiated with publishers at country level to provide the online access to satisfy their patrons, some Publishers have also waived the licensing fees for their online material, one such example is Canadian Publishers. Some policy plan for copyright law has been devised in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia that what should be provided and what not.

The American Library Association is the largest association of librarians across the world has argued successful plans for library users with a slight economic stimulus at the governmental level. Some FUNDERS like IMLS in the U.S. are also offering grantees extra flexibility.

## **6. REASSESSING LIBRARY RESOURCES**

Librarians have been active in taking up their roles during a pandemic. Librarians at Ireland have proved in contact tracing while in the United Kingdom their roles remained active by tracing the contacts for people in isolation outside the world. Librarian has volunteering played their part with community initiatives at Auckland, New Zealand and Public Libraries news England. As we know that many people lost their homeless shelters at Kansas and were deprived of these facilities, the government had provided them WIFI hot-spots and laptops for research activities. Toledo, Ohio has donated its vehicles for library resources. Richland Library at South Carolina had provided hand sanitizes stations and critical resources for people facing unemployment. Many Libraries have offered drive-thru meals for children at Indianapolis public Library and St Loius country library and some other libraries at Oklahoma city handing out books to children, who faced challenges to continue their studies from home. Some libraries have also repurposed their spaces and equipment to meet the needs of their students one such example is San Francisco library which has developed childcare facilities inside the library, a library at Anchorage, Alaska has converted space for emergency coordination centre. Some libraries are acting as a homeless shelter like Spokane, Oregon library and San Luis Obispo library at California which offer safe places for people living in their cars. There are some libraries, offers book drops to collect spare masks in Oakland, California. In short, Libraries in the United States, New Zealand, Canada, Portugal and France are offering 3D prints and donating existing pieces of equipment. The State Library of Western Australia provides mystery boxes for over-subscribed books and delivering bags of books to deprived areas.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

The COVID-19 is a widespread global health crisis of our time and one of the greatest challenge we have faced. COVID-19 has spread rapidly across the world, and all major cities are in lockdown (Yousuf, Muhammad 2020). The main objectives of any libraries are to provide access and services to library collections from remote areas in any pandemic. For these purposes, many libraries have updated their websites for online material, while others are improving their services. The purpose of this study was to know the current status of



COVID-19 and its impact on library services around the world. Two constructs are being formulated for undertaken this study, the first construct related to the provision of services like skills, training and instructional programs while the second construct deals with the services contributed by the library practitioners during this pandemic (Sadia. et, al, 2020). Many people across the globe want to continue their education by adopting online means of communication during COVID-19. Differently to this, a study by (Hiremath. et, al 2019) mentions that users visit the libraries for primary information, like searching online databases, scanning, journals etc, this study shows that during current lockdown users are unable to visit the libraries as they use to do before, a study was conducted by the Georgia Public Library services (2020) that libraries provide internet access wherever feasible, free and open public wi-fi, points or other implementation for the public for internet access in a virtual environment like live Facebook, zoom and Instagram TV etc. to the patron for vital connecting and learning programmes. IFLA (2020) has stated that Kibera and Kakuru public libraries in Kenya has launched an innovative programme through social networks like sharing books and storytimes etc. Some other libraries like Monash in Australia national library of Pozega in Serbia have made similar efforts for their patrons to access their libraries online. Libraries in Huesca, Spain have responded by developing new training material for users to help that make the most of these possibilities. In South Asia, India TS State Central library Chandigarh is sharing book reviews and other information through social media for their patrons. Digital library and public awareness programmes can enhance the utilization of library services in any pandemic.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The COVID-19 is a widespread global health crisis of our time and one of the greatest challenge we have faced. The Pandemic started in Wuhan China in November 2019 and spread like waves in the different continent of the world. As of September 21, 2020, there were 31,254,734 cases and more than 965,199 deaths attributed to the virus worldwide. Many strategies have been adopted to reduce the widespread disease by adopting different precautionary measurement like limiting travel, quarantining citizens, and cancelling large gathering such as sports, schools and academic institutions where people gathering on a large scale. Libraries and librarians are in a critical situation whether to stop the public entry or what alternative sources should be adopted to fulfil the researcher needs in a way that is the best fit for both librarians and library users. The government in different parts are taking different decisions, some are trying to close their institutions while others are indicating that life should continue as usual and even more government are merely leaving the decisions up to the director of institutions. The present paper has devised some policy plan for any pandemic in general and particularly for the COVID-19. Some limitations in this paper need to be addressed in future such as policy for open access material, copyright issues and budgeting plan for library services in any pandemic.

Recommendation:-

The study suggests the following recommendation for considerations

1. Financial resources for the development of a library system that can be utilized in any pandemic

2. Awareness of new emerging technology for library professionals
3. Access to Online Databases and publishers by the competent authority that can be used in any pandemic
4. Centralized training programs for library patrons
5. Performance evaluating system for the librarians
6. Public Awareness programs by the library staff that can educate their patrons about any pandemic

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## **Appendix**

### **Key Messages**

- Covid-19 is a widespread disease that originated from China and spread with rapid speed like waves and has badly affected people of different spheres like libraries
- To reduce the disease, various strategies have been introduced at the global level; librarians are developing similar policies to cope with any pandemic in future
- Educational institutions are getting closed, and researchers got worried, librarians are planning some alternative sources that will help researchers in any pandemic
- Librarians upkeep themselves to assist patrons in any Pandemic and are introducing preventive measures which will be better for librarians and patron both.