



Hyderabad Karnataka Librarians'
Association

**Journal of Information
Management and Educational
Technology**

**Volume 3, Issue 2 & 3
August & December 2019**

University libraries in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic

Shilpa S. Uplaonkar

University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad
uplaonkarshilpa16@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Thousands of libraries across the world have closed down to stop the spread of COVID-19. The novel corona virus, COVID-19, originated in Wuhan, China has spread rapidly across the globe in December 2019. Being a pandemic disease (WHO) and in the nonexistence of a vaccine, social distancing has emerged as the most widely adopted strategy to combat the disease. However, ICT initiatives took by MHRD and UGC/ICAR made an indelible mark for students and teachers to go ahead with their routine duties such as developing online e-courses for combating COVID-19 by taking preventive and precautionary measures, maintaining social distancing and staying in the confines. This review highlights the avenues and opportunities available for the readers on library information and resources, India in particular.

Keywords: Library, COVID-19, digital resources, e-courses.

1. INTRODUCTION

On January 8, 2020 the novel corona virus was officially announced as the causative pathogen of COVID-19 by the Chinese centre for disease control and prevention (Li *et al.* 2020). The epidemics of corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) started from Wuhan, China last December and have become a major challenging public health problem for not only in China but also in countries around the world (Phelan *et al.*, 2020). On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that this outbreak had constituted a public health emergency of international concern (Mahase, 2020). The novel corona virus was initially named 2019-nCoV and officially as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV2). As of February 26, COVID-19 has been recognized in 34 countries, with a total 80,239 laboratory confirmed cases and 2700 deaths (WHO 2020). But now, it has been spread all over the world even through after taking many major precautions. This pandemic spread has resulted most of the human activities to come to a stand-still and the use of libraries is no exception.

Libraries are universally recognized as important social institutions and no community is considered complete without a library system. Libraries are charged with the most enviable function of dispensing knowledge to the ignorant and the informed alike. The

main function of a library is the collection and preservation of knowledge for its dissemination to all. Its conservation for posterity is also an important duty of a library.

However, libraries are facing change due to impact of ICT, changing patron needs, changing information environment or web resources that are trying to replace reference librarians. Use of descriptive technologies is resulting in transition from print to digital changes takes places from forms to formats, delivery systems and it is inevitable, amidst several challenges which is aptly quoted by Dneant as -“ Libraries could provide a risk vector for the spread of the disease, which beyond the direct health impacts could reduce the public trust in libraries”.

Lack of formal pandemic policies for libraries is a complicating factor throughout the current crisis. Library users need to be connected with local public health resources and services. Libraries can be key partners in empowering members of our community to fight the spread of the corona virus. Thousands of libraries across the India have closed down to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Because the COVID-19 phenomenon is unmapped territory in terms of its level of imminent danger to staff and patrons and the uncertain duration of its resulting library closings. Libraries may need to evolve codified procedures for how to deal with a situation of this magnitude. This problem is not unique to public libraries but also to University libraries. OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) writes, “To reduce the impact of a pandemic on your operations, employees, customers and the general public, it is important for all businesses and organizations to begin continuity planning for a pandemic now.”

The library at University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, India, hosts a wide array of subscribers comprising regional students and students from other countries. The task of closing down its doors was panicking for the reason that most of the students are in thesis writing period as well as examination preparations. This aligns with the statement of Darcy Brizeey - “ Libraries are one of the few places that anybody can go to the expectations of having to buy something”. With this background, an attempt has been made in this paper to highlight and review the existing information resources for the use by readers in the lock down period.

2. WHAT CAN LIBRARIES/LIBRARIANS DO FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19?

IFLA, ALA, ILF, ICAR provided some key resources for libraries in responding to the corona virus pandemic.

- 2.1. IFLA - The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)** is the leading international body representing the interests of people who rely on [libraries](#) and [information professionals](#). An independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, IFLA was founded in Scotland in 1927 and maintains headquarters at the [National Library of the Netherlands](#) in The Hague. IFLA sponsors the annual [IFLA World Library and Information Congress](#), promoting universal and equitable [access to information](#), ideas, and works of imagination for social, educational, cultural, democratic, and economic [empowerment](#). Reconsidering programming such as story times or

workshops, especially for groups at risk such as older users. Additional efforts to ensure hygiene, including through disinfecting hard surfaces. Removing riskier items such as toys or virtual reality headsets from circulation. Implementing plans to offer remote services for example e-Lending, e-Learning, or support to remote teaching, etc.

2.2. ALA - The American Library Association (ALA) was founded in on 1876 is a [nonprofit organization](#) based in USA that promotes [libraries](#) and library education internationally. It is the oldest and largest library association in the world. The main purpose of this association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvements of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure for all.

Below are some topics to include in an individual library policy on illness and/or pandemic prevention and preparedness - after ensuring (if necessary) that they are consistent with the policies of the library's governing body:

- Criteria for closing the library
- Employee policies for sick leave, payroll and banking/financial issues, working from home
- Mandated documentation of procedures or cross training so others can take over for sick employees.
- Policies for social distancing -- that is, removing a number of chairs so people aren't sitting close to each other, or limiting the number of people who can come in at any one time, or taking out coat racks, and similar things that keep people and their belongings separate from each other.
- Criteria for suspending story times and other library programs.
- Provision of masks and gloves along with the training of staff in their removal and disposal.
- Standards for the cleaning of bathrooms, railings and door knobs, telephones, keyboards, counters, and cleaning of workstations/offices of employees who go home sick, emptying of wastebaskets, etc.
- Setting a schedule for seeing to the critical needs of the facility if the library is closed for an extended time (boiler and building checks by custodians, book drop, payroll and banking considerations).
- Communications plan for reaching staff and for communicating with the public
- Means for continuing to provide information services for the public, such as digital reference, online materials access and expansion of other online resources
- Accommodation of the needs of people in the community who rely on library resources
- Education of the public in advance of an epidemic

2.3. ILF - Indiana Library Federation is devoted to fostering the professional growth of its members and the promotion of all libraries in Indiana. It accomplishes its goals through statewide [continuing education](#), public awareness, and [library advocacy](#). The organization works to create a strong

sense of unity within the library community. ILF offers members a number of opportunities for library leadership, professional growth, networking, and recognition. Indiana Library Federation offers online [virtual exchanges](#) and possible webinars during the pandemic crisis. Check out archived micro-trainings on [Intellectual Freedom](#), [Public Library Series](#) (members only), and more.

- 2.4. ICAR - The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** is an autonomous body responsible established on 1929 at New Delhi, for co-ordinating agricultural education and research in India. It reports to the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture. It is the largest network of agricultural research and education institutes in the world. ICAR had offered all its guest houses located in different states for quarantine use. ICAR also said that its four institutes -- Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bengaluru-based National Institute of Veterinary Epidemiology and Disease Informatics (NIVEDI), Izatnagar-based Indian Veterinary Research Institute and Hisar-based National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE) - have required facility to do COVID-19 tests.

3. LIBRARY CLOSURES AROUND THE WORLD

Libraries around the world are facing hard choices around which services to offer and how, ranging from minimal restrictions to full closure. We are aware that governments themselves are taking different approaches, sometimes ordering the closure of all institutions, others indicating that life should continue as usual, and others simply leaving decisions up to library directors. Many public libraries around the world are promoting online resources, putting existing services online.

3.1. Pandemic Preparedness

A pandemic is an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and effects an exceptionally high proportion of the population. The preparedness for the pandemic has been suggested in the following:

3.2. Time is the Best Disinfectant

Yet stepping back may be the best defense against a still developing threat. The easiest, safest, and most inexpensive disinfectant is time. "This pandemic is a unique situation for most conservators, so we don't know a lot about disinfecting generally, and this virus specifically," says Knight. "Our view is that prophylaxis, or preventive measures, are best."

3.3. Cleaning and Sanitizing

Keeping libraries safe is important for both workers and guests. But during the current COVID-19 pandemic, questions about how to do that—particularly when it comes to materials and surfaces. Internal hard surface, including tabletops, door handles, book drops and computers should be professionally cleaned. Any staff working out site should institute thorough hand-washing especially when handling books or any shared objects in the library.

Nandal says that “There are no studies that specifically answer the question of how transmissible the corona virus might be from the most common library material, coated and uncoated paper, book cloth or polyester book jacket”.

3.4. Avoiding Materials Damage

Knight says librarians should be cautious when using cleaning solvents on books and other potentially fragile library materials. “I am not aware of a ‘least damaging’ cleaner or disinfectant, especially for any objects of obvious lasting value,” he says, explaining that the risks to books subjected to aqueous cleaning or disinfecting include water damage and weakened hinges and joints. “Books wrapped in polyester or polyethylene can be more reasonably cleaned and disinfected, and strong library-binding buckram cloth coverings can probably withstand the enhanced cleaning too,” he adds. “But again, if one is planning to clean and disinfect collections, even among poly-covered volumes, they should understand and accept that there will be collection damage.”

There’s evidence that certain methods may not be effective anyway. “Common misperceptions may be that spraying or wiping the outside of a volume with Lysol, alcohol, or bleach is sufficient to denature the virus across the entire volume,” says Durant.

3.5. Care to be taken while handling circulation services

- Please keep distance with any library related services within your working organization
- Avoid group gathering in any event participation
- Provide awareness on to take precautions on corona virus by using offline and online platforms from your library so that you can protect your working organization specially.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Maintain at least three feet distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing with a tissue or your handkerchief then dispose the tissue safely
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer with at least 60% of alcohol.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, seek medical attention immediately
- Keep in mind the travel advisory set out by the ministry of health and welfare

4. PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENTS

For most of the students library is a source of information. The core factor of the work of a librarian is absolutely vital. Everyday routine of library work is changing and saving lives. As well as providing informal mental health and wellbeing support, they are raising national literacy levels, supporting students and reaching out into their communities to make them stronger and more cohesive.

5. E-BOOK FOR QUARANTINE

With many libraries closing their doors to protect their constituents from COVID-19. Higher Education institutions are suspending or moving classes online. Thankfully, UGC/ICAR is providing many online courses for students and teachers and a number of publishers are offering e-books to help readers keep busy during social distancing.

ICT initiatives for MHRD and UGC/ICAR took initiation for the sake of students and teachers for combat COVID-19 by taking preventive and precautionary measures, maintaining social distancing and staying in the confines of our homes/hotels by engaging in online

1. SWAYAM Online Courses:

<http://storage.googleapis.com/uniquecourses/online.html> (Swayam.gov.in) Provide access to best teaching learning resources which were earlier delivered on the SWAYAM platform may be now viewed by any learner free of cost.

2. UG/PG MOOCs:

http://ugcmoocs.inflibnet.ac.in/ugcmoocs/moocs_courses.php hosts learning material of the SWAYAM UG and PG (Non-Technology) archived courses.

3. E-PG Pathshala:

epgp.inflibnet.ac.in hosts high quality, interactive e- content containing 23,000 modules (e-text and video) in 70 PG disciplines of social sciences, arts, fine arts and humanities, natural & mathematical sciences.

4. E- Content courseware in UG subjects:

<http://cec.nic.in/> e-content in 87 UG courses with about 24110 e-content modules is available on the CEC.

5. SWAYAMPARBHA:

<http://www.swayamparbha.gov.in/> is a group of 32 DTH channels providing high quality education curriculum based course contents covering diverse disciplines.

6. CEC-UGC YouTube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/cecedusat> provides access to unlimited educational curriculum based absolutely free.

7. National Digital Library:

<http://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/> is a digital repository platform of a vast amount of academic content in different formats and provides interface support for leading Indian languages for all academic levels including researchers and lifelong learners.

8. Shodhganga:

<https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/> is a digital repository platform of 2,60,000 Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertations for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access.

9. E-Shodh Sindhu:

<http://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/> provides current as well as archival access to more than 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines.

10. Vidwan:

<http://vidwan.inflibnet.ac.in> is a database of experts which provides information about experts to peers, prospective collaborators, policy makers and research scholars in the country.

11. e-KrishiShiksha

<http://ecoursesonline.iasri.res.in/> provides the courses developed under the NAIP-ICAR by various universities. The contents of various UG and PG courses in agriculture are being developed by subject experts. The courseware material is prepared as per ICAR approved syllabus for the benefit of under-graduate students already enrolled in Indian Agricultural Universities.

6. CONCLUSION

More and more countries are encouraging citizens to practice 'social distancing' – keeping a safe distance between individuals in order to reduce the risks of the virus passing from one person to another, many libraries are seeing a major increase in interest in digital resources. Clearly, the possibility to use resources online depends a lot on the terms under which they are accessed. Fortunately, a lot of publishers and vendors have taken helpful initiatives. Many have provided open access to materials related to COVID-19. Others have facilitated access by making it easier to log-in and access materials from outside of official networks. ICT initiatives for MHRD and UGC/ICAR took initiation for the sake of students and teachers for combat COVID-19 by taking preventive and precautionary measures, maintaining social distancing and staying in the confines of our homes/hostels by engaging in online.

REFERENCES

1. https://ecourses.icar.gov.in/Objective_new.aspx
2. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2020/03/covid-19-its-impact-on-public-libraries/>
3. Li,Q,Guan et al., 2020, Early transmission dynamics in wuhan, china, of novel coronavirus-infected pneumonia. N Engl J Med. (epub ahead of print 29 january 2020)
4. Mahase, E. 2020 china corona virus: WHO declares international emergency as death toll exceeds 2020. BMJ.368:m408.
5. Meng,L.F., Hua and Bian, Z. 2020. Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Emerging and future challenges for dental and oral medicine.
6. <https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries>
7. [www.UGC.F.No.1-14/2020\(website\)](http://www.UGC.F.No.1-14/2020(website)) dated 25.03.2020
8. www.theguardian.com
9. <https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/libraries-and-the-coronavirus.html>
10. <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/how-to-sanitize-collections-covid-19/>
11. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>