RESTRUCTURING OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC: A REVIEW

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Abstract :-

The Covid-19 Pandemic has resulted in extraordinary situations where global economies have been shut down using lockdown procedures to prevent the spread of this disease. Information has become the most valuable asset in the emerging world. Hence, information has become one of the major driving forces that lead a country towards sustainable development. While the libraries and other information centers are closed around the world, it could adversely affect the economy and general livelihood of the society. Libraries have responded to this extraordinary situation by offering their services online through digital access yet remaining closed to the public. The purpose of this short article is to discuss the issue of post pandemic re-opening of libraries and what measures they should be taking to prevent reinfection and spread of viral diseases like Covid-19.

Keywords :- Covid-19 Pandemic, libraries, lockdown, online access, Social Media, Library services,, sanitization methods.

1. INTRODUCTION :-

Libraries are considered the heart of academic and research institutions. Without a library,academics will have no progress. Though the digital library is a frequent buzzword for libraries and information centers in the present era, traditional services, especially in public and academic libraries, still exist. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all types of libraries have been equally affected. There is a huge the impact of the COIVID-19 pandemic on the continuity of library services and access in the Indian academic and research libraries.Though some universities, colleges and schools were using online resources even prior to the Covid-19 crisis, the lockdown, forced higher education institutions and students to opt for digital resources and online platforms. Needless to say, online platforms require a dedicated space at home, e-infrastructure, essential gadgets, quality internet service, electricity and data purchasing power. The new requirements at home pushed a large number of students into a vulnerable situation.

2. COVID 19 AND ACADEMICS IN INDIA :-

In India, the first COVID-19 case was reported on January 27, 2020, in Kerala, when a 20 years old girl infected while returning from Wuhan city, China, to her home state Kerala, was studying at Wuhan University. Since then, the cases have continually been reported in various parts of the country. The Govt. of India declared its first nationwide lockdown on March 25, 2020, for 21 days. That was the time when the case was approximately 500. Later, the infection cases increased quickly and doubled in 6 days, negatively impacting the economy, human life, and the environment.

Meanwhile, the Govt. of India classified the 733 districts into three zones- red, green and orange to combat the spread of the COVID-19. By the end of Lockdown 3.0, the Government recognized 130 districts as 'Red Zone', 284 districts as 'Orange Zone' and 319 districts in the 'Green Zone'. The entire HEI's declared closed with fifty percent staff. The research activities at academics and research laboratories became slow, and academic libraries' doors closed. Staff perceived the Indian Government and the local authorities' advisories issued from time to time while working from home(WFH). However, WFH was not comfortable for the staff as time, place, and service are concerned because physical service is vital in academics.

In libraries, general services like library reading areas, check-in and check-out of library materials and student-librarian interactions didn't meet user's access. Library staff encountered several challenges to fulfill the users' needs. The librarian's role significantly changed from a hybrid library to a completely virtual one. After the partial lifting of lockdown, the academic services,including the library, resumed phase-wise.

3. LIBRARIES UNDER LOCKDOWN

Libraries are knowledge organizations as they hold information as much as they are centers of learning and cultural activities . They serve students and readers from all walks of life and offer services like lending of books and reading materials. Libraries also have reading rooms where patrons could come and borrow books to read.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been characterized by extraordinary situations with people across the world taking special precautions against this dreadful pandemic. With the global economies having been locked down to maintain isolation to enforce social distancing, such extraordinary steps were taken to contain the spread of this highly contagious coronavirus disease. With almost all the countries being more or less affected by the pandemic, lockdowns have been enforced in around 158 countries around the world. Preventive measures like social distancing, wearing of masks, quarantine, sanitizing and maintaining lockdown to prevent gathering of people have been undertaken across the world. Libraries too have but little choice and their closures around the world indicate that they are abiding the decisions of their respective directors who in turn are following their government's directives to shut down.

4. PREVENTIVE MEASURES IN LIBRARIES AGAINST COVID-19:-

Library staffs are at equal risk of getting exposed to contagious disease like COVID- 19 in a much similar but analogous manner like healthcare workers for both deals with people. So academic, school, public, community and special libraries must adhere to the rules and regulations in order to maintain post COVID-19 preventative measures. The guidelines as protocols have been outlined by the IFLA as follows:

i.   Access to liquid soap or hand wash /hand sanitizers with warm water should be maintained before

entering the library.

ii. Special precaution should be in place on loan (circulation) desks in a circulation or lending section where

books are borrowed or returned. Circulation section, therefore, should take enough precautions to avoid

getting infected.

iii. During lending or borrowing of books in the circulation section, special systems should be in place to

sanitize library cards as well as books returned to the library.

iv. Reading rooms must be cleaned and sanitized before and after library hours.

v. Computer rooms and computer accessories should be kept clean.

vi.Library staff and users/patrons need to be aware of whether they are feeling unwell or ill or show any signs of COVID-19.

vii.Social distancing should be maintained within the reading rooms and overcrowding must be avoided, and viii.Limiting the number of users to the library.

Since libraries are public gathering places and people from all walks of life come to visit public libraries in search of information and knowledge, library staff are equally exposed to contracting contagious infections like H1N1 or CoVID-19. Librarians, on the other hand, have a definite role to play regarding safety measures that they should adopt to minimize the risk of exposure to Covid-19-like infections . As Friedman and Friedman elucidates, transitioning out of Covid-19 lockdown is an important aspect of developing a zone-based social distancing

On account of lockdowns due to Covid-19 Pandemic, libraries have developed planned ideas regarding access to their materials via online mode. Online access to digital contents and materials have made it possible for students and learners to search and retrieve accessible materials like journals, periodicals, books, thesis materials, magazines and other materials for their educational needs. Since public libraries, school libraries, academic and college libraries have all been shut down to prevent gathering of people who could transmit Covid-19 infection among them, it has become necessary for libraries to opt for alternative modes of operation . They tend to remain "active" without being "open". For, libraries are sources of knowledge, and so such knowledge must be accessible to the patrons. I have already discussed the issue of post-Covid-19 scenarios when libraries are likely to be open to the students and the public. This could raise concern regarding the risk

of spreading contagious infections. Several outlined measures as guidelines have been formulated by the IFLA when libraries prepare for their re-opening

5. ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN CONTEXT WITH LIBRARIES :-

Social media is nothing more than a new set of technological tools which allow two-way communication. There is high rate of social media worldwide businesses have seen in social media platforms a first-class opportunity to build efficient relationships with customers t was not long after that libraries and other types of information organizations followed suit and leveraged social media to reach out to their patrons and promote their services.

Social media have also emerged as an effective tool for risk and crisis communication during disasters and emergencies and individuals turn to social media to look for updated information on critical situations, as well as for getting emotional support.Promotion of library services, collections and events at a low cost, and reaching out to and gathering feedback from users to improve services have been recognized as the most important benefits for libraries.

Following Social media were effectively used during Covid 19 pandemic

5.1 Use of Facebook :- Use in different countries found that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform by both public and academic libraries. Academic libraries has been connected to their users , students via facebook for notices , official communication regarding academic libraries functioning.

5.2 Use of Twitter :- Twitter has been used to connect with researchers and other institutions.

5.3 Use of Whatsapp :- Whatsapp has a major impact on the education system in Covid 19 pandemic. There is tremendous use of Whatsapp for not only higher education but also higher secondary education. By creating class groups on whatsapp, there is an effective way of dissemination of information in all the age groups. The Government of India has taken the most important step towards making whatsapp

communication as official communication, that's why whatsapp is the most effective and famous social media in the field of education. Whatsapp has a major impact on resource sharing by sending class notes, Ebooks, College and school notices.

5.4 Use of Youtube :- Youtube is a most commonly used platform for encalcating education among the students. Services provided by Youtube are free of cost. That's the key which makes Youtube the most famous social media. Many educational videos uploaded by teachers and students and academic libraries are following them effectively. Youtube makes online education easier.

6. LIBRARY SERVICES DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC :-

6.1 Subscription to e-resources :- Many Academic libraries move towards subscription to e-resources/digital resources /databases and the mode of availability, such as IP based or Login id password-based access.

6.2 Preparation of library guides for their readers :- Academic library activities during lockdown, such as preparing library guides containing notifications/Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)/alerts in the lockdown period.

6.3 Comprehensive digital resource guides about free Internet resources :- librarians were the provision of comprehensive guides about free Internet resources in the form of PDF files/web pages/portals.

6.4 Library guides :- Library guides were mostly circulated among the users through the WhatsApp group of the college/school/university department or by email communication.

6.5 Library Website :- Library website has been playing a very important role in Covid 19 Pandemic. Dissemination of Notes, Ebooks, via library websites plays vital role in Higher Education.

6.6 Librarians' participation in online meetings and webinars :-Librarians were engaged in online meetings with their library staff, and they also arranged webinars on various topics.

6.7 E-Content Development :- Many Faculties and with the help of librarian, E-content development was undertaken and uploaded using Dspace as Institutional Repository. Sometime E-content created and uploaded on Youtube and separate channel was created.

7. CHALLENGES FACED BY LIBRARIANS OF SUDDEN LOCKDOWN DUE TO COVID-19 :-
The most obvious challenge was the lack of infrastructure/facilities while working from home

CONCLUSION: - Though Indian librarians faced infrastructural problems, by and large, the situation was handled pretty well during the pandemic. The immense importance of open access resources and open educational materials has been realized in the pandemic period, as librarians provided free and open access resources to the users in the form of digital guides/via the website. This may boost the development of institutional repositories and their content in India.

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