



Innovative library services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis by the University libraries in Karnataka, India

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Abstract

The paper discusses the background of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) disease presented unique challenges to all the stakeholders of education system. It talks about the different dimensions of education sectors affected by this pandemic and the response of the libraries and librarians during this period. The sudden and unexpected outbreak of the virus forced the library professionals, to ascertain ways of working in a rapid time frame like shifting to digital platform wherever possible and to provide adequate remote services to the users. The purpose of this paper is to find out how technology became a saviour for the premier universities in Karnataka during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explores the type of services provided by various University libraries in Karnataka.

Keywords: innovative library services, remote services, virtual services, library services, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

The COVID-19 began to lead to the closure of library buildings at the start of the year 2020. The pandemic has forced governments worldwide to place their countries in full or partial lockdown to contain the spread of the Corona virus. The Government of India declared closure of all educational institutions across the country from 16 March 2020, as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 pandemic. The University Grants Commission, decided to cancel all the examinations except the terminal semester / final years and directed to complete it by end of September 2020. Libraries with their reading hall/ study rooms were also closed hence no physical access to the print collection and circulation. As a result the concept of 'work from home' provides a proper way to manage the home time into use of quality time. Libraries and librarians are offering reduced or alternative services until full services called as work from home. Then onwards several academic institutions/ groups/ associations started various online programs like webinars, Faculty Development Programme, workshops, quiz competition, exams and trainings etc. In fact library professionals have demonstrated their skills, empathy and flexibility during lockdown to respond to the rapidly evolving situation. But technology cannot do this alone the role of library professionals is very crucial to make their users aware about the facilities and services provided by them.

The innovative library services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis by the university libraries in Karnataka state are:

Remote Access to E-Resources

The main aim of any academic library is to enhance and strengthen the teaching, learning and research process by installing seamless document/information delivery system and around the country all libraries of higher education system have been working hard to provide services and

access to collections to the users who have been displaced due to COVID-19. While all the libraries under study have provision of remote access to subscribed electronic resources, many have taken a lot of effort in leveraging and expanding existing online services. Notably library have displayed step by step user guide on remote login to get access to the licensed electronic resources. User has to authenticate using their institutional e-mail ID and password or they may access the resources using common ID provided for COVID-19 crisis period.

Creating Awareness about Open Access Educational Resources

The libraries started online users awareness programs to make users aware about Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), AMS Free Online Books, Book Boon, Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB) and other open access resources.

Organisation of Virtual Events/ Webinars

Libraries have taken effort in arranging webinars relating to topics starting from information literacy to research ethics to educate their users on the use of digital information in their learning and research activities.

Ask a Librarian

The libraries started help through the 'Ask a Librarian' service, where students, teachers and researches have access to librarians' help in real time through email service. The link to the service is available on the library's homepage.

Access to Print Materials

Libraries have taken special effort to make the print collection available to its users. They have compiled a list of course reading materials and provided a link to it and have also introduced delivery of scanned pages limited to few pages or a chapter in a print document available in the

library collection on request also introduced the service of online delivery of document/ research paper on request.

Easing of Penalty Rules and Online Renewal of Print Resources

Most of the libraries have extended the due date for all types of reading materials issued to all categories of members. Whereas libraries has renewed thousands of books issued prior to lockdown to avoid penalty to users and even rights have been granted in the library automation software so that the users can renew the materials themselves from remote login.

Creating Awareness to Users about National Digital Library of India.

The National Digital Library of India is a digital repository 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, all disciplines, all popular form of access devices and differently-abled learners. Students of Science, Engineering and Social Science streams can get benefited by visiting <https://www.ndl.gov.in/> or <https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/> and clicking "Corona Outbreak: Study from home" button on top to access, free of cost, Video lectures, Web courses Notes, Questions, Solutions, etc., on various subject areas they are studying, from authoritative sources to continue their study effectively during this difficult situation arising out of suspension of classes and closure of libraries due to COVID-19 Lockdown.

Popularized Shodhganga, e-shodh Sindhu and e-PG Pathshala Services

The Shidhganga (<https://shodhganaa.inflibnet.ac.in>) is a digital repository platform of 2,60,000 plus 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.

The e-Shodh Sindhu (<https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/>) provides current as well as archival access to more than 10,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines from a large number of publishers and aggregators to its member institutions, including centrally-funded technical institutions, universities and colleges that are covered under I2 (B) and 2 (f) Sections of the UGC Act.

The e-PG Pathshala (<http://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/>) hosts high quality, curriculum-based, interactive e-content, e-text and video, Post Graduate disciplines of social sciences, arts, fine arts and humanities, natural and mathematical sciences.

Assistance in Information Searching and Scholarly Writing

It was found that that efficiency of libraries in providing virtual reference services in a new and improved manner got enhanced during this COVID-19 obligations on providing physical services in person. Various attempts were made by most of the libraries to facilitate Inter library loan services on a virtual basis from requisition to supply. Similarly Plagiarism checking, Email Alert services, Scanned document services were taken as the priority services and all efforts were taken by libraries to highlight these services on the websites with complete detailing of the requisite process

for these services.

Providing Remote Access to Institutional Repositories

The libraries started uploading documents and metadata creation for institutional publications, tutorials, manuals, class notes, course kit etc and providing remote access to Institutional Repositories.

Conclusion

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic brought a sudden and radical changes in delivery of library and information services, as strict social distancing and lockdown measures were imposed in the early phases of the pandemic. The Internet and web technologies have created a new and unparallel environment and enabling the libraries to enhance and strengthen the research, teaching and learning even in this difficult and uncertain time. The concept and practice of providing remote access of electronic resources by libraries is not new, but the user friendly way adopted by libraries and the number of resources are made available during the pandemic.

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