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# Dissemination of Information: A Significant Role of Library Web Site in Pandemic & Post Pandemic Scenario

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Most of the academic, special, public libraries having a web presence in form of website, it may be static or dynamic. The library web site can play or can be said definitely plays a variety of roles in the lifecycle of a user. A library website is a single window to multiple resources and facilities a library offers to their readers. It enables users to know all that library provides to users specifically its various functions, its electronic services. More specifically it helps to showcase libraries collections, services and more importantly reference service which can be delivered electronically. Electronic reference service is also called as Virtual Reference Service/Ask a Librarian takes place in real time by booking a prior appointment by users with reference librarian in this pandemic as the availability of staff is less. Mostly in *Ask a Librarian service*, online reference assistance is provided. Another asynchronous reference service where readers fill up web form and ask query through it, which is usually answered via email.

Due to COVID 19 in most part of the world all physical libraries were closed down as the corona virus is contagious and to follow government regulations as

well. But the libraries were still operating or delivering their services through websites. For the present paper author did inspection of hundreds of academic websites to categorise the types of information available through the website by these libraries in Pandemic 2020 situation in context with COVID 19.

Various type of information was available on academic library websites that can be categorised as

1. Information/links about COVID 19 (Medical/Government Link)
2. Information/links to Maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) about COVID 19
3. Information about borrowed items and access to physical collection, about virtual reference service, FAQs during pandemic 2020
4. Information/links about open access materials
5. Information/links to free content from commercial publishers during pandemic 2020
6. Information/links to filter information especially misinformation/fake news viral
7. Information/links for library staff for their upgrading of skills and communication in pandemic 2020
8. Information/links about stress and coping due to pandemic 2020
9. Information /support for how to start teaching online
10. Information/links about resources for reopening businesses after pandemic 2020
11. Information about reopening of physical library and the procedure followed
12. Library is a place for peace and harmony & against Coronavirus racism
13. Documenting COVID 19 as an archive: contributions from users' community

### **1. Information/links about COVID 19 (Medical/Government Links)**

Library is an ideal place to turn for information about COVID-19, the disease caused by the Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Not only are libraries a trusted source of vetting information, there is a long history of libraries as a destination for answers to health questions. Libraries will remain great resources to access credible medical information and connect to resources to help the users in this crisis (Libraries and accurate information about the Coronavirus, 2020).

Yale university (2020) librarians at Cushing/Whitney Medical Library had created a COVID-19 resource page containing clinical tools and guidance, latest

research and citations, datasets and repositories, and consumer health information.

University of Washington Libraries (2020a) had provided a guide to recommended resources for researching, visualizing, and evaluating scientific, clinical, & public health points information on COVID-19 which covers very interesting fact checking resources. Whereas University of Toronto libraries (2020) had provided timeline wise a guide to resources about the Canadian government information on COVID 19.

U.S. National Library of Medicine (2020) MedlinePlus had displayed on their website all information about Covid 19 right from Coronavirus testing to risks of tests. In case of Indian Scenario Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) had provided links to authentic information sources from Government of India and WHO on Covid 19.

## **2. Information/Links to Maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) about COVID 19**

Even the information about maps, datasets, applications, and more for coronavirus disease 2020 (COVID-19) was also made available from library home pages.

University of Washington Libraries (2020b) provided links to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Global Infection Map - University of Washington GIS which track and visualize confirmed cases, confirmed active cases, recovered cases, & deaths. Map local & global trends. The website provided plenty of links from university, government as well as from newspapers maps of global tracking, total count and global outbreak. Their website also contained information about COVID-19 Pandemic Infographics.

## **3. Information about Borrowed Items and Access to Physical Collection, about Virtual Reference Service, FAQs during Pandemic 2020**

University of East Anglia (2020) had provided detailed information about COVID 19 and closing of physical library in form of FAQs. The library was partially open at present.

University of Michigan (2020) library had provided information about Building Access During COVID-19, Returning Borrowed Items During COVID-19, Research Help and Instruction etc for readers. IIT Gandhinagar (2020) had provided the list of library resources & services provided during COVID-19.

#### **4. Information/Links about Open Access (OA) Materials**

There were libraries that were providing OA material specific links from their website to help their users to find more OA material which was important for their research as there were numerous research projects were conducted on COVID-19 simultaneously. The list of publishers and journals those who have dedicated research hubs with open access articles about COVID-19 were mostly covered by many university library websites. Indiana University (2020) had provided following list:

- BMJ
- Cambridge University Press
- Cell Press
- Cochrane
- Elsevier
- The JAMA Network
- The Lancet
- New England Journal of Medicine
- Oxford University Press
- PLOS
- Springer Nature
- Wiley
- American Society for Microbiology (via PubMed)

The US Centers for Disease Control affiliated journals were all available in open access mode. Also, in India NISCAIR (2020) journals were openly accessible to all researchers across globe.

#### **5. Information/Links to Free Content from Commercial Publishers during Pandemic 2020**

To support educational institutions during this challenging time of COVID-19, several publishers had come forward by providing free content and free access in full or providing research material, educational course material temporarily as a support for students, research scholars and academicians (Inflibnet, 2020).

Plenty of Indian libraries had provided links to free content provided by commercial publishers such as IIT Delhi, IIM Ahmedabad etc. In the post pandemic period most of the publishers closed the open access option.

The following are major publishers who have provided free access:

- American Institute of Physics (Scitation)
- ACM Digital Library
- Annual Reviews
- Cambridge University Press
- JSTOR Archives
- Proquest Database
- SIAM (Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics)
- Springer-Nature

The Australian National University (2020) had provided exhaustive list of publishers offering free access to scholarly materials in response to COVID-19.

## **6. Information/Links to Filter Information Especially Fake News Viral**

Library play a crucial role in making information senseful in COVID 19. Library websites provide authentic information. People look for the information in this pandemic crisis. Social media is full of misinformation. Misinformation /fake information may be spread intentionally as a way to drive purchasing of advertised products or for other reasons. So how can anyone trust the information?

There are plenty of news filtering websites that can be displayed on library website, so the users can filter the information on their own with the help of those websites. For example, NewsGuard, a transparent and diverse team of journalists that rate news sources and specific stories. NewsGuard has a Coronavirus Misinformation Tracking Center where libraries (or readers themselves) can check up on sites.

London South Bank University library (2020) had provided resources on mis-information about the virus from around the world. The links included WHO - Mythbusters: The World Health Organisation has a site dedicated to debunking the fake news and conspiracy theories. Second link is to The Corona VirusFacts/Datos CoronaVirus Alliance Database that gathers all of the falsehoods that have been detected by the Corona VirusFacts/DatosCorona Virus alliance. This database unites fact-checkers in more than 70 countries and includes articles published in at least 40 languages. Like this almost 100's of links are provided country wise, social media wise too.

Similarly, St. Louis Community College Libraries (2020) website had provided links to fact-checking resources to find out whether the information is contradictory or alarming regarding COVID 19.

## **7. Information/Links for Library Staff for Their Upgrading Skills and Communication during Pandemic 2020**

Massachusetts Libraries (2020) had come out with a fantastic library web page where they had guided librarians/library staff about what they can do to keep themselves up-to-date in this pandemic situation. Following tips were posted on their homepage:

- Explore other libraries' websites for creative ideas for your website, communications, and virtual programs/services.
- Determine how the library can promote remote services best to your community.
- Reach out to your local news to have your library featured.
- Connect with your Colleagues Connect & Community on Social Media
- Promote Self-Care
- Serve as a Recovery Center for the Community
- Stay Up-to-Date Professionally
- Support Legislative Advocacy Means Reach out to your local legislators to ask what the library can do to help.
- Promote that the library is providing essential services.

## **8. Information/Links about Stress and Coping Due to Pandemic 2020**

Libraries have understood that readers need psychological support and healing, so few libraries were providing information on stress reduction and coping, & stress relieving activities. For example Tufts University (2020) was providing tips from CNN News, BBC News about How to Keep Coronavirus Fears from Affecting Mental Health. Tips from Boston News included what you need to know about maintaining your mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak. Even it has included tips from Tufts University School of Medicine regarding coping with anxiety in a time of pandemic

Athlone Institute of Technology library (2020) had provided list of resources for Positive living and wellbeing about minding mind during Covid-19. It includes links to breathing exercises to overcome stress and anxiety. Links to articles like Can You Be Alone but Not Lonely? A Neuroscientist Explains How to Cope with Self-Isolation are also provided.

Grace college library (2020) had provided tips in form of links for Managing Stress and Anxiety. They even had given links to the puzzles, colouring books, videos, Music and snack recipes for students while studying they can try to divert their mind.

## **9. Information/Support for How to Start Teaching Online**

Guides to online teaching were provided to teachers/instructors those who are naïve to online teaching. These guides were developed by their own staff as well as external sources were also provided. Like in case of University of the Pacific (2020) a guide was developed by the library which is a curated list of resources for teaching online, including publisher resources, library e-books, resources by discipline, and OER resources. In addition to this, their in-house guide i.e. Center for Teaching and Learning's Instructional Continuity Planning for Faculty resource link was also provided. Along with these external resources were provided too.

The University of Sydney Library (2020) had provided copyright advice to teachers/instructors/educators. Their website contains plenty of guides about how Australian copyright law allows educators to use third party copyright material for educational purposes without having to seek permission from the copyright owner. The detailed guides were available on their website. It helps a lot to the teachers who wants to use part of the book, scan and keep as a reading material for students.

Harvard university library (2020) had provided compilation of guides called as Teaching Remotely with Harvard library. The Library was making it possible for faculty teaching remote classes to connect seamlessly through direct engagement with library staff, access to digital content, and collaboration across the university.

Even Harvard library was helping researchers from all disciplines to generate, curate, transform and publish their research through direct engagement with library staff, access to existing data sets and tools, and robust digital repositories for data and scholarly communications.

## **10. Information/Links about Resources for Reopening Businesses after Pandemic 2020**

New Jersey State Library (2020) an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University provided links to reopening related to business information from the Federal Government, NJ State Government, NJ County and Municipal government, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and professional and trade organizations.

## **11. Information about Reopening of Physical Library and the Procedure Followed**

Basic guidelines were provided by IFLA, ALA, & ALIA for the reopening of libraries. University of Notre Dame (2020) had provided a guideline for comprehensive building and safety preparations for fall semester. The University of North Carolina (2020) had provided phase wise plan and promised the users to maintain excellence in library services that support teaching, learning, research and clinical care. Their main focus was on the essential services to meet the needs of library users.

## **12. Library Is A Place for Peace and Harmony & Against Coronavirus Racism**

There were library websites which had contained information requesting the users not to spread rumours about Covid 19 also Anti Chinese or Anti Asian rumours.

*DeSales University Library (2020) had provided definition of Coronavirus racism as Coronavirus racism is anti-Chinese and anti-Asian scapegoating and xenophobic reactions, including fear, exclusion, micro-aggressions, and other racist behaviours related to this public health epidemic.*

Coronavirus racism also includes inappropriate "jokes," innuendos, or suggestions that any/all Chinese and members of other Asian communities are responsible for or suspected of having this illness and should be avoided.

Whether "*intended*" to be hurtful or not, the impact of these sorts of these "jokes" is very harmful and helps spread misinformation. They have provided a few helpful resources focused on facts about coronavirus as well as recognizing and addressing racism and micro-aggressions related to COVID-19.

Similarly, Iowa State University of Science and Technology (2020) had provided selected resources on coronavirus racism and tools for interrupting it.

## **13. Documenting COVID 19 as an Archive: Contributions from Users' Community**

The University of Columbia's (2020) Archives is collecting materials to document the coronavirus pandemic. The University's official response is being recorded by saving communications, emails, websites and other documents. In addition to these materials, university is inviting faculty, students, alumni, librarians and staff of the university asking for help to document this crisis. They want to note down how the Columbia community is experiencing and reflecting on these tumultuous times in form of diverse set of voices, lived experience, and everyday lives.



University feels that historians of the future will want to know how the people spent the days.

Similarly, Brown University Libraries (2020) COVID-19 Community Archive Project is asking their university community to contribute experience of pandemic. According to the aim of the project historical record is essential for capturing the full and authentic experiences throughout the educational, professional, physical, and emotional challenges posed by this unprecedented time.

## Conclusion

Many leading global and Indian library websites were providing the different category of information and resources. These were important for not only students, but faculty, staff and citizens too. These websites were updated regularly to keep informing the users the latest developments. It is evident that how crucial role library website can play in pandemic 2020 apart from their routine electronic services. Library was providing resources, links, advice, medium of fact checking, help and even spreading peace. Even libraries with the help of 3 D printers were printing face shields for medical workers. With all these evidences emphasis the noble cause of libraries existence and proves sustainability for the future.

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