

RE-ENGINEERING OF LIBRARY SERVICES POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on library services, leading to the need for reinvention and re-engineering. Libraries had to quickly adapt to provide services remotely and ensure the safety of staff and patrons. This has included increasing the use of technology for virtual programming, curbside pickup, and digital collections. Many libraries have also had to change their physical spaces and operations to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Additionally, some libraries have had to pivot their focus to address new community needs, such as providing technology and internet access for remote learning and telework. Overall, the pandemic has accelerated the trend towards digital and virtual services, but it also highlighted the importance of libraries as knowledge hubs. The purpose of this paper is to examine the problem of libraries reopening after a pandemic and what precautions they should take to stop the spread of viruses like Covid-19.

Keywords: Covid-19, library services, Re-engineering , Digital Resources, E-audiobook.

1.0 Introduction

The COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus disease 2019, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has since spread globally, leading to a worldwide pandemic. To prevent the spread of Covid-19, it is important to practice good hygiene, such as washing hands frequently, wearing a mask in public, and maintaining social distancing. Vaccines have been developed and authorized for emergency use around the world, and it is recommended to get vaccinated as soon as possible. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on libraries, leading to the closure of physical spaces and the shift to virtual services. As a result, libraries have had to quickly adapt and re-invent their services to meet the changing needs of their patrons.

One of the key changes has been an increased focus on digital services and resources. Libraries have expanded their e-book and e-audiobook collections, and have made more of their databases and online reference materials available remotely. They have also invested in virtual reality and 3D printing resources. The library have re-engineered their services to meet the needs of patrons working and learning remotely. This also includes the development of online tutorials and courses, as well as the expansion of virtual programming and events.

The Post-Covid libraries re-engineering services also includes contactless pickup and delivery services, virtual reference and assistance service, offering online library card registration, expanding the hours of online assistance and chat services and encouraging online book clubs and online reading groups

2.0 Present Trends of Library Services

Recent trends in library services include an emphasis on digital resources, online access, and user-centered design. Many libraries now offer digital collections of e-books, audiobooks, and other digital media, as well as online databases and research tools. In addition to the advent of technology, libraries are now providing more online services such as live reference services online tutorials and webinars, and virtual tours. Some are mentioned:-

- ❖ **Digital Resources:** With the growing popularity of e-books and other digital media, libraries are now offering more digital resources to patrons. This includes e-books, audiobooks, digital magazines, and online databases.
- ❖ **Online Access:** Many libraries now offer online access to their resources and services. Patrons can access digital resources, place holds, renew items, and even pay fines online.
- ❖ **User-Centered Design:** Libraries are now focusing on user-centred design to provide a better experience for patrons. This includes creating open and flexible spaces, collaborative workspaces, and maker spaces.
- ❖ **Programming and Services:** Libraries now offer more programming and services for children, teens, and adults. This includes literacy programs, job search assistance, and technology training.
- ❖ **Technology Integration:** Libraries are now using technology to improve services and make them more accessible to patrons. This includes self-checkout kiosks, RFID technology, and mobile apps.
- ❖ **Community Outreach:** Libraries are now more focused on community outreach and building relationships with local organizations. This includes partnering with schools, community centres and other organizations to provide programs and services.
- ❖ **Virtual Services:** With the current pandemic situation, virtual services are becoming popular in libraries. They provide online reference services, webinars, virtual tours, and another online programming.
- ❖ **Data analytics:** Libraries are using data analytics to track the usage and engagement of their services and resources. This helps them to understand their patrons' needs and preferences, and make decisions to improve the services.

3.0 Library Services after the Covid-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, libraries are adapting their services to ensure the safety of staff and patrons while still providing access to information and resources. Some of the ways libraries are modifying their services include:

- ❖ **Virtual services:** Many libraries offer online resources and services, such as e-books, audiobooks, and online databases, which can be accessed remotely.
- ❖ **Curbside pickup:** Some libraries allow patrons to place holds on materials and then pick them up outside the library, reducing the need for in-person browsing.
- ❖ **Limited in-person services:** Some libraries have reopened with reduced capacity, social distancing measures, and enhanced cleaning protocols in place.
- ❖ **Contactless services:** Some libraries offer contactless options such as self-checkout, contactless holds pickup and returns, and mobile payments.
- ❖ **Virtual programming:** Many libraries have shifted to offering virtual programs and events, such as book clubs, author talks, and workshops that can be accessed remotely.

4.0 Important Online Resources made popularized during Covid-19 are:

- ❖ **Online databases:** Libraries may provide access to a wide range of online databases, such as those for research, news, and industry information.
- ❖ **Streaming media:** Libraries may offer streaming services for movies, music, and television shows, as well as access to language learning resources.
- ❖ **Digital archives:** Many libraries now provide access to digital archives, such as historical newspapers, photographs, and manuscripts.
- ❖ **E-books:** Many libraries now offer a digital collection of e-books that can be borrowed and read on electronic devices such as e-readers, tablets, and smart phones.
- ❖ **E-audio books:** Libraries may offer a collection of digital audio books, which can be downloaded and listened to on a computer or mobile device.
- ❖ **Virtual reality and 3D printing resources:** Libraries may offer access to virtual reality and 3D printing resources to patrons.
- ❖ **Online tutorials and courses:** Libraries may provide access to online tutorials and courses, such as those for programming, design, and professional development.
- ❖ **Online reference works:** Libraries may offer access to online reference works, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks.
- ❖ **Online research tools:** Libraries may provide access to online research tools such as citation management software and survey tools.

- ❖ **Mobile Applications:** Libraries may develop and offer mobile apps that allow patrons to access library resources and services on the go.

5.0 Post Covid-19 Impact on Libraries

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on library and information centers, causing them to adapt and make changes to their services in order to keep patrons and staff safe. The impact of the pandemic on libraries can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ **Digital resources:** The pandemic has increased the demand for digital resources and online access, such as e-books and online databases as patrons have been unable to access physical materials.
- ❖ **Reduced budget:** The pandemic has led to a reduction in library budgets, as libraries have had to reduce services and incur additional costs for cleaning and sanitation.
- ❖ **Remote work:** Library staff have had to work remotely during the pandemic, which may continue to be a trend even after the pandemic subsides.
- ❖ **Virtual services:** The pandemic has accelerated the shift towards virtual services, such as online reference, webinars, and virtual programming, which will likely continue even after the pandemic subsides.
- ❖ **Collaboration:** The pandemic has led to increased collaboration among libraries, as they have had to share resources and expertise to continue serving patrons during the pandemic.
- ❖ **Limited capacity:** Libraries may continue implementing limited capacity and social distancing measures to keep patrons and staff safe, even after the pandemic subsides.
- ❖ **Curbside pickup:** Libraries have implemented curbside pickup services, which may continue to be offered as an option for patrons even after the pandemic subsides.
- ❖ **Increased cleaning and sanitation:** Libraries may continue to increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitation of high-touch surfaces to reduce the spread of germs.

6.0 Post Covid -19 Challenges for the Libraries:

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a number of challenges for libraries, which include:

- ❖ **Reduced funding:** Many libraries have seen their budgets reduced as a result of the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, making it difficult to maintain and expand services.
- ❖ **Limited access to physical spaces:** With many libraries closed or operating at reduced capacity, patrons have had limited access to physical resources and services.
- ❖ **Digital divide:** Not all patrons have equal access to digital resources and technology, which can limit their ability to take advantage of virtual services offered by libraries.
- ❖ **Staffing challenges:** With many libraries operating at reduced capacity, staffing has been challenging for many libraries have had to reduce hours or furlough staff.
- ❖ **Health and safety concerns:** Libraries have had to implement various health and safety measures to protect staff and patrons, which can be costly and time-consuming.
- ❖ **Adapting to the new normal:** Libraries have had to quickly adapt to the new normal and find ways to continue to provide services in a virtual environment.
- ❖ **Meeting the needs of the community:** With many patrons facing economic and social challenges as a result of the pandemic, libraries have had to find new ways to support them.
- ❖ **Mental Health:** The pandemic has brought a lot of stress and uncertainty to people, and libraries may have to work on ways to support the mental well-being of the community.
- ❖ **Keeping up with the current technology:** With the shift to virtual services, libraries have had to invest in technology and infrastructure to support the delivery of digital resources and services.
- ❖ **Managing the uncertainty:** The pandemic is ongoing and, the situation is constantly changing, which makes it difficult for libraries to plan and manage services over the long term.

7.0 Re-engineering of Library Services

The Re-engineering of library services refers to the process of re-designing and re-inventing library services to better meet the changing needs of patrons in a rapidly changing environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for libraries to re-engineer their services, as libraries have had to quickly adapt to the shift to

virtual services and support patrons who are learning remotely. Few examples of how libraries are re-engineer their services are:

- ❖ **Virtual reference and assistance:** Libraries can offer virtual reference and assistance services, such as online chat or video conferencing, to help patrons find the information they need.
- ❖ **Online tutorials and courses:** Libraries can offer online tutorials and courses, such as those for programming, design, and professional development, to support patrons who are working and learning remotely.
- ❖ **Mobile Applications:** Libraries can develop and offer mobile that allows patrons to access library resources and services on the go.
- ❖ **Contactless pickup and delivery services:** Libraries can offer contactless pickup and delivery services to patrons, allowing them to safely access physical resources while maintaining social distancing.
- ❖ **Offering online library card registration:** Libraries can make the process of getting a library card more convenient by allowing patrons to register for a library card online.
- ❖ **Virtual tours and augmented reality:** Libraries can offer virtual tours and augmented reality experiences to patrons to make the library experience more interactive.
- ❖ **Online research tools:** Libraries can provide access to online research tools such as citation management software and survey tools to support patrons' research needs.
- ❖ **Collaboration with other organizations:** Libraries can collaborate with other organizations, such as schools, businesses, and community groups, to expand their reach and services.
- ❖ **Digital services and resources:** Libraries can expand their e-book, e-audiobook, and online databases to make them more accessible to patrons remotely.
- ❖ **Virtual programming and events:** Libraries can offer virtual programming and events, such as online book clubs, author talks, and workshops, to engage with patrons remotely.

8.0 Conclusion

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic created hazardous effect all over the world. The Information and Communication Technology acted as an aid, most educational institutions and their libraries provide virtual and online services in response to this disease. The corona virus posed a direct threat to libraries in terms of both their physical location as well as resources and services they offer to users. According to legislative regulations, all libraries were required to function virtually through their own library websites and adhere to the Covid-19 safety procedure. The best method to help library clients during a pandemic is to periodically update library web pages with information about highlighted online access points and various digital or online library resources and services were made available to the users.

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