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The Implication of COVID 19 Era on Library Users and the New Normal of Safety Measures: The Role of Professional Librarians.

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This paper was on the implication of COVID 19 era on library users and the new normal of safety measures: the role of professional librarians. This deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which has dramatically changed how the world operates in nearly all sectors. The problem now is that many people globally, and especially in developing countries like Nigeria, disbelieve the existence of the virus due to lack of proper information. The paper is aimed at exploring the new normal of COVID 19 to libraries all over the world. The areas covered are: managing different approaches to restrictions; business (more or less) as usual; minimal service; preparing for re-opening: Staying safe at home and at work; How to handle library materials? Libraries around the World prepare for a New Normal; libraries are not "low-risk"; curbside or remote pickup; the future of libraries is seamlessly physical and digital; preventive measures and guidelines for libraries during COVID-19 Pandemic and roles of library professionals.

Key words: COVID 19, Users, New Normal, Safety Measures, and Librarians

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus refers to a family of viruses. COVID-19 – or Coronavirus Disease – is the infectious disease caused by a newly discovered type of coronavirus in 2019 which earned it the name COVID 19. As the World Health Organization (WHO), (2020) has set out, most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Common symptoms include fever, tiredness and a dry cough.

Other symptoms include shortness of breath, aches and pains, sore throat, and very few people will report diarrhea, nausea or a runny nose. The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes (World Health Organization, 2020).

This deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which has dramatically changed how the world operates in nearly all sectors. The problem now is that many people globally, and especially in developing countries like Nigeria, disbelieve the existence of the virus due to lack

of adequate information (Ohia, Bakarey, & Ahmad, 2020).Where there is even sufficient information, majority of people still lack health information literacy. Without appropriate health information literacy about the virus, all efforts towards mitigating its spread and negative effects will yield no satisfactory results (Urhiewhu, Aji, & Onyenania, 2021).

Due to the virus 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 (World Health Organization, 2020). Clearly any decision to restrict services or close a library is a difficult one and needs to be taken following an assessment of the relative risks. We are currently aware of entire academic and public library systems being closed in the following countries and territories: Albania, Argentina,

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia, Brazil, the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Nigeria, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates, etc. Meanwhile, school libraries in 34 countries will have been affected by the closure of all educational institutions, while in others, at least some schools have been closed, according to figures from UNESCO. In many of these, university libraries are also close(https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries).

Research Methods

Descriptive research design was used for this study. The study adopted a survey method in sampling and data collection. A survey is typically conducted to determine the present status of a given phenomenon. The structure questionnaire was used. Google form was used to collected data from the respondents. Total enumeration technique was used to cover all the respondents.
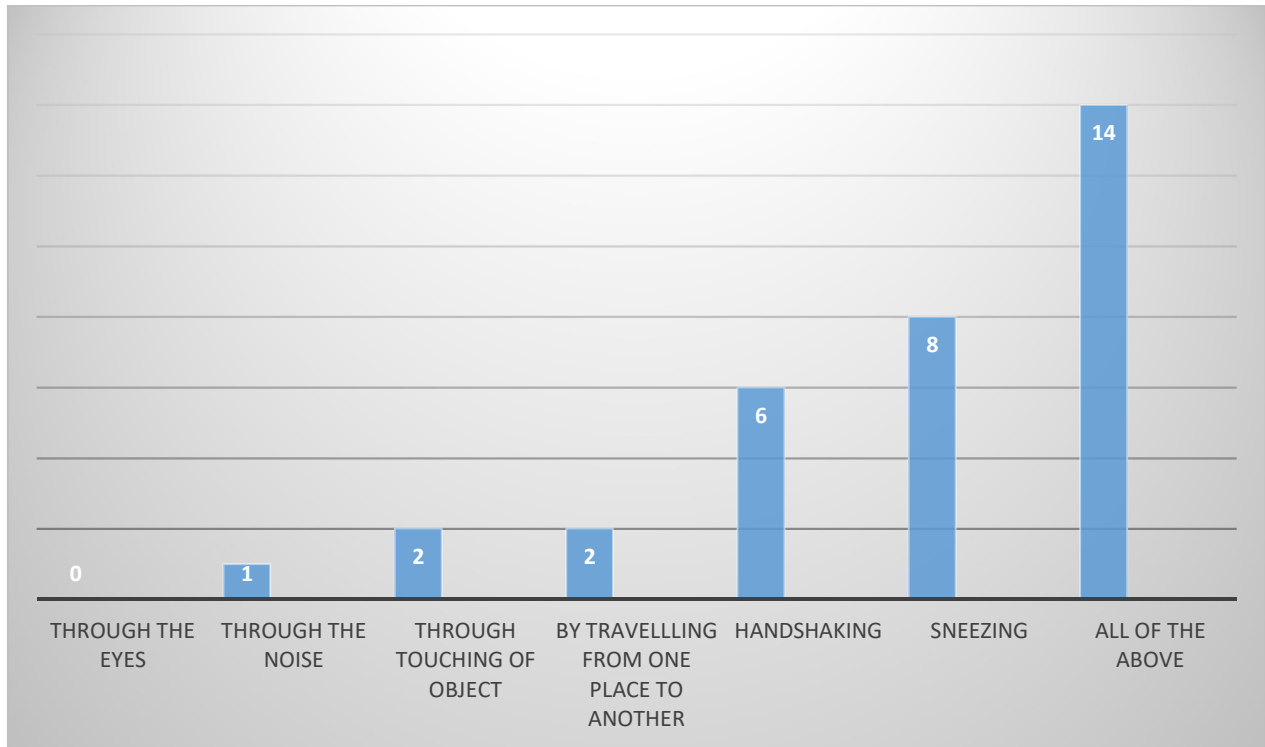
Results and Discussion

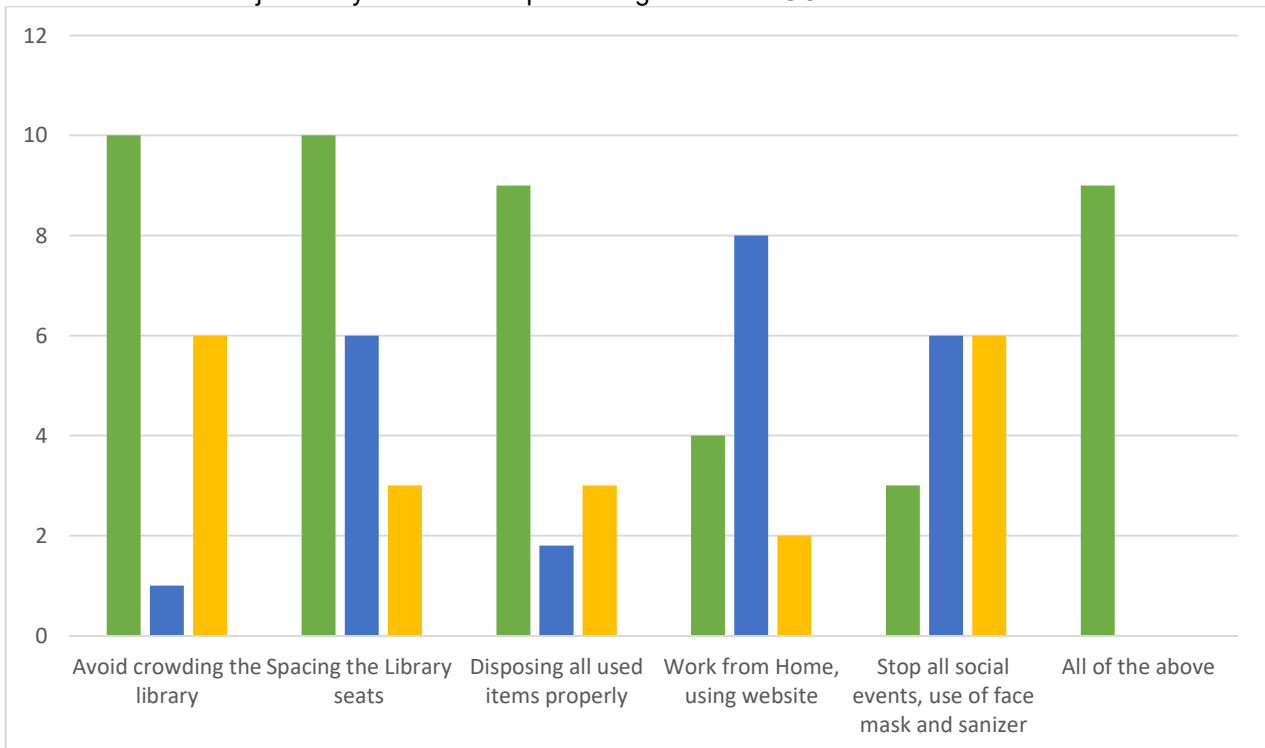How long have you been in practice as a Professional Librarian?
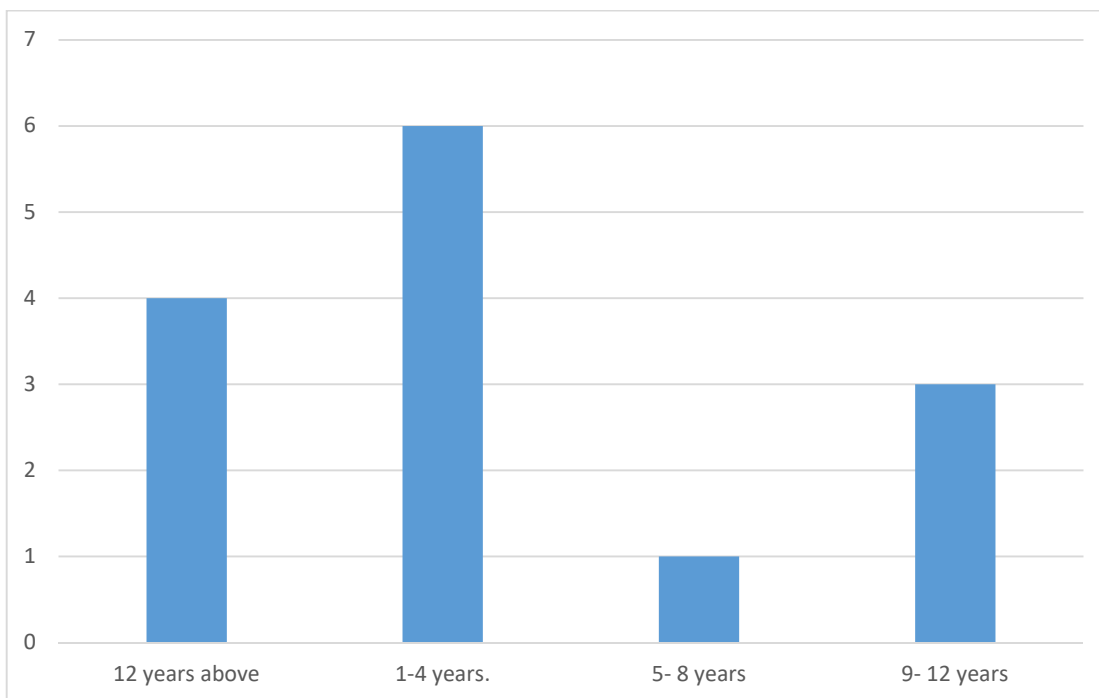
From the chart above showed that Professional Librarians practice in period of 1-4 years. Other group of librarians have practice

How is covid 19 contacted?

What are the major safety measures of preventing contact of COVID in libraries?

The pie chart showed that librarians can carried users during covid 19 with following ways: provision of hands sanitizer at strategic places; repositioning the reading seat and reducing users entrance to the library on daily basis.

As a professional librarian, what do you understand by new normal?
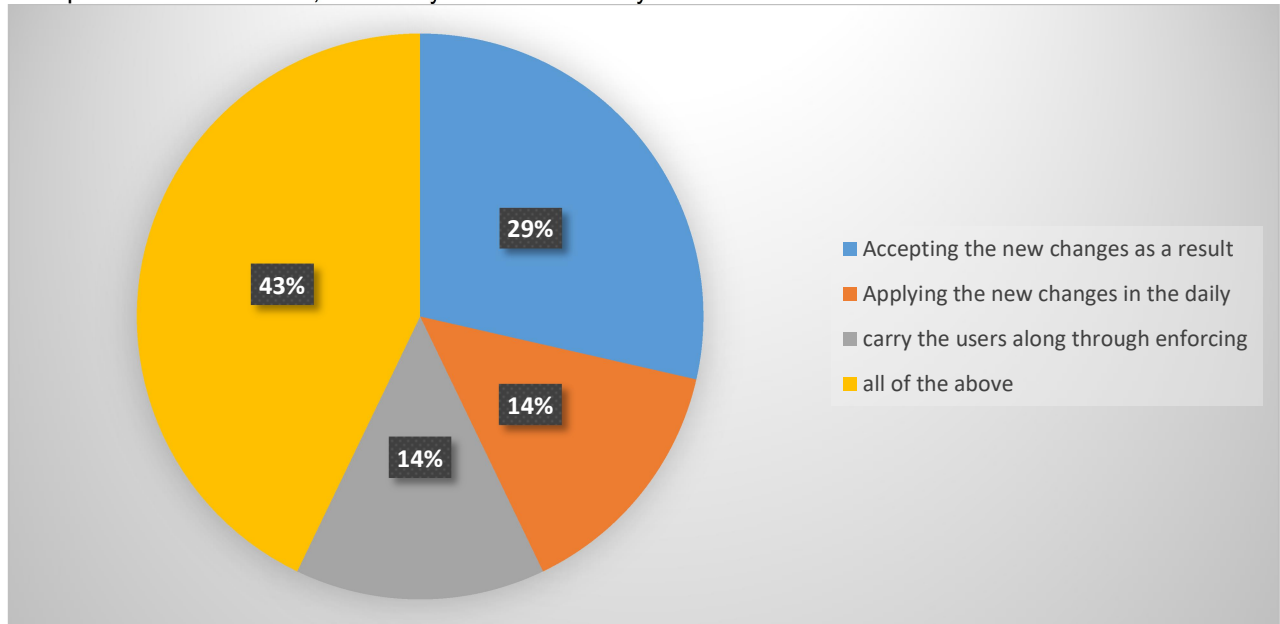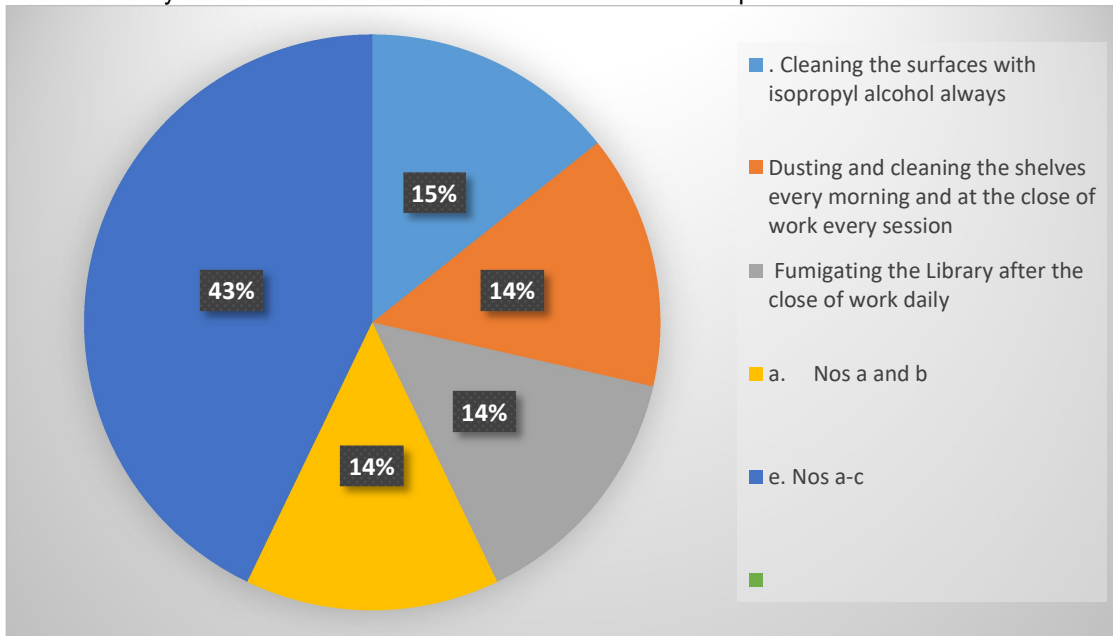

The pie chart showed that all of the above was 43%, accepting the new changes as a result 29%; applying the new changes in the daily 14%; and carry the users along through enforcing 14%. Therefore, the study showed that librarians knows the new normal

How can Professional librarian endeavor to make provisions of materials to users
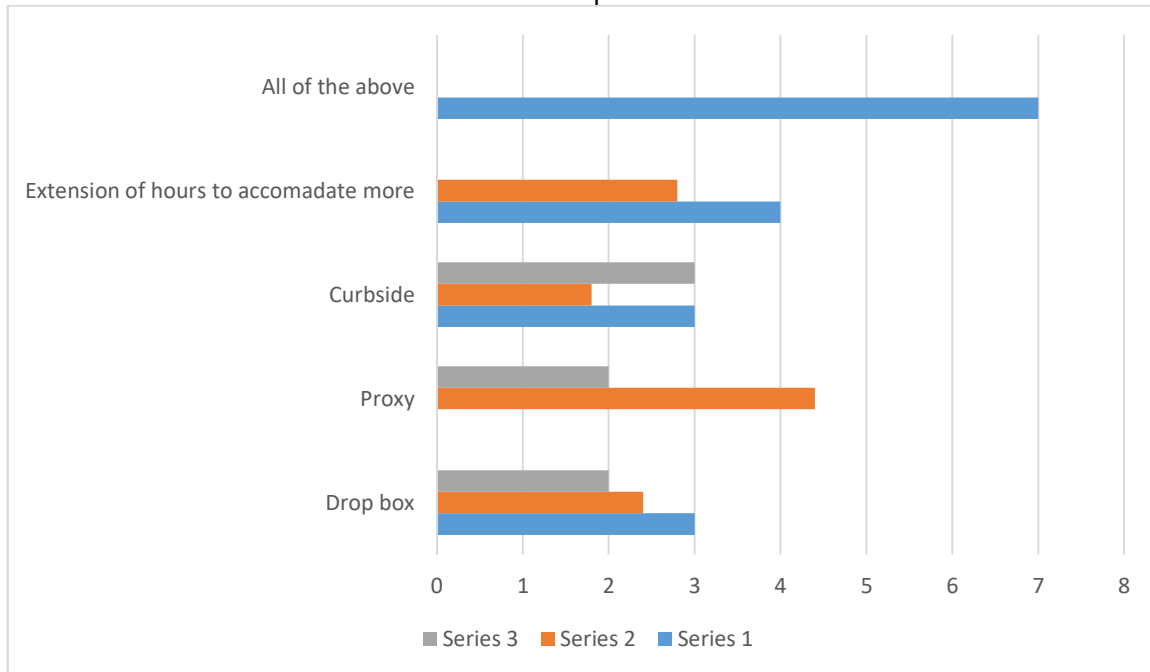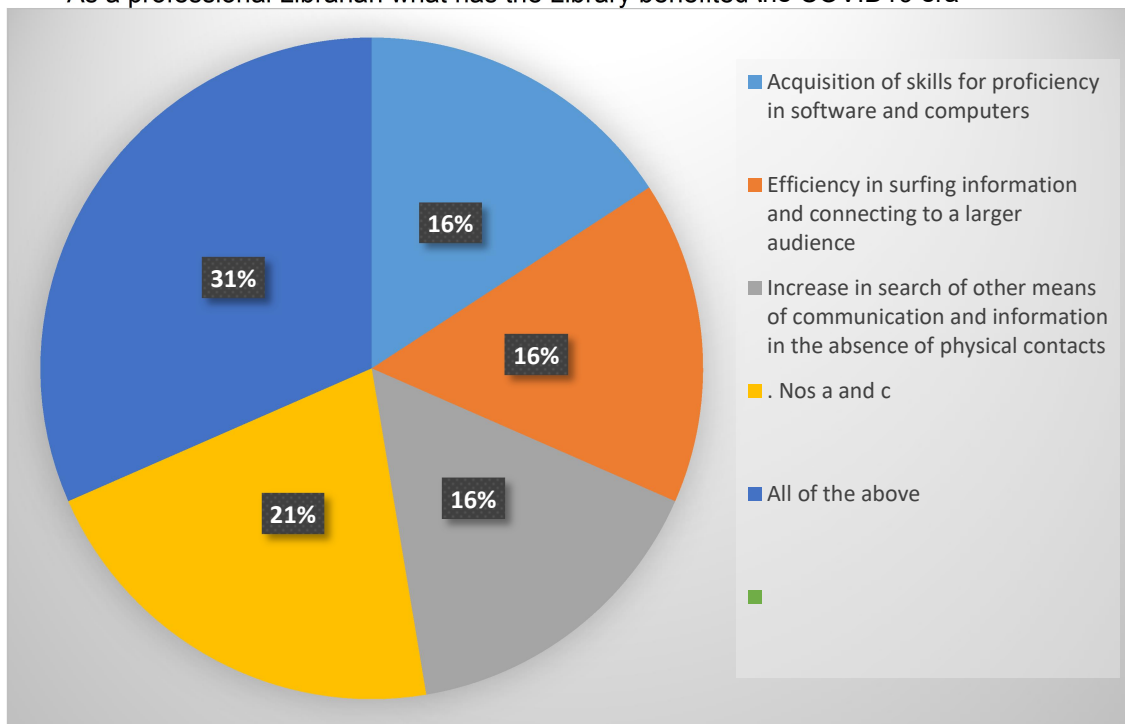
Are there safety measures to be taken in the new normal to keep staff and users from the virus?

Legend:
- Cleaning the surfaces with isopropyl alcohol always
- Dusting and cleaning the shelves every morning and at the close of work every session
- Fumigating the Library after the close of work daily
- a.   Nos a and b
- e. Nos a-c

The pie chart showed that safety measures to be taken in the new normal to keep staff and users from the virus dusting and cleaning shelves tables, and chairs; fumigating the library after the close of work daily; clearing the surfaces with isopropyl alcohol always.

As a professional Librarian what has the Library benefited the COVID19 era

Legend:
- Acquisition of skills for proficiency in software and computers
- Efficiency in surfing information and connecting to a larger audience
- Increase in search of other means of communication and information in the absence of physical contacts
- . Nos a and c
- All of the above

The pie chart above showed that professional Librarian benefited the COVID19 era acquisition of skills for proficiency in software and computer is 16%; increase in search of other means of communication and information in the absence of physical contacts; all of the above is 31%. Therefore, librarians benefits from Covid 19 through the all of the above.

How to handle library materials?

A key question for many in the library field has been around the **risk of infection through contact with materials carrying coronavirus**. Clearly our understanding of any aspect of how the virus is spread is still at a relatively early stage, and so it is not possible to offer definitive advice, other than the universal recommendations on keeping hands clean and not touching faces.

Libraries around the World prepare for a New Normal

Across the world, many countries have begun a gradual reopening of public life in an attempt to return a sense of normalcy to residents' lives and diminish the economic impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In South Korea, baseball has resumed, though the season began five-weeks late, and teams are playing to empty stands outfitted with photos of masked fans (WHO.n.d)

Through the specific restrictions put in place, and those being lifted vary widely across the globe, libraries are struggling to figure out the best course of action to safely resume providing services to their communities. The Australian Library and Information Association sums it up nicely: "Reopening will not mean going back to the way things were pre-COVID-19; it will mean putting in place the 'new normal' approach to library services (COVID-19 and the Global Library Field, 2020).

Libraries are not "low-risk"

After pushback from librarians, on April 20th, Johns Hopkins amended their previously published report which originally classified libraries as "low-risk" for re-opening. "There's a perception that libraries are still these quiet, austere temples of knowledge, but we've really become community centers and gathering places," said Peter Coyl, Director of the Montclair Public Library in New Jersey:

> *This comes as no surprise to librarians, who welcomed the addendum to the Johns Hopkins report which states that "libraries that incorporate social activities or community gatherings into their services should refer to the 'community centers' category" – a category considered as medium to high risk, similar to restaurants and retail stores.*

Phased reopening of library buildings

According to Petrowicz, (2020) opined that continued social distancing concerns mean it will be a while before libraries are again the bustling centers of community activity, full of story time tots, book clubs, and study groups. Still, as some businesses begin to reopen at limited capacity, it may be helpful for libraries to take cues from those that have begun to reopen as they determine their own process for a phased approach. Retailers are using ticker counters, or people-counting technology to ensure that they do not exceed a safe capacity, while using ground markings to help those waiting in line to maintain a safe distance from each other. Similar measures are being taken at Bremen Public Library in Germany, which reopened to patrons on May 4th. 2021.

Protecting Staff and Users

Obviously, a first step towards protecting the health and well-being of staff and users is preventing contact with those already sick. Health questionnaires and temperature checks are being widely used in Asia to screen visitors before allowing admittance to establishments. Social norms vary widely across the globe, and libraries will need to be sensitive to the tolerance levels of their own communities. However, even in the US, some businesses are requiring temperature checks and PPE for visitors.

Once inside the library, care must be taken to limit contact between staff and users. In addition to providing staff with masks and gloves, some institutions are taking extra precautions. In Brandenburg, Germany, The Brandenburg Museum Association's guidelines include building Plexiglas shields for ticket desks, providing disinfectant for staff, taking credit cards instead of cash and regular cleaning of facilities (Paramanik, 2015). The Library Association in Germany has published recommendations for the reopening of libraries, as has an inter-association group of librarians in France. However, unlike restaurants and museums, which have a limited number of high-touch items to disinfect, libraries must contend with thousands of materials, many of which cannot be simply wiped down with disinfectant. In China, many libraries are using UV sanitizers to disinfect materials after return. In other parts of the world, libraries are developing their own protocols – some with multiple book drops are using one per day, then retrieving materials after a 72-hour waiting period. Others are configuring their AMH systems to deliver returned items to bins where the materials remain for a three-day period before being handled. The French guidelines also recommend a three-day quarantine for paper or cardboard materials, but recommend a 10-day quarantine for those with plastic covers.

The Bremen Public Library in Germany has partnered with a local theater company to build Plexiglas protected workspaces for staff. The creative arrangement means that the library pays only for materials, while the labor is provided by the theater as part of a collaborative partnership.

Libraries with automated return solutions are able to ensure that returns are updated in users' accounts immediately, allowing users to avoid late penalties or exceed maximum loan limits while waiting for materials to be safe to touch(Cox, 2020).

The future of libraries is seamlessly physical and digital

It must not go without saying that librarians and library staff have shown remarkable fortitude, creativity, and resilience during this crisis. Without the benefit of physical buildings and materials, libraries have continued to serve their communities by offering digital collections, video-conference book clubs, recorded and broadcast story times, webinars, and online consulting. As libraries around the globe begin to reopen, these new virtual ways of connecting and communicating will no doubt, become an even more important part of the library landscape. While users are quickly adapting to virtual living and working environments, they are still craving human connections and familiar in-person experiences. Libraries must appeal to users with services that are seamlessly physical and digital. Bibliotheca looks forward to partnering with and helping libraries around the world turn this disruption into an opportunity to reimagine the future use of their libraries.

Preventive Measures and Guidelines for Libraries during COVID-19 Pandemic

Libraries are facing challenges and restrictions in the lockdown. Governments regularly are taking different approaches, sometimes ordering the full closure of all institutions, in these situations library professionals may take the following preventive measures to curb the spread of COVID19 through the libraries. According to Asif and Singh, (2020):

1. Stay at home if you feel sickness
2. Use appropriate sanitizer frequently
3. Roster of staff duty
4. Keep books at separate place at least for 48 hours when check in/check out
5. Maintain social distance
6. Follow good health and hygiene habits
7. Limiting concentration of users in reading room allowing just one table per user
8. Use mask and cover while sneezing or coughing
9. Avoid sneezing or coughing while handling books
10. Keeping surfaces clean, including toys and library computers surface like door knobs, switches and railing etc.
11. Use online platforms or social media to share Knowledge/Information.
12. Provide remote access of library resources to the users

13. Promote paperless work culture in the libraries
14. Frequently used items such as magazines and newspapers may only be accessible to people with gloves and masks, etc.

Roles of Library Professionals

Now in the Modern world, the role of library professionals is converted from conservator of data to facilitator of knowledge in an effective way. The main important functions of Library Professionals are identification of query/problem, to select, to procure, to organize, to preserve, and disseminate information. Immediate response should take place in all the above mentioned areas. It is a great challenge for Library Professionals to remain at the frontline of the profession to serve the whole community.

- To introduce the users with an open access system/resources
- To introduce the Library Professionals as a technological gatekeeper, as a teacher, scholar, collaborator role between the different types of users.
- Library Professionals' main roles are Customer Service, Community Outreach, Cataloging, and Administration.
- In India, during the lockdown period, all people were unable to move from one place to another. The physical interface of Libraries already shut down to follow the lockdown conditions but many libraries around the world offer its digital collection for the whole community for easy access. Library Users who have library cards or not, can easily access and take advantage of available e-resources like e-books, e-journals, and online programs offered by different universities, various libraries like Delhi Public Library, NDLI, etc.
- During the lockdown period in the USA, "National Emergency Library" is developed by the Internet archive blogs which has a wide range of collection around 1.4million books on its digital library platform
- The Library Professionals can provide various online digital platforms where users can easily access their information. These online digital platform links can be shared on organization websites as well as through social media platforms. Delhi Public Library provides the various links of the digital platform on its website.
- Library Professionals can create a new app with freely available e-contents to access different resources on a single platform.
- Assist those people who are not familiar with digital tools(https://work.chron.com/professional-duties-Library Professionals-11973.html)

CONCLUSION

In this COVID 19 pandemic situation, Library Professionals have to do all the things: Easy access to information is an essential prerequisite; It is necessary for the enormous needs of all its potential users; Digital platforms for education is the futuristic demand of the user; Digital Library is in more demand in this kind of pandemic situation; Library professionals can act as stress busters in this situation. Library Professionals and information professionals must be ready to meet the requirement of readers whether it is for COVID 19 or any other pandemic situations. Social distancing is one of the only major way to control the transmission of this virus COVID 19 from one person to another. The social responsibility of library professionals is to provide the information access to the users. Information demand is also increasing in this kind of pandemic situation.

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