

*Full Length Research*

# The directive of work from home in the wake of the lingering COVID-19 pandemic: Perspective of four Academic Libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria.

<sup>1</sup>Ozonuwe, Opene Sunday and <sup>2</sup>Lateef, Elizabeth Bukunola

Crawford University, P.M.B. 2001, Faith City, Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Corresponding authors email: [openeozonuwe@crawforduniversity.edu.ng](mailto:openeozonuwe@crawforduniversity.edu.ng)

Tel. +2347067317673

Accepted 23 April 2021

The dread of COVID-19 outbreak forced several nations and organizations to introduce lockdown, social distancing, use of nose mask, face mask, constant washing of hands, use of alcohol based hand sanitizers and so on as advised by the World Health Organization (WHO). The pandemic was a period of hardship; as most people lost their jobs and various organizations could no longer pay full salary. Stakeholders were advised to work from home via online platforms. Online teaching and learning become inevitable via zoom and social media channels. The library was not left out in this abrupt change as it has to move her services online since physical library were shut down. A structured interview design was the method of data collections and the result of data obtained was presented according to the research questions in a tabular form. Some of the challenges found were lack of funds for data subscriptions, network issues etc. The researchers recommended that Librarians must collaborate with co-professionals; government and its agencies; community leaders and NGOs and also give attention to acquiring digital literacy skills among others

**Keywords:** Directives, Work from Home, Lingering, COVID 19, Academic Libraries.

**Cite This Article As:** Ozonuwe, O.S., Lateef, E.B. (2021). The directive of work from home in the wake of the lingering COVID-19 pandemic: Perspective of four Academic Libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 9(4): 158-164

## INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the corona virus, also known as COVID-19 pandemic first started in Wuhan, China in late 2019 and rapidly spread across all nations of the world. The true cause(s) of the deadly virus is yet to be ascertained. Nonetheless, corona virus (COVID-19) is said to spread as a result of droplet from the mouth when someone is speaking, coughing or through the nose when an infected person sneezes and the other who is not infected inhales the droplet. Several scholars have come up with different views about the Covid-19 pandemic. For instant, Zhou, et

al (2020) observed that bat SARSr-CoVs have the possibility to infect human.

The distressing speed with which the virus spread drew the attention of the World Health Organization (WHO) to quickly act and come up with measures that can help restrain the spread of the virus leading to the lockdown of almost all countries in the world. Schools, libraries, worship centres, markets, airports and other social gathering centres like hotels, event/recreation centres and sport arena were locked down while people's movements were restricted.

As a result of the lockdown, Ladan, Haruna and Madu

(2020) posited that the electronic media and social networking platforms were the major channels through which awareness and information about the deadly virus was circulated by individuals and corporate organizations. However, it is worthy to note that most of the information that was circulated about the coronavirus was not only fake and lacked authenticity and credibility but they also created unnecessary panic among the populace which was worrisome. At some point, it generated panic and stigmatization. Some of the preventive measures put in place by the World Health Organization were the compulsory wearing of face mask, social/physical distancing of at least two meters, the use of alcohol based hand sanitizer and constant washing of hands. In addition, corporate workers were authorized to work from home, online learning became paramount and church services, buying and selling and many other transactions were moved online. Also, libraries and librarians were left with no choice than to implement and embrace digital and online information service delivery system to be able to meet up and satisfy the information needs of their users even during the lockdown. Many libraries in Nigeria, especially the academic libraries embraced online/social networking platforms as avenues through which they render services to their users doing this period.

It is important to emphasize that the web was not originally designed with features and facilities that permit interaction among users. Previously, it was referred to as web1.0 and it was mainly used as a platform for businesses and by organizations to broadcast information to the people. However, with the evolution of internet and communication technology, it has eventually emerged as Web 2.0 making it more dynamic, interactive and collaborative. Web 2.0 has the features that facilitate exchange of information and knowledge sharing among users. Ashraf and Kamaljit (2011) stated that these features facilitate interaction and integration of people and the web, making it the backbone of the Web 2.0. In Web 1.0 environment, users could only read what others wrote. Web 2.0 being an upgrade of web1.0, allows users to express their views and publish them online through social networking platforms like blogs, Facebook, WhatsApp, telegram, wikis, google apps, online databases and library applications.

The lingering COVID-19 pandemic has made it more crucial for libraries to reconsider and review their mode of information service delivery considering the compulsory lockdown and closure of libraries and other major centres as necessitated by the pandemic. The only sure way for libraries to remain relevant is by transforming to a more exposed, globally accessible, independent and vibrant establishment. Libraries and librarians have to seize the opportunity of the pandemic to consider the adoption of new media and evolving technology for their library operations.

## Statement of the Problem

Egunjobi and Awoyemi (2013) opined that the application of ICTs such as computers, internet, e-mail as well as other networking technologies, has opened up new vista and opportunities to library and information services which the traditional library cannot provide. The mode of information service delivery by libraries changed during the COVID-19 pandemic as users could not have access to the physical resources and services of the library due to the total lockdown of most countries as necessitated by the pandemic. This study therefore was conducted to establish the perspectives of four academic libraries in Ogun State Nigeria in response to the directive of work from home in the wake of the lingering covid 19 pandemic.

## Objectives of the Study

The following research objectives were developed to put the study in the right perspective:

- i. To ascertain if academic libraries in Ogun state, Nigeria observed total or partial lock down during the COVID 19 pandemic.
- ii. To find out if academic libraries in Ogun state engaged in digital and online library service delivery during the COVID 19 pandemic.
- iii. To determine the reactions of the users to the services provided.
- iv. To identify the significance of digital and online library service delivery to the libraries and to the librarians as well.
- v. To detect the various platforms and databases through which the services were provided.
- vi. To ascertain the challenges the new normal has brought the academic libraries and to librarians as well.
- vii. To suggest possible solutions and make recommendations for the way forward.

## Research Questions

1. Did your university library observed total or partial lockdown during the COVID 19 pandemic?
2. Did your university library engage in any form of digital and online library services during the COVID 19 pandemic?
3. If yes, what are the reactions of your users to the services your library provided?
4. What are some of the platforms and databases through which your library rendered those services?
5. What are the significance of digital and online library services to your library and to the librarians as well?
6. What are the challenges the new norm has brought to your university library and to librarians?
7. Suggest some possible solutions and make recommendations for the way forward?

## Literature Review

Ladan, Haruna, and Madu (2020) indicated that COVID-19 virus is transmitted during close contact through respiratory droplets (such as coughing). They further stated that the virus can spread directly from person to person when a COVID-19 infected person coughs or exhales, producing droplets that reach the nose, mouth or eyes of another person. UNESCO press release on COVID-19 (dated 24th March 2020) stated that “the number of students affected by the school and university closures in 138 countries has nearly quadrupled to 1.37 billion, representing more than 3 out of 4 children and youth worldwide. UNESC added that “nearly 60.2 million teachers are no longer in the classrooms.”

As at 8th August, 2020 World Health Organization (WHO 2020) stated that the total number of COVID 19 cases globally were 19,718,030, total and newly reported cases within the last 24 hours was 253,409. According to WHO (2020), total deaths recorded globally from inception was 728,013, total newly reported deaths within the last 24 hours were 5,719 and that would amount to 18,990,017 total recoveries. In the same vain, by 8th August, 2020 the Nigeria Centre of Disease Control (NCDC 2020) discovered 290 newly confirmed cases and 5 deaths were recorded in Nigeria. Till date, total of 46,867 cases has been confirmed 33,346 cases have been discharged and 950 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the federal capital territory. The 290 new cases were reported from 16 states- Lagos (82), Plateau (82), Oyo (19), FCT (18), Edo (16), Kaduna (15), Enugu (9), Ogun (9), Kano (8), Kwara (8), Cross River (5), Ondo (5), Rivers (5), Ekiti (4), Imo (3) and Borno (2).

Conversely, on the roles of digital and online library services, Ladan etal (2020) s stated that Information Technology (IT) and internet companies such as google and microsoft company have provided free teaching and learning tools to support students and teachers learning at home. For example, by March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 Google lunched its “Teach from Home Hub” as an aid to teachers and learners across the world that is unable to attend schools during the coronavirus (COVID -19) crisis. Also, springer and other publishing companies has made a reasonable number of e-books and online journals available on the open access platform to aid learning and research during the COVID-19 lock down and beyond.

The National Digital Library of India (NDLI, 2020) initiated a specially designed collection of e-resources for specific group of students to help the student community in the difficult situation that arose as a result of the suspension of physical classes and closure of physical libraries arising out of COVID-19 lockdown. These are provided through the library social networking pages.

In addition, the rapid growth and advancement in Information Technology (IT), internet of a thing (IoT) and social media network (SMN) has conveyed unpredicted

deviations in library services delivery to clientele. Egunjobi and Awoyemi (2013) opined that the application of ICTs such as computers, internet, e-mail as well as other networked technologies has opened up new and wider possibilities and opportunities to global library and information services and products which the traditional library cannot provide. Iwhiwhu, Ruteyan and Eghwubare (2010) observed that before the advent of ICTs, communication in the library was done through books, newspapers, microforms, slides, etc. They added that the use of telephones and computers led to the internet. They also noted that the application of telecommunications to an automated library system can bring more efficiency to library services. Just as the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) has revolutionized the daily lives of individuals, so has it enhanced library operations?

Furthermore, Zickuhr, Rainie and Purcell (2013) established in their study that a notable share of Americans say they would embrace even wider uses of technology at libraries which include but are not limited to online research services, allowing patrons to pose questions and get answers from the librarians. In the same vein, Elahi and Islam (2014) affirmed that mobile devices and applications provide access to information in the comfort of people’s homes and offices, using their cellular phones or personal digital assistance. Murray (2010) acknowledged that mobile technologies can be used to provide services such as library websites; short message services (SMS), reference services, and mobile online public access catalogue (MOPAC). Zani-Yost (2004) submitted that having access to sophisticated technology and more information does not necessarily mean that users have better searching skills. Thus, this is where librarians come in to help users sieve relevant information from the myriad of information available.

Dunn and Morgan (2003) and Massey-Burzio (2002) in Malik and Mahmood (2014) also agreed that this state of affairs gave libraries an impulse to reach users electronically where they are and provide quick access to relevant, credible and authentic sources. Therefore, taking these services as a challenge, librarians are moving aggressively towards designing new types of services which are accessible virtually to remote users by incorporating modern technologies like fax, cellphone, e-mail, chatting and video conferencing. Nicholas (2011) stated that the methods used to provide this type of services include chat and instant messaging (IM), real-time live web chat reference using web-based contact software, and 24/7 (24hours a day/7 days a week) collaboration. Nicholas (2011) added that the features of the web chat services include co-browsing, electronic queuing of patrons, sending of webpages, pre-defined text messaging, chat transfers among librarians, conferencing, complete transcript record of the entire session, and a knowledge base. Nicholas (2011) further stated that there has been an increased usage of Web 2.0 applications, mobile

technologies, and virtual world in the provision of reference services. The epidemic of the COVID 19 and the compulsory lock down and restrictions compelled libraries around the world especially in Africa to embrace online and digital library services

## METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. This would enhance the use of interviews to gather data for this study. The interview was personally carried out by the researchers on the selected respondents (librarians) of the four university libraries in Ogun state Nigeria, which are: Covenant University Library (CUL), Ota; Crawford University Library (CRUL), Igbesa, Babcock University Library (BUL), Ilishan-Remo and Hallmark University Library (HUL), Ijebu Ode.

**The reports of interviews are represented thus:**

**Table 1.**

Libraries Investigated	QR1: Did your library observed total lockdown or partial lockdown of the physical library during the COVID19 pandemic	QR2: Did your Library engaged in any form of digital or online library services delivery during COVID 19 lockdown?	QR3: If yes, what are the reactions of your library users to the services provided?
	Response to RQ1	Response to RQ2	Response to RQ3
CUL	✓ Total Lockdown	✓ Yes	✓ Satisfactory
CRL	✓ Partial Lockdown	✓ Yes	✓ Commendable
BUL	✓ Total Lockdown	✓ Yes	✓ Commendable
HMUL	✓ Total Lockdown	✓ Yes	✓ Satisfactory

Libraries Investigated	QR4: What are some of the platforms and databases through which your library rendered those services?	QR5: What are the significance of COVID 19 and online library services to your library and to the librarians as well?	QR6: What are the challenges the new norm has brought to your library and to librarians?	QR7: Make recommendations for the way forward?
	Responses to RQ4	Responses to RQ5	Responses to RQ6	Responses to RQ7

Table 1. Continues

CUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ OPAC</li> <li>✓ Ebscohost</li> <li>✓ Jstor</li> <li>✓ Science Direct</li> <li>✓ Agora</li> <li>✓ ebrary</li> <li>✓ emails</li> <li>✓ Institutional Repository etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It compelled many librarians to take rest and work from the comfort of their homes.</li> <li>✓ Addressing the users query in friendly manner.</li> <li>✓ Free webinar workshops.</li> <li>✓ Online reporting system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sudden shift from physical to complete digital environment,</li> <li>✓ Stagnation of academic programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Librarians must collaborate and networking with co- professionals, government and its agencies, community leaders and NGOs.</li> </ul>
CRUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Smarteaccess</li> <li>✓ Phone Calls.</li> <li>✓ Social Media Networks (Whatsapp)</li> <li>✓ Email</li> <li>✓ PDF Drive</li> <li>✓ Ebscohost</li> <li>✓ DOAB and DOAJ</li> <li>✓ Z-lib</li> <li>✓ SOCIndex</li> <li>✓ Serials directory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It gives the librarians the opportunity to reach their users in the comfort zone.</li> <li>✓ Library service was taken to the grassroots</li> <li>✓ Unlimited access to information resources in spite of social distancing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The librarians fears and inabilities were exposed</li> <li>✓ Loss of job.</li> <li>✓ Negligence of the physical library.</li> <li>✓ High cost of data subscription.</li> <li>✓ Electricity issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Librarians have to acquire digital literacy skills.</li> <li>✓ Proficiency in software management and cloud computing.</li> <li>✓ Training via webinar and virtual orientation services for users.</li> </ul>
BUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ OPAC,</li> <li>✓ BU website,</li> <li>✓ online databases such as Ebscohost, Jstor, mobile phone etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It bridged the gap that may exist in physical exchange or provision of information.</li> <li>✓ Reference services via ask a librarian automated response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ None physical patronage</li> <li>✓ Increase in copy right infringement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A sophisticated and robust online library service is paramount.</li> <li>✓ Functional Library website and library apps need to be developed.</li> </ul>
HMUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Open access databases,</li> <li>✓ Whatsapp group,</li> <li>✓ Smarteaccess database etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Online/ electronic orientation services.</li> <li>✓ Quick access to information resources.</li> <li>✓ It forced many librarians to acquire vocational skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Economic and fiscal crises.</li> <li>✓ Breakdown of academic activities.</li> <li>✓ Loss of job.</li> <li>✓ None payment of salary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Librarians must embrace emerging technologies and social media channels for online service delivery</li> </ul>

## Discussion of Findings

From the four academic libraries investigated, three were discovered to have observed total lockdown of the physical library while one observed partial lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also revealed that the four university libraries investigated engaged in digital and online library services during the pandemic to provide eBooks, online journal articles and other e-resources to their users. It was reported that the users from the four academic libraries commended the services provided to them via the online platforms.

More so, the librarians of the four academic libraries investigated disclosed the various platforms through which the online library services were rendered. These includes Science Direct, ProQuest, Jstor, Academic Search, Scopus, Ajol, World Cat, SocINDEX with Full Text, Serials Directory, Ebscohost, DOAB, DOAJ, Z-lib, Smart access and most especially social media platforms. This agreed with the submission of Egunjobi and Awoyemi (2013) which stated that the application of ICTs such as computers, internet, e-mail as well as other networked technologies, has opened up new and wider possibilities and opportunities to global library and information services and products which the traditional library cannot provide. It also agreed with the findings of Nicholas (2011) which stated that the methods used to provide this type of services include chat and instant messaging (IM), real-time live web chat reference using web-based contact software, and 24/7 (24hours a day/7 days a week) collaboration. The android mobile devices, social media site, internet browsers and search engines offered the librarians multiple opportunities to create content in various platforms.

The impact of COVID 19 and online library service delivery by libraries and librarians was enormous. It was revealed that the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic and the adoption of online library service delivery compelled many librarians to take rest and work from the comfort of their homes, it also availed them the opportunity of addressing users queries in a more friendly manner. It was also discovered that most of the librarians were able to organize and also attend free webinar workshops during the COVID 19 lockdown. Library users also had unlimited and quick access to information resources in spite of social distancing that was necessitated by the pandemic. Many librarians and library staff were compelled to acquire soft skills that are required for optimum information service delivery as dictated by the new normal. This agrees with the findings of Elahi and Islam (2014) that affirmed that mobile devices and applications provide access to information in the comfort of people's homes and offices, using their cellular phones or personal digital assistance.

The challenges that the new normal has brought to libraries and librarians were discovered to include sudden shift from physical to complete digital environment, stagnation of academic activities, loss of jobs, negligence

of the physical library, high cost of data subscription, electricity issues, budget cut and none payment of salary and so on.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made for the way forward:

- 1) Librarians must collaborate and network with co-professionals, government and its agencies, community leaders and NGOs.
- 2) Librarians must acquire digital literacy skills.
- 3) Librarians must be skilled in software management and cloud computing.
- 4) Librarians need to adapt training via webinar and virtual orientation services for their users.
- 5) Physical resources need to be digitalized and made available online.
- 6) A functional Library website and library applications is necessity
- 7) Librarians must embrace emerging technologies and social media channels for online service delivery.
- 8) Librarians must engage in aggressive online marketing, exhibition and publicity of the services they offer to the public.
- 9) Librarians are expected to possess the ability to acquire, produce and publish new knowledge (graphic design, image, video, wiki etc).
- 10) Librarians must build capacity to design website and databases.
- 11) Copyright laws must be reviewed to exempt libraries
- 12) Libraries should have policies in place to guide and safeguard their online operations.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new challenge in teaching, learning, information acquisition, dissemination and knowledge creation. Also, it has brought about a new normal that has come to stay. This new normal has effected a change in library services delivery. There is a compelling need for librarians to acquire new skills (especially digital skills), build capacities and proficiencies that will enable them remain relevant in the ever changing information world and also function properly in the new normal or they should be ready to get extinct. They need to rise up and be ready to learn, unlearn and re-learn. The university libraries investigated adapted means of reaching out to their users online in spite of the pandemic. Digital platforms will not only facilitate information delivery but will also help meet the diverse needs of the users in their comfort zone.

## REFERENCES

- Ashraf, D and Kamaljit I. L. (2011). The Impact of the New Web 2.0 Technologies in Communication, Development and Revolutions of Societies. *Journal of Advances in Information Technology*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Pp. 204-216
- Dunn, K. & Morgan, A. (2003). Going where the students are. *The Reference Librarian*, 38(79), 201 – 213.
- Egunjobi, R.A. & Awoyemi, R.A. (2013). *Provision of Electronic Information Services in Academic Libraries*. In Issa A.O., Igwe, K.N. and Uzuegbu, C.P. (2013). *Provision of Library and Information Services to Users in the Era of Globalization*: PP.297-299
- Elahi, MD. H. and Islam, MD. S. (2014). Go Fast, Go with Mobile: Students Perception on Implementing Mobile Based Library Services at Dhaka University Library. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1197>. Accessed August 1st, 2020.
- Iwhiwhu, B. E, Ruteyan, J. O and Eghwubare, A. (2010), "Mobile Phones for Library Services: Prospects for Delta State University Library, Abraka", *Library Philosophy and Practice*, available at: <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/iwhiwhu-ruteyan-eghwubare.htm> (accessed on 15th June. 2020)
- Ladan A, Haruna, B and Madu, A. U. (2020). COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Media News in Nigeria: The Role of Libraries and Library Associations in Information Dissemination. *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences* Volume 7, Issue 2. Pp125-133
- Malik, A. and Mahmood, K. (2014). Readiness for Digital Reference Service (DRS) in University Libraries: a Survey in the Punjab, Pakistan. *Information Development* (30), 181 – 188.
- Murray, L. (2010). Libraries "like to move it, move it". *Reference Services Review* (online), 14 38(2), 233-249. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00907321011045007>. Accessed August 20th, 2020.
- National Digital Library of India (2020). COVID-19 Lockdown not to affect your study. Study through National Digital Library of India. available at <https://ndli.iitkgp.ac.in>. Accessed August 20<sup>th</sup> 2020
- Nicholas, P. (2011). Creating a Digital Reference Agenda for Academic Libraries in Jamaica: An Exploratory Case Study. *Libri* 61, 258 – 280.
- Nigeria Centre of Disease Control (NCDC, 2020). Retrieved August 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 from <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/>
- UNESCO (2020). Press release, 24th March, 2020 on COVID-19 retrieved from [www.en.unesco.org](http://www.en.unesco.org). August 20 2020
- World Health Organization (WHO 10th August 2020). Retrieved August 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 from <https://covid19.who.int/table>.
- Zanin-Yost, A. (2004). Digital Reference: What the past has taught us and what the future will hold. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 7(1), 1 – 13. Available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>. Accessed August 22, 2020.
- Zhou P, Yang XL, Wang XG, Hu B, Zhang L, Zhang W, Si HR, Zhu Y, Li B, Huang CL, Chen HD (2020). A pneumonia outbreak associated with a new coronavirus of probable bat origin. *Nature*. 579 (7798): 270-3. Retrieved June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 from DOI:10.1038/s41586-020-2012-7
- Zickuhr, K., Raine, L. and Purcell, K. (2013). Library services in the Digital Age. Pew Research Center Internet & American Life. Available at <http://libraries.pewinternet.org>. Accessed August 22, 2020.