Changing Library Reader's Services in Nigeria Universities: New Reality from Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Background/Problem Statement: The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted university library operations in Nigeria, significantly limiting physical access to library services and creating challenges for students, lecturers, and researchers in obtaining timely information. The sudden shift to remote and digital services exposed gaps in infrastructure, professional skills, and preparedness, especially in developing countries where technological adoption is slower. Consequently, there was a need to assess how university libraries and librarians adapted their reader services during the pandemic to meet users' evolving information needs. . Purpose: This study examines change in readers' services in Nigeria universities: new reality from COVID- 19 pandemic Method: The study adopts qualitative research method. The purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study as the participants were sampled on the ground of being professional librarians in university of Ilorin library. The total number of participant was seven. The structured interview was used to collect data on the convenient time of the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the final version of the interview transcript. Result: Interviews with professional librarians supported these findings, revealing that university libraries adopted various innovations such as subscription to electronic resources, development of library guides, and increased use of library websites to continue serving users . The majority of library services during the pandemic were delivered through electronic formats, highlighting a shift towards digital engagement. Conclusion: The finding of the study revealed that majority of participants noted the services by professional librarians during COVID 19 to users were through electronic formats. The study recommends that training and workshop should be organized for library users and library professional on the use of current information tools.

Keywords: Service Quality, Perception, Exclusive Library

I. INTRODUCTION

Background. University libraries are established to support teaching, learning and research routine of university communities. However, university libraries represent an important integral of university community. It is fondly called the heart or nerve centre of university. This is because no, university can successfully carried out it mandate of teaching, learning and research activities without a university library. Therefore, the period of 2020 which is heralded with coronavirus pandemic in the world has affected mode of operadium of many institutions especially university library reader's services in Nigeria. COVID-19 is a viral infection that has ravaged most of the continents and was discovered in China in 2019. This has resulted to the closure of educational institutions and the global economy, resulting in the intentional closure of libraries worldwide. Many countries were closed down, workers were directed from home to work, and educational institutions' online environments, particularly in developing countries, were restricted to learning practices. However, service to users of university of Ilorin was obstructing as a result of pandemic that rampage the world. Users engage with alternative and services were limited toward phone calls and other non-physical engagement

Information was provided for any type of media to carry out their daily operations. Jeyaraj, (2021) observed that with the pandemic's effects and on the rise, educational activities, public gatherings, local events and several other services were brought to a halt in the efforts of trying to bring the spread of COVID-19 under control by minimizing contact. Adhering to the social-distancing and contactless new-normal situation, Universities and University Libraries were forced to close down their physical services.

However, with information being a constant and essential service sought after by several users, libraries had to find alternatives to cope up with pandemic in order to evolve (Weiss, 2020). During pandemic, universities were able to transition to digital services, while others were unable to do so and declared that all of their services would be locked down (Rafiq, et al, 2021).

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused a rapid transformation in the delivery of information and, ultimately, education throughout the country because many institutions followed the instructions relayed from the University's administrative board on how to conduct and oversee online services (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020). This pandemic is causing changes not only in how libraries deliver information to their users, but also rapid policy changes and actions (Asif & Singh, 2020).Moreover, with pandemic is forcing institutional operations, as well as instructional planning and delivery, to change quickly. In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID -19 and protect faculty, research scholars, and students, most sectors, including academia, have implemented optional or mandatory work-from-home policies. The library is central to teaching, learning, and research. Libraries close their physical facilities during the lockdown and even after it is lifted, focusing on their e- services and doing their best to support remote teaching and study becomes their mandate.

It is also observed in university of Ilorin that after the ban has being lifted during period only staff comes to make use of library but with adherence to covid-19 rule and regulation of social distance. Also most of services provided by the university are rarely provided physically but electronically. This greatly influence mode of operation of university library especially those that vast in information literacy and its skills. Against this background, this study examines changing library reader's services in the University of Ilorin: New reality from covid-19 pandemic

Problems. During covid-19 pandemic, libraries activities especially university library operation put on hold and ability of readers to get information in term of service perceived to become difficult. Covid-19 period mar major services that are meant to be provided to readers by university library physically which perceived to put on hold work in progress by students, lecturers, researchers and host community where the university is situated. Tanus and Sanchez-Tarrago (2020) stated that the main challenges that academic libraries are facing as a result of the pandemic are related to a sudden shift from personal attendance and face-to-face work to remote working and virtual attendance with no prior preparation (performance protocols infrastructure professional skills). However, Sulaiman, et al (2025) reported that with technology advances, the volume of information at our disposal is increasing at an unprecedented rate. The rapid growth has introduced fresh hurdles in terms of how students can effectively access, process, and utilize during the pandemic .

Furthermore, reopening libraries is a significant challenge because it involves changes in facilities, protective equipment, and hygiene protocols, which may put a strain on the library's budget (Tanus & Sanchez, 2020). In Nigeria as a developing country, information resources provision by university libraries are not totally provided electronically, information are still provided physically and with Covid-19, majority of such information resources and services before difficult to provided. On this premises, this study examines changing library reader's services in the University of Ilorin: New reality from covid-19 pandemic.

Previous Literature Review. As at the time Covid-19 become well known the world, Since March 23, 2020, the library has been converting some existing resources to a multimedia format and investigating new initiatives/practices to promote the university's entire online teaching and learning (Mehta & Wang, 2020). This implies that during covid-19 academic libraries together with the librarians engage in operations and initiative that put library services at door step of users. Nomsa, Kapombe and Sinyangwe (2020) posited that during COVID-19 academic libraries face with challenge of meeting the information needs of their users as it were before the pandemic. EBLIDA, (2020) observed that library was losing its relevance to users because of the competition with other online sources of information as staff were required to work from home due to the lockdown protocol.

Ukpanah and Enang(2022) identified library website, social networking, electronic services and the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) as resources used in delivery information to readers during Covid-19 pandemic. Kuber (2022) also noted that subscription to e-resources, Preparation of library guides for their readers, Comprehensive digital resource guides about free Internet resources; Library website has been playing a very important role in Covid, E-Content Development, Librarians' participation in online meetings and webinars and library Website. However, Broering (2017) stated that the library and user solution lies in the development and enhancement of library networks to improve the delivery of information. In libraries, websites are gateways for the use of tools for electronic materials. In the COVID-19 era, the only gate opened to users was the library website which administrators controlled remotely with the closure of physical library spaces.

Therefore, Chiatto (2018) described social networking as "communities in which individuals are somehow related by values such as friendship and working relationships." Social media networking sites are online platforms where individuals, groups, and organizations create and exchange content in the form of images, music videos, and charts. Moreover, several social media platforms are currently available to deliver COVID-19 content, including WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube, Blogs, Wikis, LinkedIn, Flickr, and others. These are well-known information exchange sites. Because of their popularity, libraries use the platforms to provide authenticated data to library users. According to Chukwuyere, Nwanneka, Chukwudebelu, and Emenari (2020) noted that WhatsApp" is one of the most credible information sources during the pandemic crisis. Ali and Bhatti (2020) also noted that libraries disseminate information to their users' communities via mobile apps, artificial intelligence-based Chatbots, and social media tools, as well as video-based lectures on YouTube.

In addition, an electronic resource is a source of information that is available in an electronic format, full-text articles, magazines, industry details, e-books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other resources are examples of E-Resources. Electronic tools make it easier to provide users with the necessary and credible information. During the period of lockdown in most countries around the world, major editors of electronic resources such as ProQuest, Cambridge, Elsevier, Emerald, and many more provided free access to their publications, primarily on Coronavirus-related issues and other open access literature (Ukpanah & Enang, 2022). Furthermore, if academic libraries are to maintain their relevance in society, they must catch up with changes brought on by the digital transformation of information societies. The COVID-19 outbreak further catalyzed this transition.

Although the idea of moving towards technology seems a viable option for information providers in developed countries, the same digital shift is deemed to be more complicated for libraries in developing and underdeveloped countries. The OPAC window, which provides access to bibliographic information resources, is used by the majority of library users to access the library catalogue. According to Asaikpe (2020), OPAC search capabilities such as keyword search, boolean search, truncation, proximity search, and search for item identification numbers have revolutionized access to bibliographic knowledge. Therefore, Ali & Gatiti (2020) highlighted the role played by the librarian in educating and creating awareness among people and medical staff to keep themselves safe with the latest updates in the field. People were asked to follow social distancing, wear masks, and use sanitisation to follow other preventive measures and Government guidelines.

State of The Art. During Covid-19 pandemic, service of academic libraries especially university libraries taken different dimensions with hope of adapting to the current reality that eluded the whole. However, libraries and information centers adapted various modes of online services for their users' community. Haque, Zhang, Alam, Hasan and Any (2022) noted that libraries have evolved into a continuous learning factory, establishing themselves as a new breed of information centers capable of assisting users in readjusting to a new normal condition. Online learning has emerged as an alternative to address the limitations imposed in the aftermath of the coronavirus epidemic in the education sector, and it is viewed as a viable solution to overcome the obstacles including university libraries. Akanbi et al (2022) noted that service such as document download service; document sharing; digital preservation and scanning, social interaction were provided to library users via electronic during pandemic. Artificial intelligence applications were used in the COVID-19 pandemic for library services and resources (Nawaz, et al. 2020). Moreover, Akanbi al et. (2024) posited that services of libraries have to be accessible to all members of the community; this requires well situated library infrastructure, facilities and information resources as well as relevant technologies.

Purpose. The main objective of this study to examine the changing library reader's services in the University of Ilorin: New reality from covid-19 pandemic. Specific objectives are to; identify services delivery through electronic resources in university of Ilorin during Covid-19 pandemic; investigate innovation taken by university library as well as librarians in providing services during Covid-19 in university of Ilorin library; determine the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on services of university of Ilorin library; and examine strategies to eradicate negative effects of Covid-19 pandemic on services of university of Ilorin library.

II. METHODS

This study adopts qualitative research method owing to the intention of providing in-depth understanding of changing library reader's services in the University of Ilorin: New reality from covid-19 pandemic. The choice of qualitative research approach is to provide more insights as to the major themes of this study, which can further entrench the theoretical framework in scholarly communication. The case study was adopted in this study as it permits the in-depth exploration of a phenomenon in a group of people (Yin, 2009). In this case, this study seeks to explore changing library reader's services in the University of Ilorin: new reality from covid-19 pandemic. The purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study as the participants were sampled on the ground of being professional librarians

in university of Ilorin library. Heads of various units especially, circulation, reference, serials, e-library, law unit, medical unit and university librarians were interview for the study.

The inclusion criteria include status of being a librarian practicing in university of Ilorin Library, and head ship of the unit. The total number of participant was seven. The structured interview was used to collect data on the convenient time of the participants. The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed using the Microsoft Word application. After this, Microsoft Excel application was used to code the transcripts. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, which are the validity and reliability of qualitative data, the codes was sent to the participants to ensure that there is no form of misinterpretation or misconstrued words or phrases emanating from the transcribed interview (Birt et al., 2016). Thematic analysis was used to analyze the final version of the interview transcript. The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Collected data were qualitative in nature, hence thematic analysis was used in the analysis. Transcription was done on Microsoft Excel with each sheet contains responses of each participant. Since the participants were seven, this means that there were seven sheets on the Microsoft Excel coding sheet.

Services Deliver through Electronic Resources in University of Ilorin during Covid-19 Pandemic. The study found out that more than half of participants indicated that academic libraries together with the librarians engage in operations and initiative that put library services at door step of users during covid-19. This implies that library delivery services through door to door because of predicament of COVID-19

Participant 2:

"During Covid 19 libraries were shut down and services were transfer from library to individual personnel. This means that library personnel were given mandate to provide services to users who were in door as result of Covid 19. Online services also provide through users email and other electronic social media.

Participant 1:

"Services rendered by university libraries during Covid 19 were majorly online services through email and social media platform created during Covid 19 by university library."

Participant 5:

"The Covid 19 pandemic created a lot of challenges to academic library services in Nigeria. The services rendered physical become stagnant and libraries especially academic libraries created alternative sources of providing information to users. These alternative services are electronic means of using e-mail."

Participant 4:

"I want to categorically say that Covid 19 teaches Nigeria educators new things especially the area of providing services clientele who are in door during the pandemic. University library design means such as online platforms and the use of email to transfer information and message to library users"

The study finding revealed that majority of participants noted the services renders by professional librarians during COVID 19 to users were through electronic formats. The university library created channels and means such as special e-mail and converted social media platforms designated for information dissemination for COVID 19 services.

Innovation Taken by University Library as well as Librarians in providing services during Covid-19 in University of Ilorin Library. The innovation taken by university library as well as librarians in providing services during Covid-19 in university of Ilorin library are many as indicated by majority of participants. This finding revealed that university library and librarian adopted innovation such as subscription to e-resources, preparation of library guides for their readers and comprehensive digital resource guides about free Internet resources. Library website has been playing a very important role in Covid, e-content development, librarians' participation in online meetings and webinars and library website.

Participant 1:

I can sincerely tell you that Covid 19 expose developing countries especially Nigeria to a lot of innovation that characterized the methods of delivering services during the Covid 19 pandemic. I want to be fact with you that, the use of all these innovation taken by university during Covid 19 were not used before Covid 19 such as to e-resources, preparation of library guides for their readers, comprehensive digital resource guides about free Internet resources

Participant 2:

During the Covid 19 university library create operation such as intent content, digital resources guide, online tutoring, and multimodal text for beginner readers.

Participant 5:

In university of Ilorin here, the university library management design framework that contact users' library and librarians together on provision of information services during the COVID 19. This includes electronic interface and text –to-speech application.

Participant 6:

The innovation provided during covid 19 by university library has totally improve the services between librarians and users such as creation of modern platforms such as internet face and text-to speech application enables

The finding of this study indicated that majority of participants are of opinion that university library and librarian adopted innovation such as subscription to e-resources, preparation of library guides for their readers and comprehensive digital resource guides about free Internet resources. Library website has been playing a very important role in Covid, e-content development, librarians' participation in online meetings and webinars and library website.

Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Services of University of Ilorin Library. The finding of this study indicated that more than half of participants' belief that Covid 19 have a very significant effects on services delivery. The Covid 19 pandemic created a problem to idea of moving towards technology seems a viable option for information providers in developed countries, the same digital shift is deemed to be more complicated for libraries in developing and underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. The OPAC window, which provides access to bibliographic information resources, is used by the majority of library users to access the library catalogue become easier.

Participant 3:

> Let's me tell for the fact that the university library and librarian see Covid 19 as important phenomenon that created a sizeable link on services delivery. This covid 19 seriously affect services as many physical services were absent and service becomes electronically.

Participant 4:

> The service during covid 19 in university library is usually prompt and easier and there was no need for physical and face to service delivery. This pandemic created environment for distance services and encourage people outside the immediate environment to have access to information of one library and the others

Participant 5:

> The service provided during the covid 19 by university library encourage students and lecturers to develop skills on information provision information and communication technology and thus become a positive effect on library services during the covid 19 pandemic.

Participants 6

> Situation from the time of covid 19 on service delivery become positive between clientele and university library and librarians. This implies that harmonious relationship was created in term of feedback from clientele to library and librarians.

The finding of this study posited that Covid 19 pandemic created a idea of moving towards technology seems a viable option for information providers in developed countries, the same digital shift is deemed to be more complicated for libraries in developing and underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. The OPAC window, which provides access to bibliographic information resources, is used by the majority of library users to access the library catalogue become easier.

Strategies put in Place to Eradicate Negative Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Services of University of Ilorin Library. The finding of this study indicated that more than half of participants' belief training and workshop could go in long way eradicating negative effect of pandemic on services delivery in university library. The fair created by the use of information and communication technology for dissemination of electronic information during the COVID 19 tend to be eradicated with the seminar and training organized for both clientele and librarians.

Participant 3:

> One of the strategies that can eradicate effect of Covid 19 pandemic on services of university library is proper orientation, training and organsiation seminars for library personnel and users so that there will be proper Synge in the communication of services among the users and librarians.

Participant 4:

> Sanitization, training, and workshops on information dissemination between library and users need to put in place for better services by university library. The university library needs to create skills and environment that can improve information dissemination between librarians and users.

Participant 5:

> The service provided during the Covid 19 by university library encourages students and lecturers to develop skills on information provision information and communication technology and thus become a positive effect on library services during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Participants 6:

Situation from the time of Covid 19 on service delivery become positive between clientele and university library and librarians. This implies that harmonious relationship was created in term of feedback from clientele to library and librarians.

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Discussion of Research Findings. The finding of the study revealed that majority of participants noted the services by professional librarians during COVID 19 to users were through electronic formats. The university library created channels and means such as special e-mail and converted social media platforms designated for information dissemination for COVID 19 services. The finding of this study is in line with Broering (2017) stated that the library and user solution lies in the development and enhancement of library networks to improve the delivery of information. In libraries, websites are gateways for the use of tools for electronic materials. In the COVID-19 era, the only gate opened to users was the library website which administrators controlled remotely with the closure of physical library spaces.

The finding of this study indicated that majority of participants are of opinion that university library and librarian adopted innovation such as subscription to e-resources, preparation of library guides for their readers and comprehensive digital resource guides about free Internet resources. Library website has been playing a very important role in Covid, e-content development, librarians' participation in online meetings and webinars and library website. The findings of this is corroborates with study by Ali and Bhatti (2020) that during the COVID 19 that libraries disseminate information to their users' communities via mobile apps, artificial intelligence-based Chatbots, and social media tools, as well as video-based lectures on YouTube.

The finding of this study posited that Covid 19 pandemic created a idea of moving towards technology seems a viable option for information providers in developed countries, the same digital shift is deemed to be more complicated for libraries in developing and underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. The OPAC window, which provides access to bibliographic information resources, is used by the majority of library users to access the library catalogue become easier. The finding of this study is supported by Ukpanah and Enang, (2022) that Covid 19 has change the information seeking behaviour and patterns of information users in the world in positive ways.

The finding of this study posited that Covid 19 pandemic created an idea towards moving to technology seems a viable option for information providers in developed countries, the same digital shift is deemed to be more complicated for libraries in developing and underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. The OPAC window, which provides access to bibliographic information resources, is used by the majority of library users to access the library catalogue become easier. The finding of this study corroborate by According to Asaikpe (2020) that strategies such as boolean search, truncation, proximity search, and search for item identification numbers have revolutionized access to bibliographic knowledge during covid 19.

Research Limitations (Disclaimer). This study only examines two facets of evaluating service quality at the Soepardjo Roestam Library. The subject pertains exclusively to the Soepardjo Roestam Library, which has a limited user base. The sample size does not account for gender or educational attainment. The sample error in this study remained around 10%.

IV. CONCLUTION

The study established that during COVID 19 library services in Nigeria universities changed from physical or traditional way to online information sources. The reality of staying indoor during the COVID 19 makes the services delivery to users easier to access and available for with from far distance. Covid 19 has given library leverage to library professional to work from their home in rendering services that they meant to offer physically. Based on the found of the study, the following recommendations are provided. Training and workshop should be organised for library users and library professional on the use of current information tools, motivation should be provided to professional librarians on the need to adapt to current reality brought by COVID 19, library should organize seminars for library professional on creation of new innovation and the management should employ more personnel so that, stress of multi-tasks will be addressed.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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