

Covid Pandemic: Web Based Information Services in College Library

*Dr. Rajni Jindal

Author's Affiliation:

* Librarian, Vivekananda College, University of Delhi, Jhilmil Colony, Delhi, 110095, India

Corresponding Author: Dr. Rajni Jindal, Librarian, Vivekananda College, University of Delhi, Jhilmil Colony, Delhi, 110095, India

E-mail: rajni.jindal1@gmail.com

(Received on 03.03.2022, Revised on 24.06.2022, Accepted on 08.08.2022, Published on 15.12.2022)

How to cite this article: Jindal R. (2022). Covid Pandemic: Web Based Information Services in College Library. *Library Progress International*, 42(2), 275-284.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the various innovative web based information services, also known as online information services rendered by Vivekananda College library in support of online teaching-learning during Covid lockdown period. The spread of Covid pandemic has led to change in the nature of teaching and learning and libraries also needed to change services provision to their academic community. The college library being a part of academic institution needs to cater its community in online teaching and learning during covid lockdown. The Vivekananda College Library also did provide web based information services. Various web 2.0 tools were used by the library and access to digital was facilitated in different formats. This paper also studies the satisfaction of its patrons. The case study revealed that 91% of the surveyed faculty was satisfied with the services.

KEYWORDS: Covid, Pandemic, Information services, Web based information services, Librarians, Social media, College library

INTRODUCTION

The world wide pandemic Covid has become a global crisis as it spread to most of the countries and devastated them. All the countries implemented various emergency measures so as to prevent the spread of the virus. The lockdown of countries/states/cities was one of the measures and our country took immediate action and locked down quickly. All colleges under all the universities shut down without any prior notice. The government started to check the virus and quarantine the people suffering from it so as to stop or limit the virus infection.

This phase started the culture of work from home. All higher education institutions, universities, colleges and even schools started the process of online teaching and learning. (Kaur, 2020)

Tools Used By Libraries to Provide Digital Services during Lockdown

Before Covid, mostly email was being used as a tool for communication remotely but pandemic times had taught everyone about the revolutionary ICT tools. Now most of the people including the academic community are using them (eg. Social networking sites, Instant messaging system etc.). Libraries are also in the forefront in using these tools to facilitate access to e-resources and provide various other information services to their patrons. They are

using these tools innovatively for dissemination of information, for accessing the e-resources, spreading awareness about the pandemic and preventive measures to be taken for the same. Libraries and librarians are adapting themselves in the transformed environment. Webinars, virtual orientations, information literacy tutorial sessions are being organized by the libraries using the web 2.0 tools and making their patrons information literate. Some of the tools being used are Zoom, Google meet, Webex and skype etc. Facebook and youtube are also being used to provide a platform for dissemination of information and online streaming of the sessions and webinars etc.

Web Based Information Services during Covid Pandemic

During the Covid lockdown period access to physical libraries was not allowed and everyone had to rely on e-resources. It was the duty of the librarians to facilitate access to them. They used various platforms for information literacy tutorials, social media for dissemination of information and revamped their websites to provide access to authentic e-resources through various subject gateways. Digital libraries offered e-resources (online databases, e-journals, e-books etc.) and web based information services to help users anytime anywhere (24 x 7 x 365). The libraries through their websites provided active links to reliable, relevant and credible information resources. They also disseminate information through various social media and stop spreading misinformation or rumors (Nagarkar, 2020). Furthermore, how librarians in Pakistani libraries helped users during the lockdown period was also studied (Ali and Gatiti, 2020). They provided virtual support to them by provision of virtual reference service, literature search, document delivery and systematic reviews. Continued provision of the library's basic services in e-environment was the need of the hour. They also noted that libraries should counter fake information by providing authentic information, especially through their digital platforms.

Challenges Faced By Librarians in Offering Services during the Lockdown Period

Librarians, habitual of working in the physical libraries faced a big challenge during lockdown.

The speed of the internet, power outage, availability of infrastructure (Computer, laptop, Router, telecommunication network, and printer etc.) were some of the top challenges. This sudden change in working pattern and demand for infrastructure had affected the developing nations globally. Other than infrastructure and Internet speed, librarians faced the lack of knowledge of ICT, resources and technical expertise as some other challenges. To overcome these challenges they learnt various techniques to be in touch with their patrons (e.g. Web conferencing, virtual meeting for holding various information tutorials, disseminating information through their social media platforms and virtual referencing through instant messaging systems). The pandemic showed that the crisis taught us to use ICT in an innovative manner and also taught us to use other forgotten technologies. Librarians dealt with all the challenges and facilitated access to millions of e-resources and also provided innovative web based information services to their users.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

It is a case study of the library of Vivekananda College (Constituent college of University of Delhi). The study collected primary data through a closed end structured questionnaire. The data was collected from the College faculty only as they were the ones using maximum web based (online) information services of the library in their web based teaching process. The data was collected from them by circulating a Google form. The data collected through this google form in the Google spreadsheet was analyzed in a systematic manner using different graphs etc. and findings were studied as per the objectives.

Brief Profile of Vivekananda College Library

The Vivekananda College Library is a state of the art library equipped to meet academic as well as intellectual needs of its patrons. The library is fully automated and all housekeeping operations are computerized. OPAC is on Library LAN. The library is connected to the Delhi University network (e-Shodhsindhu) with access to DULS databases and e-resources. During Covid lockdown the DULS facilitated remote access to the e-resources, earlier it was IP

based. It also has access to the Braille library of DULS. It is a member of N-LIST (a programme of INFLIBNET) to provide remote access to users to a huge number of e- resources. It is also a member of DELNET for Inter library loan and e- resources. Library is Wi-Fi enabled for internet connectivity. The library has an official in-house developed and maintained website and also uses many social media tools (eg. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter as well as Youtube) to disseminate information, and to facilitate many web based information services. A number of google forms are also used to provide different information services (eg. Virtual reference service, plagiarism checking, and access to e-resources etc.) ("Vivekananda College Library - About us", 2022)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following are the research objectives of this study during Covid pandemic to support Online teaching learning:

- Identify the role of the college library
- To analyze the web based information services
- The form of digital content made accessible to the user
- Faculty awareness of web 2.0 tools used by library
- Provision of Information literacy

- Satisfaction of the faculty of the web based library information services

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It was a descriptive research design study which surveyed the users (Faculty members) of the college through a structured questionnaire. Due to lockdown of the college, an online survey form was created using Google form which was sent to all the hundred faculty members of the college through mail and whatsapp as it was not possible to conduct interviews of the faculty members. The structured questionnaire had closed-ended multiple responses questions for easy analysis of the data. The researchers were given 'Others' also as an option to the list of responses. Google form was pilot tested through five users in the beginning so as to remove any shortcomings. After successful pilot testing of the form, it was circulated to the hundred (100) faculty members of the college. A reminder mail was also sent to them to submit the responses. After a month or so seventy (70) responses were received from the faculty members resulting in a 70% response rate. The data was analyzed through Google spreadsheet. The analysis and result presentation through tables and figures was also done through the same.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Discipline wise distribution of Data

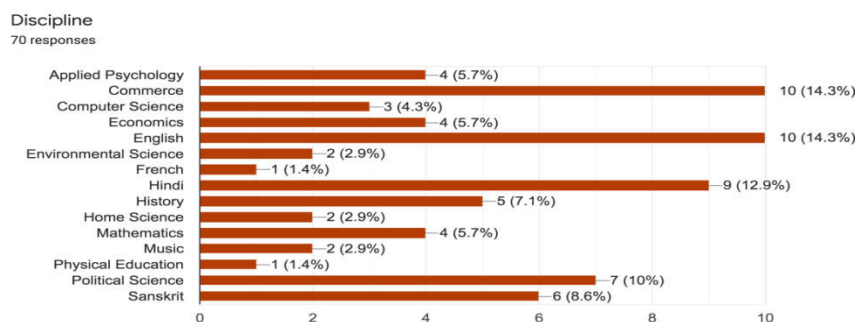


Figure 1: Discipline wise distribution of Data

The Vivekananda College is running undergraduate and postgraduate courses. It may be noted that there are fifteen departments in the college. The above Figure: 1 presents that a varied number of responses have been received from the various departments.

Maximum number of responses 10 (14.3%) were received from commerce as it is the biggest department of the college. It also presents that the same number of responses were received from the English department separately. It was followed by Hindi 9 (12.9%).

Role of the College Library

A system in which Computers and the internet are used to give knowledge and skills remotely is known as e-learning. The computer might be stand alone or in the network mode (Dhamdhere and Ganeshkhind, 2017)

e-learning has also been defined as not merely digitizing the collections but a series of activities or a process which brings together collections, services and people in support of the creation, preservation of data, information and knowledge, dissemination and use (Sharifabadi, 2006). The Libraries have an important role to play in e-learning by providing access points needed for teaching and learning (Mtega & Benard, 2014).

The librarians and especially college and university librarians have to support e-learning during these covid times. The collection needed to be developed strategically and the information services needed to be innovated. The libraries need to transform and use digital platforms, internet and World Wide Web to provide information services (eg. access to various online databases, e-journals, e-books

and other digital content). They needed to facilitate an interactive website giving access to various subject gateways for authentic and relevant information to faculty and students and help them in the online teaching and learning process. The patrons needed to be aware of already accessible subscribed digital content and open access content. The library also needed to try to create more of it. Many studies have been done discussing role of libraries in difficult pandemic times when the physical libraries are closed due to lock down and digital libraries are active in supporting online teaching and learning by facilitating access to e-resources, disseminating the information about the Covid and precautionary measures to be taken for the community health awareness. Librarians need to provide Current Awareness Service (CAS) and selective dissemination of information (SDI) services to their patrons in this regard by creating subject gateways (Ahmed et al., Ali & Gatiti, 2020; 2018; Chisita, 2020; Young, 2018; Wang & Lund, 2020).

The Vivekananda college library facilitates many web based information services accessible remotely. It played varied roles depending on the requirement of the patron. Out of many roles of the college library, respondents were asked about the following roles of the library during Covid:

- Remote access to the information (24 x 7 x 365)
- Increase the research and scholarly communication
- Store and manage the e-resources
- Aggregate online e-resources
- Provision of gateway to access various e-resources off site
- Helping through live streaming of webinars/college events on social media

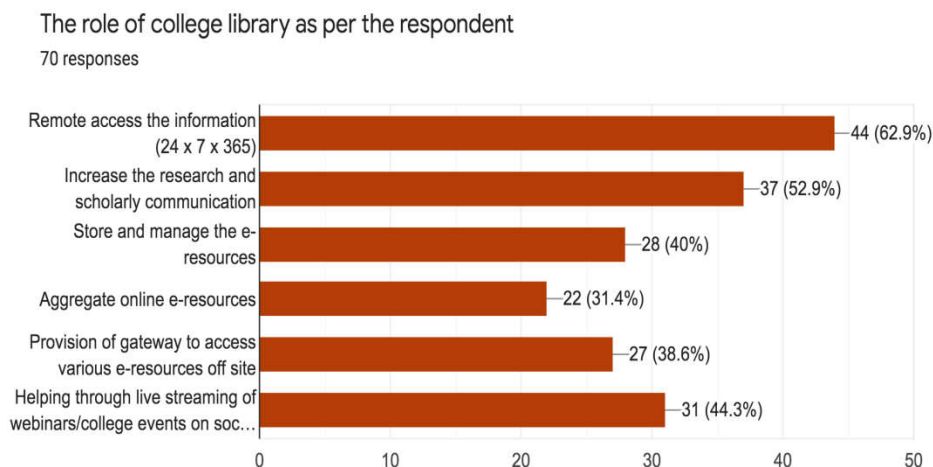


Figure 2: Role of the College Library as per respondent

The above figure 2 presents the data submitted by the respondents in pictorial form. Highest number of respondents 44 (62.9%) responded that remote access to information is the pivotal role of the library. While 37 (52.9%) responded that college libraries have a role in increasing research and scholarly communication. 31 (44.3%) respondents submitted that the library helps in live streaming of various webinars and college events through their social media platform. The Vivekananda College library is actively using social media platforms/tools to disseminate library information as well as college information/ events. It has its own facebook page, instagram, twitter as well as youtube channel. Youtube channel is being used to upload various other college recordings and to make it a platform for institutional repository. The libraries live streams college events and webinars through its facebook page. The social media is being used to give links of other open access resources as well as to market the library website.

Web Based (Online) Information Services of the Library

The Vivekananda College library is facilitating many web based information services to support web based teaching and learning. It has its own, in-house designed and developed library website as a major platform for facilitating information services. Other than that various social media platforms are being used for the same. The respondents were asked about the various web based information services of the Vivekananda College Library. Some of them are:

- Supporting online teaching learning by access to latest e-journals
- Remote access to e-journals
- Online reference service
- Providing Covid Information
- Posting latest information on the website/ social media
- Information about authentic open access resources
- Information literacy

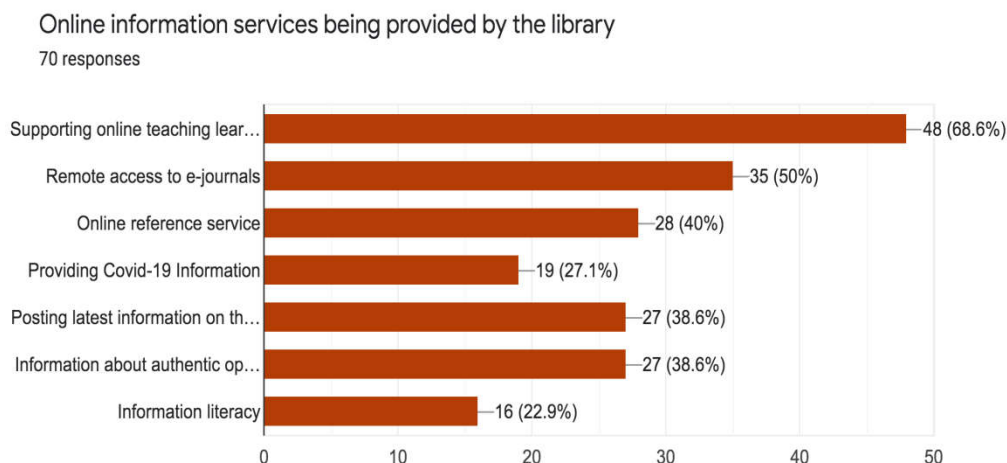


Figure 3: Online Information Services of the Library

As per the responses submitted, 48 (68.6%) respondents said that the library supports online teaching and learning by its various web based information services.. 35 (50%) replied that the remote access to e-journals is being provided by the college library. 28 (40%) responded that the library provides online reference service. 27 (38.6%) replied that the college library keeps posting the latest information on its website and also through various social media platforms.

The above data highlights that the college library has been successful in facilitating web

based information services to a large extent through various tools of the World Wide Web & its web portal.

Types of Digital Contents

Various kinds of digital contents are made available to the patrons by the college library. Some of them are online databases, e-journals, e-books, digital question papers, online public access catalogue, and Institutional repository and ask the librarian/virtual reference service.

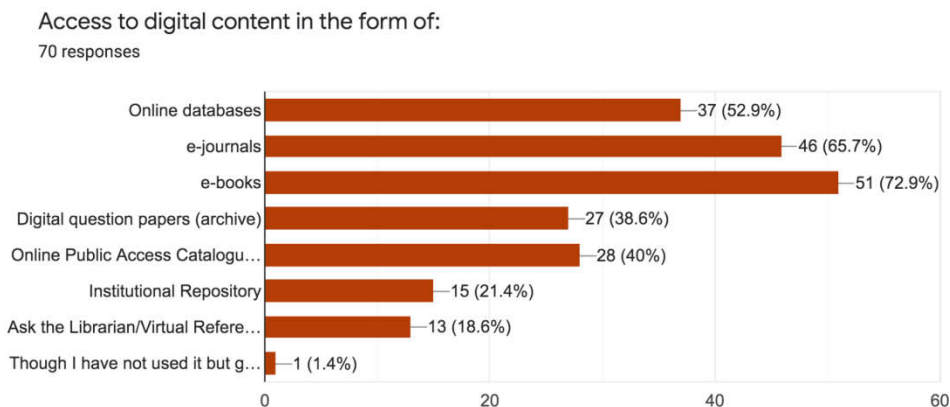


Figure 4: Types of Digital Contents

The Figure 4 highlights that the maximum number of respondents 51 (72.9%) submitted that the library provides access to the e-books, 46 (65.7%) agree that access to e-journals is provided by the library. 37 (52.9%) respondents submitted access to online databases, 28 (40%) to Online Public Access Catalogue, 27 (38.6%) to digital question paper archives and 15 (21.4%) responded to access to the institutional repository. It is interpreted that most of the faculty members are aware about the different e-resources available through the library and use

it for their online teaching learning process in virtual mode during the covid times.

Faculty Awareness of Web 2.0 Tools Used By the Library

The vivekananda College library uses many web 2.0 tools in facilitating the innovative information services. The respondents were asked about the web tools being used by the library to assess their awareness.

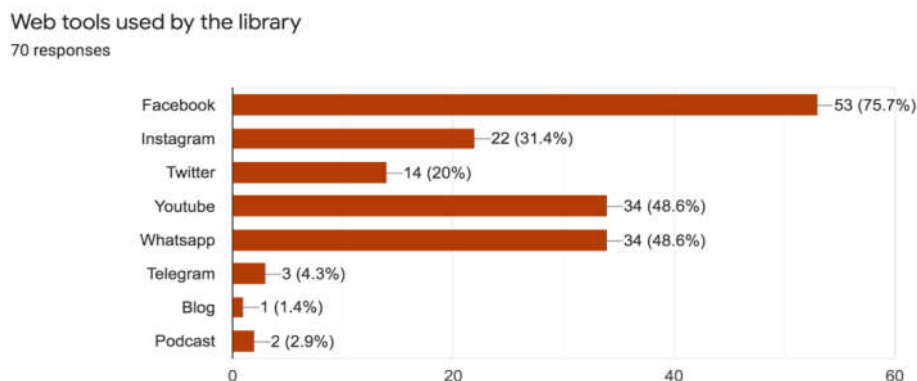


Figure 5: Web 2.0 Tools Used By the Library

The Figure 5 shows that the maximum number of respondents 53 (75.7%) are aware of the library Facebook page being used to disseminate the information and provide access to e-resources and for live streaming of college events on virtual mode. 34 (48.6%) users submitted that they are aware of library youtube channel being used to upload the videos and live stream the college events being organized on virtual platforms. Same number responded that the library provides information through an instant messaging system also, using whatsapp and chat etc.. Other than that information is shared on the library social media as well as through emails. 23 (31.4%) users know about the Instagram (Social media tool) being used by the library. Only 14 (20%) respondents know about the twitter handle of the library. The college library needs to market its social media sites more and make the user aware about them. It

will help patrons in getting the latest updates of the library and college.

Provision of Information Literacy

The respondents were asked various questions (eg. whether the library facilitates information literacy tutorials to teach them about the e-resources. Does the library initiate and orient them about accessing these e-resources? Does the library teach them the search strategies to access relevant and pin pointed information). The library runs various powerpoint presentations for information literacy which are also uploaded or available on the library website. Virtual orientation programs are organized by the library. Information dissemination of various webinars to the patrons is done through e-mail as well as various social media platforms of the library.

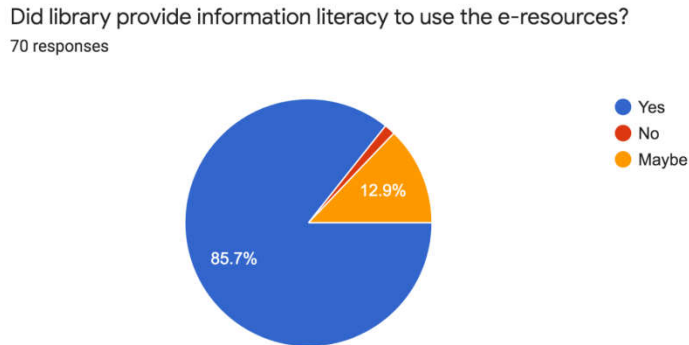


Figure 6: Provision of Information Literacy

The Figure 6 shows that 60 (85.7%) users responded positively and agreed that the library is facilitating information literacy tutorials about the various e-resources, access to them and citations etc. Only 9 (12.9%) respondents replied that sometimes the library provides information literacy to use e-resources. Only one single respondent submitted that no information literacy is provided by the library, which is very negligible. Positive response of 60 (85.7%) may be interpreted as a high level of satisfaction of respondents. The college library is outreaching

its patrons through Facebook, email and other social media platforms and facilitating information literacy.

Satisfaction of Web Based Information Services of Library

The query was evaluated on the likert scale of five. The respondents were to submit responses as 'Very satisfied', 'Satisfied', 'Neutral', 'Dissatisfied' and 'Very dissatisfied'.

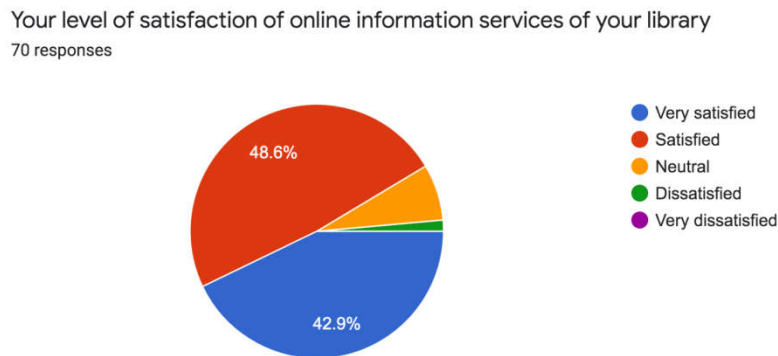


Figure 7: Satisfaction of Web Based Information Services of Library

The Figure 7 presents that a maximum 34 (48.6%) respondents are 'satisfied' with online information services of the library 30 (42.9%)

patrons were 'very satisfied' with the services, while only 5 (7.1%) remained 'neutral' in their

response. Only one single respondent is dissatisfied with the information services.

The data above represents that the web based information services of the library are being used by the patrons and the level of satisfaction is remarkably high as 64 (91%) respondents are in the category of 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied'. Still the library needs to work harder to transform dissatisfied patrons to satisfied patrons. As the data was collected from the faculty, it means that more hard work is needed to make faculty information literate who in turn may teach the same to their students.

DISCUSSION, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to find out the varied web based information services being facilitated by the Vivekananda College Library through various web 2.0 tools. The researcher examined the awareness of faculty of web 2.0 tools being used by the library along with the satisfaction of the patrons of web based information services. Response rate was 70%, whereby maximum responses were received from the faculty of the commerce department. 62.9% respondents replied that facilitating remote access to e-resources is the major role of the college library. 68.6% respondents submitted that the library is supporting online teaching and learning. 72.9% submitted that the library provides access to e-books. 75.7% respondents are aware of the library facebook page, live streaming of college events and information dissemination through it. 85.7% say that the library provides information literacy to the patrons. 91.5% patrons are satisfied and very satisfied with the library web based information services during covid.

It was remarked by a respondent to give more information literacy to the faculty, teaching them about online databases, various e-resources, accessibility as well as search strategy to be formed to get exhaustive and pin pointed information. To quote **"Library should expand the ambit of information literacy treating us teachers illiterate at par with students."** The college library needs to look into this and organize more information literacy tutorials.

Some other suggestions were:

- Teaching faculty, the use of online resources and various platforms;
- Resolve the challenges of accessing e-resources and web based information services;
- Archival recordings of eminent personalities (Audio/Video content);
- Invited author talks;

Library is already striving very hard for facilitating information literacy tutorials by various means like user orientation through virtual platforms, powerpoint presentations on the library website, dissemination of information through library social media about the webinars being conducted on information literacy, search strategies, open access resources etc. The only challenge in it is that the college library tries its level best to disseminate the information but at the time of tutorials and webinars neither the faculty show any interest in registration nor they attend them. Various tutorials are also available on the college library youtube channel and website but no feedback comes back to the library in that regard.

The library is planning for some author talks from the coming academic session. We have started a new innovative information service named 'e-Vartalaap'. The service is provided once a week on a virtual platform. By joining the meeting link, the patron might get its queries resolved in real time.

AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

The study may be extended to learn 'How to market the various social media tools of the library and to optimize their use for providing web based information services. Effectiveness of the library information services may also be studied. The study may be expanded to colleges of University of Delhi, other universities and even public libraries may be covered for the same.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmed, M. U., Hussain, S., & Farid, S. (2018). Factors influencing the adoption of e-learning in an open and distance learning institution of Pakistan. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 16(2), 91-97.
2. Ali, M. Y., & Gatiti, P. (2020). The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic: reflections on the roles of librarians and information professionals. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 37(2), 158-162.
3. Chisita, C. T. (2020). Libraries in the midst of the coronavirus (COVID-19): researcher's experiences in dealing with the vexatious infodemic. *Library Hi Tech News*, 37(6).
4. Dhamdhare, S. (2012). E-learning: Future trends and Challenges to Academic Libraries. *International Journal of Information Technology & Computer Science*, 2.
5. Kaur, H. (2020). Library and Information Services of A.C. Joshi Library during COVID - 19 pandemic: a study of faculty satisfaction. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 4464. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4464>
6. Mtega, W. P., & Bernard, R. (2014, November 13-14). The integration of library and e-learning systems: the case of selected public universities in Tanzania. *Proceedings and Report of the 7th Ubuntu Net Alliance Annual Conference, Lusaka, Zambia*, 231-244.
7. Nagarkar, S. (2020). COVID-19: the role of a library during a pandemic. *Sakal Times*, Retrieved from (www.sakaltimes.com/opinion-nation/covid-19-role-library-during-pandemic-49537).
8. Sharifabadi, S. R. (2006). How digital libraries can support e-learning. *Electronic Library*, 24(3), 389-401. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/02640470610671231>
9. *Vivekananda College Library - About us*. Sites.google.com. (2022). Retrieved 20 Jan. 2022, from <https://sites.google.com/vivekanand.ac.in/vivekananda-college-library/home/about-us>.
10. Wang, T., & Lund, B. (May, 2020). Announcement Information Provided by United States' Public Libraries during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. *Public Library Quarterly*, 39(4), 283-294. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1764325>
11. Young, E. (2018). The Role of Public Libraries in Disasters. *New Visions for Public Affairs*, 10, 31-38. Retrieved from <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/a/7158/files/2018/04/NVPA-Volume-10-27fekmi.pdf>
