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Media Informasi dan Komunikasi Kepustakawanan

Services Bestowed by The Academic Libraries During Covid-19 Outbreak: A Thematic Analysis

Research Report
Laporan Penelitian

Layanan Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi Selama Wabah Covid-19: Analisis Tematik

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A B S T R A C T

Background: Academic libraries are important information agencies that are established to support teaching, learning, and research activities at universities. It is a leading information organization that is important to the sustainable development of universities and providing versatile human capital of one country. As far as we are concerned, due to the pandemic, universities are still operating and are transforming their operation into 360 degrees using online platforms. Due to that, academic libraries all around the globe spare no effort to ensure they are still operating during the pandemic to support online teaching and learning classes. All efforts they took were documented and shared throughout journal publication. This research was carried out to get a bird's-eye view from many librarians and researchers around the globe.
Methods: Document analysis and thematic analysis methods were used in this study.
Purpose: This study aims to identify the services offered by academic libraries worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Findings: As for the findings of services, the themes associated with it were identified. It includes digital library services, virtual references, webinars, services with health protocol and regulation, social media, combating fake news, collaboration with publishers, document delivery services, special project support teaching and learning, and research endeavors.
Conclusion: Academic libraries should endeavor to provide their services to the public, regardless of the circumstances, as long as they remain under human control.

Keywords: Academic Library Services, COVID-19, Thematic Analysis.

A B S T R A K

Latar Belakang: Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi merupakan lembaga informasi penting yang didirikan untuk mendukung kegiatan belajar mengajar, dan penelitian di universitas. Perpustakaan perguruan tinggi merupakan organisasi informasi terkemuka yang penting bagi pembangunan berkelanjutan universitas dan penyediaan sumber daya manusia yang serba guna di suatu negara. Sejauh yang kami ketahui, karena pandemi, universitas masih beroperasi dan mengubah operasinya menjadi 360 derajat menggunakan platform daring. Oleh karena itu, Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi di seluruh dunia tidak menyia-nyiakan upaya untuk memastikan bahwa mereka masih beroperasi selama pandemi untuk mendukung kelas belajar mengajar daring. Semua upaya yang mereka lakukan didokumentasikan dan dibagikan melalui publikasi jurnal. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mendapatkan pandangan menyeluruh dari banyak pustakawan dan peneliti di seluruh dunia.
Metode: Analisis dokumen dan metode analisis tematik digunakan dalam penelitian ini.
Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi layanan yang ditawarkan oleh Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi di seluruh dunia selama pandemi COVID-19.
Temuan: Mengenai temuan layanan, tema yang terkait dengannya diidentifikasi. Layanan yang disediakan meliputi layanan perpustakaan digital, referensi virtual, webinar, layanan dengan protokol dan regulasi kesehatan, media sosial, penanggulangan berita bohong, kerja sama dengan penerbit, layanan pengiriman dokumen, dukungan proyek khusus untuk pengajaran dan pembelajaran, serta kegiatan penelitian.
Kesimpulan: Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi harus berupaya memberikan layanan kepada masyarakat, apa pun keadaannya, selama layanan tersebut tetap berada di bawah kendali manusia.

Kata Kunci: Layanan Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi, COVID-19, Analisis Tematik.

INTRODUCTION

During the pandemic, Covid-19, all information professionals in academic libraries were struggling to do whatever it took to ensure they were responsible and ready to support universities' teaching, learning, and research activities. It is because the education sector is still running during that time. Based on the number of publications published in Emerald Insight on their experience of providing services during challenging times, it is proven that they put their effort into ensuring that patrons are satisfied with their services regardless of adversity. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted traditional modes of learning and research. Academic libraries, as pivotal institutions in academia, faced unprecedented challenges in adapting to the new normal of remote learning and work. This study aims to investigate the specific services provided by academic libraries during the COVID-19 outbreak and assess their effectiveness in supporting remote learning and research activities.

Despite all the hurdles they face during the pandemic, all academic libraries already prepared themselves for digital environments in meeting the Industrial Revolution 4.0 tidal waves. When the pandemic occurs, this situation speeds up the process of transformation of services into digital libraries, online services, and distance learning services. Everyone, including professionals or patrons, either prepare or does not; they have to adjust themselves to ensure they are not left behind to serve and enjoy the services offered to them. In short, libraries have been forced to adopt virtual operations and develop robust services because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Martı́nez and de Jesu´s Jasso Pen˜a, 2019).

Meanwhile, another research carried out by Ajibade and Mutula (2021) found that academic libraries as learning centers must achieve digital library alignment by using the virtual learning environment, the virtual learning experience is imperative, and all the library and information science (LIS) teaching departments are already adopting modern technologies to respond to teaching gaps owing to coronavirus pandemic lockdowns.

Despite the difficulties, the pandemic COVID-19 has had positive impacts on the development of academic library services, information science curricula, and the enhancement of the library science profession to face a volatile future. Academic libraries were thrust into the spotlight during the COVID-19 pandemic, tasked with finding innovative ways to support remote learning and research. As campuses closed their doors and students, faculty, and researchers transitioned to online environments, libraries quickly adapted, offering a range of virtual services to bridge the gap. From expanding digital resource access and providing online tutorials to facilitating virtual research consultations and hosting online workshops, libraries became essential hubs for remote academic activity.

However, questions remain about the effectiveness of these services in meeting the unique needs of the academic community during this unprecedented time. Did the virtual offerings adequately support students' information literacy development and research needs? How well did online research consultations and workshops replicate the in-person experience? And to what extent did libraries successfully address the challenges faced by researchers in accessing and utilizing resources remotely? This study aims to delve into these questions and explore the impact of academic libraries' virtual services on remote learning and research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for academic libraries worldwide, necessitating rapid adaptation to maintain support for students, faculty, and researchers. This literature review synthesizes key findings from scholarly articles, reports, and studies on how academic libraries responded to the pandemic, focusing on their services, initiatives, and strategies to sustain operations and meet evolving user needs.

During the pandemic, academic libraries swiftly adopted virtual services to ensure continuity and accessibility. Johnson et al. (2020) highlight the use of digital platforms for reference assistance, instruction, and resource delivery, which proved crucial in overcoming campus closures and social distancing restrictions.

A significant challenge for libraries was ensuring access to digital resources for their communities. Brown and DiSalvo (2021) detail the strategies employed by libraries to address this issue, including expanding electronic collections, negotiating licensing agreements, and improving remote authentication methods to maintain uninterrupted research and learning activities.

The closure of physical spaces prompted the development of new approaches to instruction and support. Mestre et al. (2020) note the implementation of virtual workshops, webinars, and online tutorials to assist users in navigating digital resources, enhancing information literacy skills, and adapting to remote learning environments.

Collaboration between libraries and academic institutions became increasingly important for resource sharing and expertise exchange. Smith and Jones (2021) emphasize the role of partnerships and consortia in providing access to specialized collections, facilitating interlibrary loan services, and promoting best practices for remote service delivery.

Physical distancing measures posed challenges in keeping users engaged and connected with the community. Despite these difficulties, Garcia and Patel (2020) highlight the innovative use of social media, virtual events, and online forums to encourage interaction, promote well-being, and provide updates during the pandemic.

The pandemic also exposed pre-existing inequalities in access to library services and resources, particularly for marginalized communities. Lee and Wang (2021) discuss library efforts to address equity issues by expanding Wi-Fi access, implementing laptop-lending programs, and targeting outreach to underserved populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed academic library services. Libraries were compelled to innovate, collaborate, and prioritize digital accessibility and user support. While challenges were immense, libraries demonstrated resilience and adaptability in navigating the crisis, paving the way for future improvements in service delivery and community engagement.

In conclusion, this literature review examines how academic libraries responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the importance of flexibility, collaboration, and innovation in providing essential services and support for their communities during times of crisis.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a thematic analysis study of papers produced by authors all around the world in Emerald Insight starting from the year 2020 until the year 2021. Twenty articles have been identified and were suitable to be analyzed for this study. The statements in the articles that are related to the research objective and research question were analyzed. The related themes were developed based on the data found and analyzed in the articles.

The process involves five major activities: starting with article searching, selecting the articles, analyzing the articles, identifying themes, and developing themes.

Figure 1. Flow of Research Methodology

Data Collection

Data collection involves searching for articles and selecting articles from the journal. Secondary data were used in this study. The secondary data were obtained from the Emerald Insight database. Articles searching through Emerald Insight was conducted from August 30 until August 31, 2021. To identify the relevant and accurate information, a keyword search has been used. Keywords such as academic library and service during COVID-19 were searched through the database. Based on the result of the search, related articles were downloaded and saved in the drive. On the following day, all the downloaded articles were scrutinized and selected based on the criteria needed for this research. The criteria include the article's content that discussed the services offered by academic libraries during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, twenty articles that were selected were further read and scrutinized one by one. Based on the analysis, researchers were able to identify the twenty articles published that were categorized by five continents (Africa, Asia, North America, Europe, and Australia). Thematic analyses were carried out on all articles to identify the services offered by academic libraries on all continents during the COVID-19 outbreak. There were eight themes of services formed throughout the continents. The themes were developed according to the types of services offered by the academic libraries on all continents. Suitable authority vocabulary was used to represent the themes.
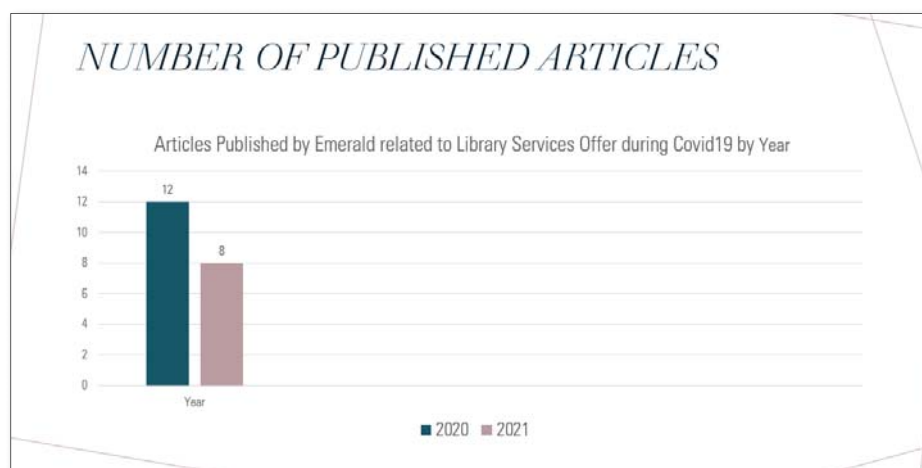

Figure 2. Number of Published and Selected Articles Emerald Insight until August 2021.
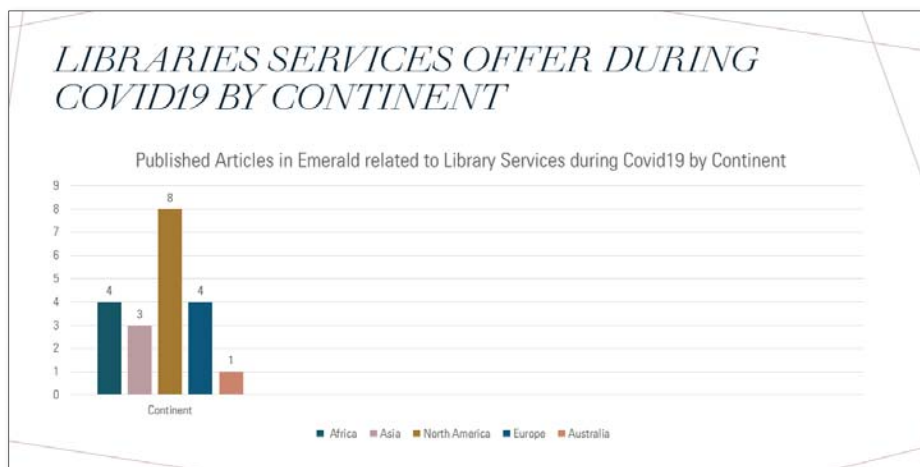
Figure 3. Published Articles in Emerald until August 2021

FINDINGS

The journal articles analyzed revealed several key themes regarding academic library services during the COVID-19 pandemic. These themes encompass digital library services, virtual reference services, webinars, adherence to health protocols and regulations, social media engagement, combating the spread of misinformation, collaborations with publishers, document delivery services, special projects, support for teaching and learning, and research endeavors.

Digital library services

Journal articles indicate that academic libraries across four continents adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by expanding their digital library services. This strategy aimed to support teaching, learning, and research activities, ensuring continuity despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Library leadership prioritized user satisfaction, striving to provide seamless access to information resources regardless of time, location, or other constraints. By doing so, libraries demonstrated their commitment to supporting the education sector during this difficult period.

Virtual References

To enhance digital library services and improve the online user experience, virtual reference services have emerged as a key solution. As social distancing measures necessitated remote interactions, chatting with a librarian became a crucial virtual reference service, allowing users to directly connect with librarians and seek assistance. To further support users, libraries also provided comprehensive user manuals for their online services, ensuring that users could independently access and utilize these resources. Additionally, some academic libraries offered online information literacy programs to empower users and enhance their digital literacy skills. By implementing these strategies, libraries aimed to reach a wider audience and provide comprehensive support, enabling users to effectively navigate and benefit from online library services.

Services with health protocol and regulation

Academic libraries have been advised to comply fully with the current rules and regulations set by the authorities while providing their services to users. This also includes the necessary health protocols and regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial to prioritize the safety and well-being of both staff and users to ensure that they can continue to enjoy the services provided.

Webinar

The advent of webinar sessions has revolutionized remote communication. Online platforms have made it possible for people from across the globe to join virtual sessions at their convenience. All that's

needed is an invitation link and a device to connect. The recent global crisis has underscored the invaluable role of webinars as a reliable and accessible means of global connection, a realization that may have been previously overlooked.

Social Media

Social media platforms are often preferred due to their cost-effectiveness and minimal data usage. The librarian adeptly utilizes these platforms to provide virtual reference services and promptly respond to user inquiries. Moreover, academic libraries have leveraged social media to effectively communicate new services and resources available to users amidst the ongoing pandemic.

Combating Fake News

Besides fulfilling its normal routine as an information agency, the academic library was also called on duty to combat fake news by providing legitimate news or information during difficult times. It is to ensure that people remain calm and know the truth. It is to prevent anxiety and chaos among people through difficult situations. In this case, the academic library in Africa took its part in providing this outreach service to its users. This can be done by inserting accurate and latest news about COVID-19 through their website, social media, and many more.

Collaboration with publisher

During the difficult times, when academic libraries were facing challenges in providing access to information and sustaining their services, publishers came forward and provided free access to academic library users. This generous move allowed academic libraries to perform their tasks effectively and provide more information to users. The publishers' support was crucial in ensuring that academic libraries continued to function, despite the unprecedented circumstances. This act of kindness from the publishers not only helped the academic libraries but also demonstrated their commitment to education and research. This support was highly appreciated by the academic community and played a significant role in keeping the academic sector going during a challenging time. The COVID-19 pandemic forced academic libraries and publishers to adapt rapidly to the challenges of remote learning and research. To ensure uninterrupted access to essential resources, libraries and publishers forged strategic partnerships that fostered collaboration and innovation.

1. Expanded Access to Digital Resources:
   a. Remote Access: Libraries and publishers worked together to expand remote access to digital resources, enabling students and faculty to access e-books, journal articles, and databases from anywhere with an internet connection.
   b. Flexible Licensing Models: Publishers offered more flexible licensing models, such as temporary site licenses or usage-based pricing, to accommodate increased demand and budget constraints.
   c. Open Access Initiatives: Both libraries and publishers supported open access initiatives to make research freely available, promoting knowledge sharing and scientific progress.

2. Enhanced Technical Support and Training:
   a. Technical Assistance: Publishers provided technical support and training to library staff to help them effectively manage and deliver digital resources.
   b. User Training: Libraries and publishers collaborated to offer online training sessions and tutorials to help users navigate digital platforms and databases.

3. Data Sharing and Analytics:
   a. Usage Data: Libraries and publishers shared usage data to gain insights into user behavior and resource utilization.
   b. Data-Driven Decision Making: This data-driven approach helped both parties make informed decisions about resource acquisition, licensing, and service delivery.

Support teaching, learning, and research endeavors

Academic libraries are important information agencies that are fully responsible for supporting teaching, learning, and research activities at the universities. Among the efforts that they provide during the pandemic are migration of service to virtual library services, providing digital library services, reference services, working with publishers, and providing current awareness services to its users. All services were provided to ensure users have access to the library collections and services.

A special project, document delivery services, and upskilling

There is one academic library among the five continents that provides special projects, document delivery services, and emphasis on upskilling of the staff to ensure they will continue to provide better services to users regardless of time and situations. The special project done by one of the academic libraries in the USA encouraged their citizens to submit photographs during the pandemic to the library. This collection will be stored in the library as their country memorial collection. This would be their contribution to the country and is one of the ways to extend their service and show their solidarity to the community. This special project attracted citizens, and they requested the academic library to accept other forms of their works related to the pandemic, such as academic essays by students, other content from university students, and collections from public libraries. This special project, on the other hand, has an impact on society to play their part in submitting content to the academic library digital collection project. at least one academic library located on five of the seven continents that offers special projects. These projects could be unique initiatives, programs, or services that are not typically offered by other academic libraries. For example, a library in Africa might offer a special project focused on digitizing historical African manuscripts, while a library in North America might have a program dedicated to supporting Indigenous studies research.

On the other side of the country, the academic library also extends its services to ensure users reach their collection through document delivery services. This effort is enchanting to solve problems with limited access to certain materials. This service also receives positive feedback and responses from users.

Despite all publications highlighting the services provided by academic libraries around the world during a pandemic, one of the publications by the Australian academic library differs from other publications in that it emphasizes the upskilling of their professionals to ensure they can sustain their services to the users regardless of difficult situations. This is because human capital is an important resource that can enhance service delivery to the users to the maximum. The professionals need to prepare themselves to react to any volatility and be capable of handling everything to ensure they are responsible for delivering services according to the situation.

Research Limitation

This study is limited to scrutinizing only the associated articles that are published on Emerald Insight. It is suggested that the analysis of the articles should be broadened to other databases to ensure that the data are enriched with diverse themes from different authors' perspectives by various databases.

CONCLUSION

Academic libraries should endeavor to provide their services to the public, regardless of the circumstances, as long as they remain under human control. Academic libraries, though primarily serving their institutions' students and faculty, possess the potential to significantly benefit the broader public. These institutions, repositories of knowledge and culture, can act as community hubs, fostering intellectual growth and social engagement. By opening their doors to the public, academic libraries can share their vast collections, including historical documents, art, and rare books, enriching the cultural landscape of the community. These libraries can also serve as spaces for meetings, workshops, and events, fostering community interaction and strengthening social bonds. Furthermore, academic libraries play a pivotal role in economic development. They support research and innovation, driving economic growth and creating jobs. By providing access to high-quality resources and technology, libraries can attract talented individuals and businesses to the community. The adoption of design thinking and innovative approaches to service delivery is critical to ensuring the sustainability of these services in the future. Emphasizing the importance of these

methods will allow academic libraries to continue to provide quality services to their patrons while keeping up with the changing times.

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