

## Libraries Without Users in Covid-19 Pandemic: Reflection on The Roles of Library and Information Professionals

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### ABSTRACT

The role of health science librarians in the coronavirus epidemic is examined in this Regular Feature. The global spread of COVID-19 has been fast. Lockdowns have been implemented in all major cities throughout the world. The first case was discovered on March 21st, 2020 in western Maharashtra, and there have been more than 1500 confirmed cases and 12 fatalities since then. An additional 12,000 cases are being investigated throughout the nation. If preventative precautions are not taken, this will only become worse. A curfew has been imposed at all Indian institutions and colleges. University librarians played a critical part in this crisis by educating the general population about the need of good health, assisting medical professionals and researchers, and continuing to provide conventional library services to the residents of western Maharashtra.

**Keywords:** Asia, west; global health; librarianship, health science; public health

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. COVID 19

Pandemics have plagued mankind several times throughout history, with some posing a greater threat to the human race as a whole. It's tough situation, all over again, for each nation in a battle against the coronavirus (COVID-19). New viruses like the Coronavirus are spreading swiftly over the globe. People who are infected with the COVID-19 virus often experience symptoms of sickness and recovery without the need for further medical care. It's more common for those over the age of 65 and those who have underlying medical conditions such as dialysis or diabetes to acquire major health issues. 'Libraries hold the energy that fires the imagination,' declared American writer and filmmaker Sidney Sheldon. To us, they provide a window into the world, inspiring us to explore, to accomplish, and to contribute to a better quality of life. Maintaining social distance regulations in this pandemic circumstance of COVID 19 causes physical library systems to become completely stalled, which helps prevent the spread of viral infection. It is a family of viruses known as Coronavirus. Library professionals play a critical role here, serving the whole community on a digital platform. Libraries are one of the finest locations to learn without the fear of needing to purchase anything. In addition to students, researchers, professionals, and many other members of our society, libraries are a vital part of our daily lives.

#### 1.2. Library and information professionals

Library users' information requirements are best served by those who have researched this topic. It is possible for them to be librarians, archivists, or records managers. The library authority hires a suitable number of people with various academic degrees and/or expertise in the library to fulfil the demand of library users. People who work in libraries are called library employees or LIS professionals.

##### 1.2.1. The Role of Librarians and Information Specialists in a Pandemic

1. A librarian's involvement in a pandemic has three dimensions:
2. Generating and sharing information on the importance of preventing illness in the general population;
3. By offering scholars, academics, and researchers with information on the most recent advances, research, and literature;
4. To meet the core needs of regular library users

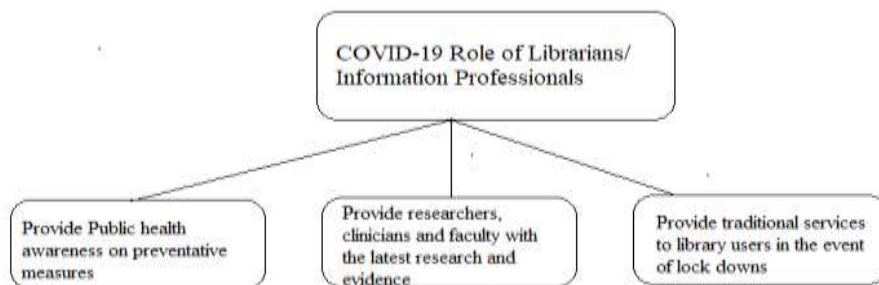


Figure 1 - Roles of Library and Information Professionals during a Pandemic

Figure 1 - Roles of Library and Information Professionals during a Pandemic

**An examination of the three primary responsibilities that librarians may perform during a pandemic**➤ **Increase public health awareness about COVID-19.**

To be successful in public health, techniques such as school closures, remote working, home isolation, and monitoring the health of symptomatic patients through telephone or online health consultations must gain societal approval. There are several topics that need to be included in COVID-19 awareness campaigns, such as the steps individuals can take to prevent transmission – for example, general instructions on using masks, handwashing, and sanitizers, the avoidance of handshakes, and various other ways to control the virus's spread. It is the obligation of all librarians (public, specialty, academic, and medical) to disseminate evidence-based information regarding this epidemic. Other relevant material might include case histories from persons who have recovered from this coronavirus, as well as recommendations on healthy diet and lifestyle choices that can lower the chance of contracting this condition. There are three critical messages that must be communicated:

- **The significance of social distance.**

To limit disease transmission, those who are suspected of having COVID should practise social distancing, remaining at home to preserve social distance from family, friends, and strangers.

- **Quarantine measures may be used.**

One of the oldest and most successful techniques for managing infectious illness outbreaks is quarantine. During the pandemic emergency in China, quarantine was a successful approach. It is also an efficient method of containing an influenza epidemic.

- **Advice on how to prevent being scammed.**

Misinformation is propagated via various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and others, in the era of social media. Librarians and information professionals strive to mitigate this by only distributing trustworthy information. Trustworthy information may be shared with library users through institutional and personal social media profiles, and platforms aim to keep rumours and false news at bay.

**1.3. Library professionals' difficulties during covid 19**

- Throughout the globe, library professionals face a variety of issues in determining which services to provide and how to manage lockdown circumstances ranging from minor limitations to complete shutdown.
- Many prestigious libraries, like the National Library of India, the Delhi Public Library, and other prestigious libraries throughout the globe, are afflicted by lockdown circumstances, hurting the whole community of researchers, students, scholars, readers, and so on. The closure of libraries has a significant effect on the communities we serve.
- University and college libraries, as well as school libraries, are closed, and many competitive and academic tests are still waiting; thus, at this critical moment, Library Professionals may support those students in our country who want information through the internet platform.
- It is natural for people to experience emotions ranging from normal to unhappy, anxious, puzzled, and scared/angry during a crisis. The most difficult issue for library professionals during this lockdown is to manage with these circumstances while engaging the whole community in a healthy atmosphere.
- For the purpose of opening libraries to the public in accordance with government norms and in the public's benefit.
- It is difficult to limit or close a library for the following social distancing concepts.

**1.3.1. How to tackle the above mentioned challenges by the library professionals society during covid 19**

- By adhering to government standards, Library Professionals may break the chain of coronavirus and deliver various services remotely.
- Gather factual data and transform it into helpful knowledge that will correctly assist the whole community in various professions.
- Engage the entire community through social media and organise the Reading Books challenge, poster writing competitions, skill development programme, and so on that have helped people manage normal life as before and develop skills that will help them reduce stress during this pandemic's challenging time.

- We are aware that the federal and state governments are making many choices and using a variety of techniques to better serve their constituents. All information may be published by library professionals via Social Media Platforms.
- Library professionals may experiment with the following ICT technologies and share their findings with the community. Library Professionals can provide Cloud-based Library Services, Authentication Technologies: Remote Access, Electronic Resource Management System ERMs: CORAL, Discovery Services, Library Service Platform/LibGuides/IRs, OA Resource Advocacy, and Library Service Marketing via Blogs and other Social Networking tools.
- Library professionals may provide open sources, open coursewares/OERs, open learning resources, webinars, virtual classrooms, ORCID, and citation creation tools such as Mendeley and Zotero.
- To supply users with information resources - "Different kinds of services and collections may be connected together and made available on electronic platforms."
- Provide library services to users in accordance with government regulations and human interests.
- Because library professionals may play a significant role in serving the whole community, it is crucial to describe the varied duties of library professionals in this COVID 19 pandemic scenario.

### 1.3.2. Negative Impacts of COVID-19 on Libraries

According to the report, library closures have occurred all around the globe since the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic. Libraries, when they are not closed, are faced with difficult decisions about which services to give and how, ranging from slight limits to outright shutdown. Meanwhile, the closing of all educational institutions has had an impact on libraries in 177 nations. Universities, national and research libraries are also closed in several of these nations (IFLA, 2020). According to the findings, almost 3,000 libraries throughout the nation have been closed. However, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) cautioned that limiting services or closing a library is a tough choice that must be made after an evaluation of the proportional risks. Furthermore, it was discovered that the closing of libraries in practically all nations throughout the globe, including Nigeria, merely means that librarians would be unable to retain hard/soft copies of information and make such hard copies accessible to the public. Unfortunately, western Maharashtra libraries have yet to completely digitise and make services accessible online, making it very difficult to spread accurate and up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

### 1.4. OBJECTIVES

- To examine the many problems and how Library Professionals are coping with them in this COVID 19 pandemic scenario.
- To address the many conventional duties of Library Professionals in the present COVID19 scenario.
- To examine the significance of librarians in this pandemic circumstance. To learn about the many sorts of libraries' resources and services available throughout the lockdown time.
- To describe the different critical responsibilities of Library Professionals as information preservers.

#### ➤ Scope of the paper

This paper reflects on role of librarians during a pandemic in the context of Pakistan.

### 2. Literature Review

**2.1. Adomi, E. E., & Oyovwe-Tinuoye, G. O. (2021).** According to the paper, based on the study's findings, LIS professionals are interested in COVID-19 information on preventive measures, cures, causes, and symptoms, how to provide library services to users, the availability of preventive or safety devices in the library, and staff safety when libraries eventually open to the user community. Furthermore, the Internet, social media, television, radio, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control website, the World Health Organization website, and friends, colleagues, family members, or neighbours are the primary sources of information for LIS professionals on COVID-19.

**2.2. K. Chakraborty, P. S. L. Kureshi, S. B. Gajbe, N. Upadhyay, and D. Devi (2020).** The current research gathered data from reliable sources, namely government official websites of Indian states such as MyGov COVID-19, UTs, and national/international organisations, among others. The legitimate information sources offered to the research community are mentioned once the data has been analysed and studied. Using the Scopus abstracting databases, this work additionally illustrates the ratio of COVID-19 papers to highly cited publications. This study is a unique research endeavour that focuses on the roles and duties of the Library and librarians in crisis circumstances. As a result, this research will benefit librarians, information providers, practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and development activities in this sector.

**2.3. P. Bhati and I. Kumar (2020).** This study focuses on the diverse duties of library professionals during pandemic situations such as COVID 19. It also outlines the advocacy role carried on by Library

Professionals. It tracks the amount of digital platforms that are accessible all over the globe. It also encourages people to utilise social media/networks. Library professionals can help the broader community with their intellectual pursuits. The purpose of Library Professionals is to locate information based on the needs of the user, to function as an information disseminator, and to arrange knowledge from various information pools.

**2.4. A. Nandi (2021).** The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted abrupt and dramatic adjustments in library service delivery, since strong social distance and lockdown measures were enacted in the early stages of the epidemic. Even at this tough and uncertain time, the Internet and online technologies have created a new and unequalled environment, allowing libraries to expand and deepen research, teaching, and learning. The idea and practise of libraries giving remote access to digital resources is not new, but the user-friendly approach used by UPES libraries, as well as the volume of materials made accessible during the epidemic, is remarkable.

**2.5. B. I. Okike (2020).** Librarians should act as catalysts for efficient information distribution in order to foster real knowledge. To educate users, librarians should distribute knowledge using current and new media outlets. Libraries should establish working relationships with health agencies and communication organisations with the goal of cooperative development of collections, referrals, and information shared and learning for users and a new breed of reimagined librarians for better information dissemination, especially at a time when there is a great need for accurate health-related information resources in an ever-increasing digital environment.

**2.6. J. Zhou (2021).** According to the findings of this research, online libraries are a critical source of knowledge in the context of non-contact education. The study's findings from China and Italy show that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the need for digital transformation strategies and programmes for libraries that will address the major library-related issues, such as chronic funding shortages, a lack of professionally trained staff, a lack of legislation and policies, a lack of digital infrastructure, and so on. According to the findings of this research, distant learning encounters challenges such as a traditional perspective of education among students and instructors, as well as a suspicion of advances. One way may be to have favourable experiences with distant learning and accessing online resources. As a result, libraries should focus on the quality of digital services and publish time-sensitive material vital to the learning routine.

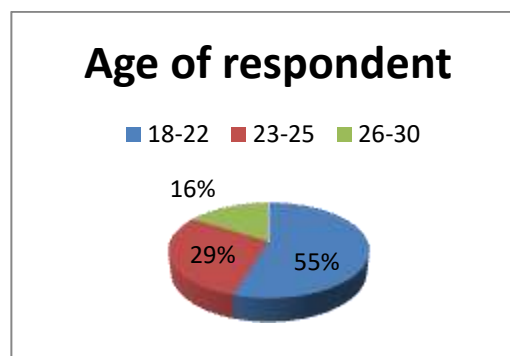
### 3. Methodology

The study gathered secondary data from the internet, newspapers, and journals to determine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on libraries, what new ways, resources, and services libraries have developed to help combat the new COVID-19 disease, the constraints faced by Nigerian libraries in effectively combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and what measures can be taken to overcome these constraints. The project comprises a comprehensive desk investigation on libraries across western Maharashtra in response to the COVID 19 outbreak. The research employed qualitative analysis to discover and categorise major themes, evaluate patterns, and comprehend social context.

#### Data Analysis

##### 1. Age of respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	18-22	17	54.8	54.8
	23-25	9	29.0	29.0
	26-30	5	16.1	16.1
	Total	31	100.0	100.0



#### Analysis

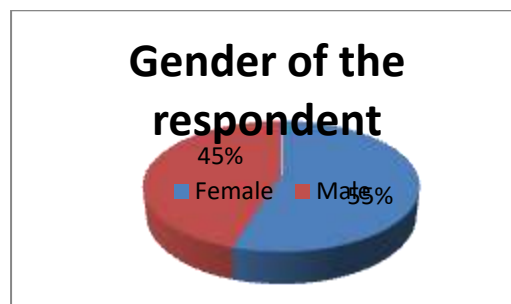
As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. We have taken the responses of people which ranges from 18-22, 23-30 and 26-30 age group. As shown in above table, 17 people that is 54.8% librarians are from age group of 18-22.

#### Interpretation

According to survey, most of the librarians are of the age group of 18-22.

## Q2. Gender of the respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Female	17	54.8	54.8
	Male	14	45.2	45.2
	Total	31	100.0	100.0



### Analysis

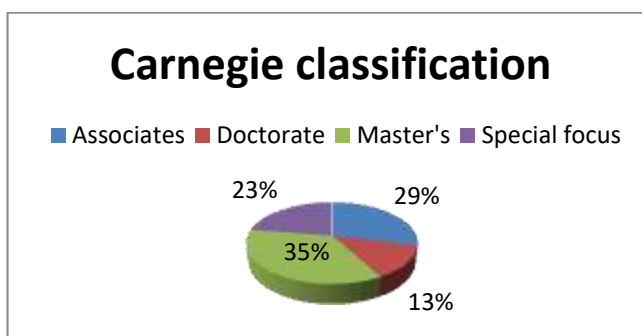
As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. IN survey 45% respondent were male respondent and 55% respondent were female.

### Interpretation

According to survey, most of the respondent were female.

## Q3. Carnegie classification

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Associates	9	29.0	29.0
	Doctorate	4	12.9	12.9
	Master's	11	35.5	35.5
	Special focus	7	22.6	22.6
	Total	31	100.0	100.0



### Analysis

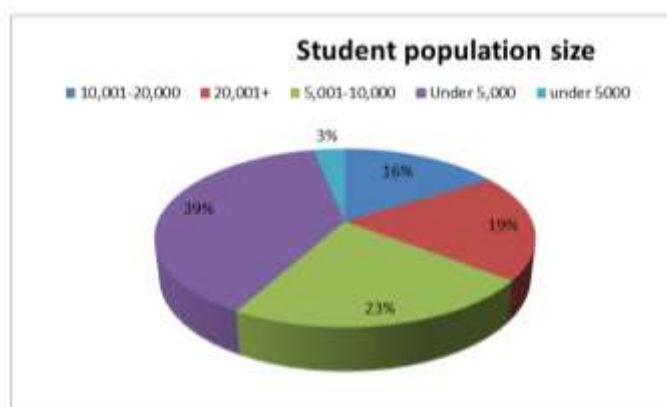
As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. IN survey 35% respondent were associates, 29% respondents were special focus oriented, 13% respondents were doctorate and 23% respondents were masters'.

### Interpretation

According to survey, most of the were master's.


## Q4. Student population size

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	10,001-20,000	5	16.1	16.1
	20,001+	6	19.4	19.4
	5,001-10,000	7	22.6	22.6
	Under 5,000	12	38.7	38.7
	under 5000	1	3.2	3.2
	Total	31	100.0	100.0



**Q5. Building status in initial stag**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Closed to patrons	12	38.7	38.7
	Open to patrons C	9	29.0	29.0
	Partially open (reduced hours/reduced space)	10	32.3	32.3
	Total	31	100.0	100.0


**Analysis**

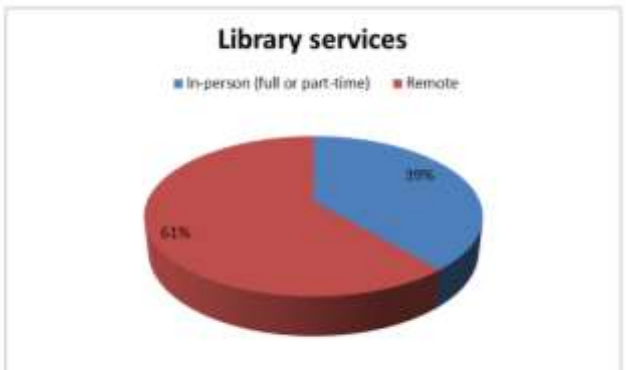
As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. IN survey 38.7% respondent said initially library is closed to patrons, 29% respondents were open to patrons C. 32.3% respondents said library was partially open.

**Interpretation**

According to survey, initially library was closed to patrons.

**Q6. Library services**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	In-person (full or part-time)	12	38.7	38.7
	Remote	19	61.3	61.3
	Total	31	100.0	100.0


**Analysis**

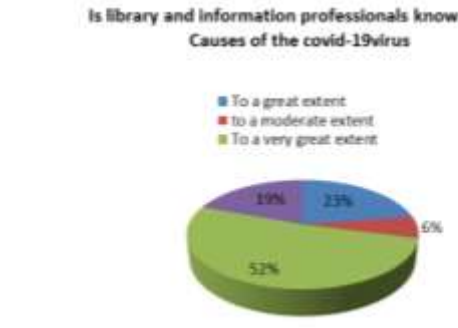
As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. IN survey 39% respondents said library services were in-person, while 61% respondents said library services were remote.

**Interpretation**

According to survey, library services were remote after the pandemic.

**Q7. Covid-19 information needs to know LIS professions****A. Causes of the covid-19virus**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
To a great extent	7	21.9	21.9
to a moderate extent	2	6.3	6.3
To a very great extent	16	50.0	50.0
To no extent	6	18.8	18.8
Total	32	100.0	100.0


**Analysis**

As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. In that we asked librarians about do they have knowledge about causes covid-19 virus. From that most of the respondents that is 50% respondents said it is necessary for library professionals to have great knowledge of causes covid-19 virus.

**Interpretation**

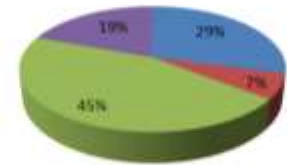
According to survey, library professionals should have great knowledge of causes covid-19 virus.

**Q7B. Symptoms of covid-19**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
To a great extent	9	28.1	28.1
to a moderate extent	2	6.3	6.3
To a very great extent	14	43.8	43.8
To no extent	6	18.8	18.8
Total	32	100.0	100.0

Is library and information professionals know a Causes of the covid-19 symptoms

■ To a great extent ■ to a moderate extent  
■ To a very great extent ■ To no extent

**Analysis**

As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. In that we asked librarians about do they have knowledge about covid -19 symptoms. From that most of the respondents that is 43.8% respondents said it is necessary for library professionals to have great knowledge of covid-19 symptoms

**Interpretation**

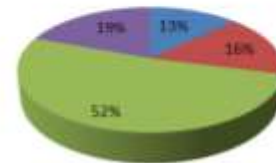
According to survey, library professionals should have great knowledge of covid-19 test symptoms.

**Q7C. Covid-19 test procedure**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
To a great extent	4	12.5	12.5
to a moderate extent	5	15.6	15.6
To a very great extent	16	50.0	50.0
To no extent	6	18.8	18.8
Total	32	100.0	100.0

Is library and information professionals know about Causes of the covid-19 test procedure

■ To a great extent ■ to a moderate extent  
■ To a very great extent ■ To no extent

**Analysis**

As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. In that we asked librarians about do they have knowledge about covid -19 test procedure. From that most of the respondents that is 50% respondents said it is necessary for library professionals to have great knowledge of covid-19 test procedure.

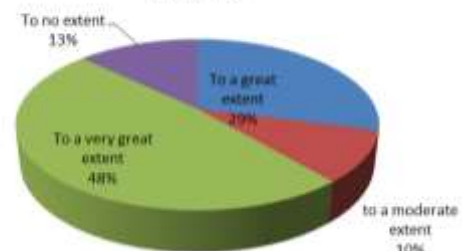
**Interpretation**

According to survey, library professionals should have great knowledge of covid-19 test procedure.

**Q7D. Staff safety when library eventually opens to user's community**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
To a great extent	9	28.1	28.1
to a moderate extent	3	9.4	9.4
To a very great extent	15	46.9	46.9
To no extent	4	12.5	12.5
Total	32	100.0	100.0

Staff safety when library eventually opens to user's community

**Analysis**

As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. In that we asked librarians about staff safety when library eventually opens to users community. From that most of the respondents that is 46.9% respondents said it is necessary to for librarians to take care of staff safety when library open to users community.

**Interpretation**

According to survey, library professionals should take care of staff safety when library open to users community.

#### Q7E.users safety when library eventually opens to user's community

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Pe
To a great extent	10	31.3	31.3
to a moderate extent	9	28.1	28.1
To a very great extent	2	6.3	6.3
To no extent	10	31.3	31.3
Total	32	100.0	100.0

users safety when library eventually opens to user's community

■ To a great extent ■ to a moderate extent  
■ To a very great extent ■ To no extent



#### Analysis

As shown in above graph, we have taken the responses of 31 librarians. In that we asked librarians about users safety when library eventually opens to users community. From that most of the respondents that is 31.3 respondents said it is necessary for librarians to take care of users safety when library open to users community.

#### Interpretation

According to survey, library professionals should take care of users' safety when library open to users community.

#### FINDINGS

Currently, Library Professionals are doing a variety of integrated/multiple tasks in addition to their conventional employment. During the lockdown time, we may supply e-resources using new technology or tools.

Library professionals all across the globe are realising the need of transitioning from conventional practise to multidimensional responsibilities. As a consequence, Library Professionals are now performing multidimensional and flexible roles in order to satisfy the need and expectations of societies, organisations, institutions, libraries, and so on, and this is a requirement of the current scenario in Covid19.

- Most of the librarians are of the age group of 18-22.
- Most of the respondent was male.
- Most of the were master's.
- Initially library was closed to patrons.
- Library services were remote after the pandemic
- library professionals should have great knowledge of causes covid-19 virus.
- library professionals should have great knowledge of covid-19 test symptoms.
- library professionals should have great knowledge of covid-19 test procedure.
- library professionals should take care of staff safety when library open to users community.
- library professionals should take care of users' safety when library open to users community.

In the event of a pandemic, a digital platform is the most effective approach to serve the whole population.

#### CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 epidemic is having a tremendous influence on governments, organisations, and people all around the globe, including libraries/librarians. Libraries of all kinds and varieties throughout the globe are working hard to help lessen the effects of the unique COVID-19 epidemic. As a result, they have created additional programmes, resources, and services. Libraries help research and medial scientists by offering legitimate news sources, databases, and linkages. They are developing specific programmes and activities like as virtual story-telling and digital content, they are more lenient with item return deadlines, and they have a variety of efforts to collect and conserve pandemic-related things.

Library Professionals must do all in this Covid19 epidemic emergency. Easy access to information is a fundamental condition, since it is required for the massive demands of all possible consumers. The user's future demand is for digital platforms for education. In a pandemic crisis, a digital library is in high need. In this case, library personnel may assist as stress relievers. Library and information workers must be prepared to address the needs of readers, whether for COVID 19 or any other pandemic crisis. The only method to prevent the spread of this virus COVID 19 from one person to another is via social distance. The



social obligation of library professionals is to provide users with access to information. In a pandemic crisis, the need for information is also growing.

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