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# **Impact of Corona Virus on Knowledge Service Centers in West Bengal**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose :** The significance of this article is to know about the existing situations of the different libraries and information centers in West Bengal and to understand the changing initiatives taken by those libraries to serve the purpose of the users and to motivate them to use library resources and for that provide remote access to Electronic Resources available through their library and information centers at anywhere any time.

**Methodology:** Questionnaires were prepared online by using Google Form and were distributed among different library professionals throughout West Bengal by using e-mails and different social networking sites and snowball sampling method is used for data collection. After returning the filled questionnaires, the data were analyzed by using graphical presentation method.

**Findings :** The crisis situation during COVID-19 period leads to the development of more and more virtual libraries. The libraries are serving online information services as per the user's requirements. The library professionals have taken different initiatives to solve the requirements of the users of the libraries. Among them most recent and very useful is organizing the online lectures through online meeting platforms for the users.

**Value :** The study has drawn the picture of the virtualization of different libraries. Library is the gateway of various learning resources, but in the hard condition of lockdown period it is not possible for the users to physically visit in the library and access library documents, the librarians come forward and do all the necessary activities to serve the users require services.

**Keywords:** Corona Virus, COVID-19, Electronic Resources, Library, Services, Users

## **1. Introduction**

Every academicians are growing their timeline by practicing knowledges and information through access of learning resources from information centers. Libraries are the gateway of information where users can able to access the true source of information and be sure that these information are reliable. During the tough period of lockdown most libraries are completely closed for the users. But the library professionals have developed a new and different way of providing their library services and support the users. Libraries have an important role to support users in finding their required resources and to pick up new knowledge and skills. When people are under social distancing, they need continuous access of some interesting and useful online documents to solve their different purposes. To fulfill these needs of the users, libraries have to provide remote access of electronic resources and online databases. Libraries are one of the most trusted place from where users can able to fulfill all of their queries and to find suitable information and supportive resources. In this connection library professionals are trying to provide online reference services for their users. With the advent of internet, this process of resource sharing becomes easier for the library professionals and the library users. During the COVID-19 outbreak library professionals can able to use this internet and make their library virtual. The library professional are always tries to reaching users by the fulfillment of their requirements through various initiatives. The communication process is very important in this situation to providing information services. The library professionals are using social networking platforms for providing information sharing and knowledge services for the users. In this way, the library professionals continue to provide library services by fighting difficult situations and maintaining their own existence.

## **2. Objectives of the Study:**

The main objectives of this survey include –

- a) To visualize the current scenario of different libraries in West Bengal during the lockdown period.
- b) To know about the initiatives taken by those libraries to serve the purpose of the users through remote access.
- c) To understand about different authentic ways taken by libraries to provide their services.
- d) To make aware the society about the importance and usefulness of library services.
- e) To find out the role of library professionals and observed their activities for the users.

## **3. Literature Review:**

The corona virus has affected live of people all over the world. It has changed people's daily life, work, education system etc. At present, a generation has to face the evils of this atrocity. Every human being has to struggle to survive through various problems. Even in these bad times,

professional people have to work, students have to continue their studies, government restrictions have to be complied with, people have to overcome all obstacles with the help of technology. The disease first appeared in Wuhan, China in December 2019, when the WHO officially announced on February 11 that it was the 2019-nCoV (COVID-19) which is also known as Coronavirus Disease. Which is now spread all over the world.

Sun et al,2020 discussed the characteristics of coronavirus spreads easily from one person to another, making it mandatory for everyone to be aware and abide by Corona restrictions. Although almost a year has passed, no cure has been found for the virus.(Wu et al., 2020).

At the moment, various educational institutions have made arrangements to conduct their courses online. With the help of which the library service has undergone a radical change. Digital management services has been accompanied by various online meeting platforms, social media, online databases etc. Libraries in different level collaborate with the other support agencies and organizations to overcome the tough situations after disaster (Featherstone et al., 2008).

According to Featherstone et al.(2012), Library professionals have moved towards the use of various information technologies and instruments for proper planning, action and implementation as a pillar of library services.

The novel corona virus became a worldwide pandemic situation. This infectious virus changed the working system from tradition to online because of the world wide lockdown. It also teaches that positive attitude, faith and hard work are the important tools of life to fight against the pandemic situation (Bilawar, 2020).

In higher education system libraries and resource centers are suggested to organized various types of learning activities programmes, virtual workshops, online webinars on library and information science area and their specializations to enhance their modern skills and knowledges on the present digital age. Ishtiaq et al., (2020) described different services, skills, instructional, and training programs being provided by twenty nine library and information centers from different sector colleges and university organizations of Sindh Province, Pakistan during the period of the pandemic situation. They also highlighted the contributions of those university libraries for dissemination and mobilization of information during this emergency.

Libraries have a critical role to play regarding information dissemination during public health emergencies such as COVID-19. Mobile technology devices such as cell phone, smartphones, smart watches, laptops, net book, etc can be used to effectively deliver information on COVID-19 to library users in Nigeria(Victoria, 2020).Additionally, facilitating conditions such as access to Internet connectivity, ownership of mobile technology device, ability to operate mobile technology devices, as well as capacity to make provision for alternative Internet access determine the utilization of mobile technology for receiving information on COVID-19 through libraries among users in Nigeria.

#### **4. Pandemics in India:**

Our world is experienced once in every 100 years a devastating pandemic which kills a huge number of people. As a result of these diseases economy collapses, civilizations ends, thousands of people die, it becomes very challenging to the ruling governments to control the pandemic situation across the world. Plague came in 1720 then we fought with Cholera in 1820 and the Spanish Flu came in 1920 and Finally the Corona virus spread in 2020 in India.

Plague (1720-1723) –The disease started transmitting in Marseille of France and called as ‘The Great Plague of Marseille’. According to the researchers, about 30% of the population of Marseille has disappeared because of the Plague(Devaux, 2013).

Cholera (1817-1824) –It is also called as Asiatic Cholera. This disease first started in Kolkata and spread over south-east Asia, middle-east and eastern Africa and Mediterranean coast. Nearly every Asian country was affected by this pandemic. The main cause of this epidemic is the use of water from lakes over-whelmed with these killer Cholera bacteria (Mandal, 2011).

Spanish Flu (1918-1920) –It is the deadliest influenza pandemic, recorded officially in history. Many indigenous communities were extinct by this pandemic (Taubenberger, 2006).

Corona (2019-2020) –COVID-19 is the recent infectious pandemic caused by the corona virus and affected globally. This disease have started from Wuhan, China and spread all over the world. The virus was first unknown to all (Singhal, 2020).

#### **5. A Review of COVID-19:**

Corona virus is a new born respiratory virus which caused acute pneumonia. This virus can spread among people through saliva fall on the surfaces of the objects around the person. When healthy person touch the surfaces of the objects and then touch their ear, eyes, nose or mouth, then the corona virus can be affect them and spread(Sun et al., 2020). Children under the age group of 10 years and old people above the age group of 60 years are more prone to corona virus. The different symptoms of COVID-19 determined by the medical professionals; i.e-Mild to high respiratory trouble, fever, dry cough, breathing problem, tiredness, diarrhea, tiredness, aches and pains, conjunctivitis, chest pain, loss of speech and movement, rash on skin, loss of taste and smell etc.

Following are some of the protective measures against COVID-19:

- a) Clean your hands regularly by using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.
- b) Maintain a safe distance from other people suffering from cough or sneeze.
- c) Stay at home if you are feeling not well.
- d) Do not touch your eyes, nose, ear or mouth without washing hands properly.

- e) Cover your face organs with a clear cloths or your bent elbow whenever you cough or sneeze and ruin the tissue in a closed dustbin without touching it.
- f) Always disinfect your frequently touched substances.

A candidate vaccine is still under research and development. So your safety measures are the best way to avoid this virus and live safe and healthy.

## **6. Role of LIS Professionals to Make Aware their Users about the New Services Being Offered:**

The library professionals are providing learning support services in this pandemic situation taking through various initiatives (Mestri, 2020).The role of library professionals to serve the library users during COVID-19 lockdown period are as follows –

- a) Understand the COVID-19 and its spread
- b) Manage different approaches to restrictions
- c) Stay safe at home and work
- d) Provide remote services
- e) Redirect library resources
- f) Aware users about the pandemic impacts by authentic and authoritative sources
- g) Make awareness of the users about false data and fake news
- h) Many publishers have extended free access of e-books, online journals and databases during COVID period
- i) Newspapers are freely available in PDF format by the publishers
- j) Ministry of Human Resource Development provides electronic educational resources through NDL, INFLIBNET, and CEC etc.
- k) Publishers of digital educational materials have offered free access to student
- l) Remote access to library resources
- m) Plugging of digital divide
- n) Extension of free internet access
- o) Online information literacy program
- p) Community information services
- q) Services of MOOCs, NDL, e-PG Pathshala, eGyanKosh

## **7. Human Resource:**

The most important key feature of the success of any library is its human resource, especially the position and the skill of the librarian. A key resource is capable of making the best use of other resources of the library for converting capital into performance. Development of human resource means self development and institutional development (Ishtiaq et al., 2020). The importance of training the staffs of library includes –

- a) Training for suitable metadata creation.

- b) Training for public relation or outreach activities.
- c) Training for ICT application.
- d) Training for a particular group in presence of a facilitator. This group should be homogeneous.

### **8. Communication Skills:**

Communication Skill is the most important and necessary for well development of online library services in the situation of lockdown. Through communication library professionals can stay in touch, bridge the gap, build trust, monitor performance and talk with the user of libraries. Proper communication helps in controlling the conflicts and improving the coordination within a group of users. Thus, library and information science professional must have good communication skill. In our present world, social media is the dominating way of communication (Bhati & Kumar, 2020).

### **9. Personal Skills:**

A good quality of personal skill consists of creative thinking, quick decisions taking, self assessment, confidence, social responsibility, and ethics.

- a) Vision, creativity and innovation
- b) Flexibility and adaptability
- c) Effective communication skills
- d) Positive attitude
- e) Leadership, teamwork and advocacy
- f) Managerial, marketing and motivational skills
- g) Desire to seek opportunities for ongoing learning
- h) Collaboration and professional networking

### **10. Changing the Thought about Library Space:**

- a) Library spaces need to be modifying into technologically sound places like virtual classrooms, internet access, and online education.
- b) Book clubs, workshops and other group meetings.
- c) Space for media production studio, maker-spaces, MOOCs study spaces and other areas for conducting virtual workshops.
- d) Student-centered active learning workspaces where learners engage in discussion and problem solving.
- e) Libraries should increase the levels of social and cultural interaction to develop a sense of belonging within a community.
- f) Develop work from home culture.
- g) Off-campus access to library resources.
- h) Provide free high speed Wi-Fi.

- i) Outreach activities like social media, webinar, and website update.
- j) Online meetings, online transmission of notes and papers.
- k) Online information support system.

### 11. Research Methodology:

An online questionnaire was prepared by using Google Form application. This questionnaire was distributed through e-mails and different social networking sites among different government library professionals. The filled questionnaires were returned by the library professionals. Their responses were analyzed and the survey was concluded. Snowball sampling method is used for data collection.

### 12. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

In the complicated situation of COVID-19, it is not possible by the users to visit any library physically. So some libraries are trying to provide their library access virtually.

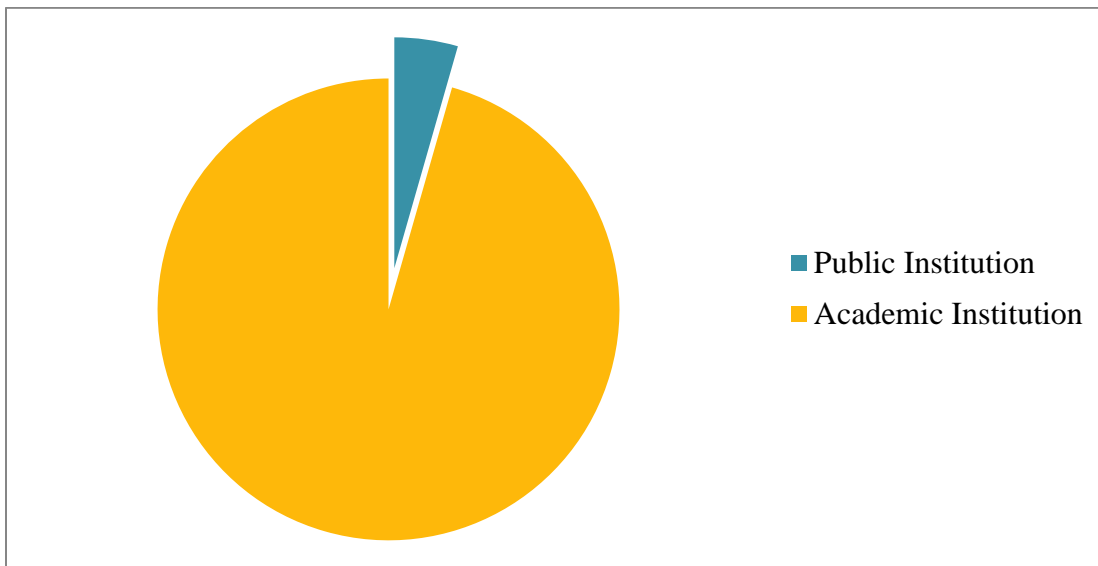


Figure 1: Type of Institution

Figure 1 shows that about 95.55% of academic libraries have taken the initiative to provide library services online in this lockdown period, whereas in case of public libraries, the percentage is only 4.44%.



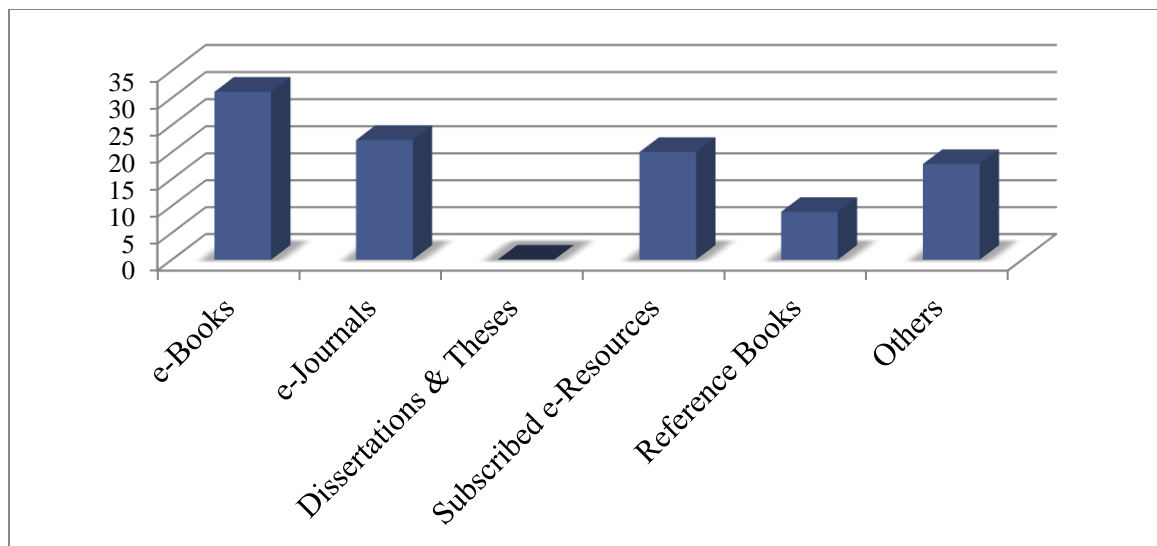


Figure 2: Type of Documents Provided

Figure 2 shows different types of services provided by the libraries. 31.11% libraries are providing eBooks, 22.22% libraries are providing e-journals, 20% libraries are providing subscribed e-resources and 8.89% libraries are providing reference books.

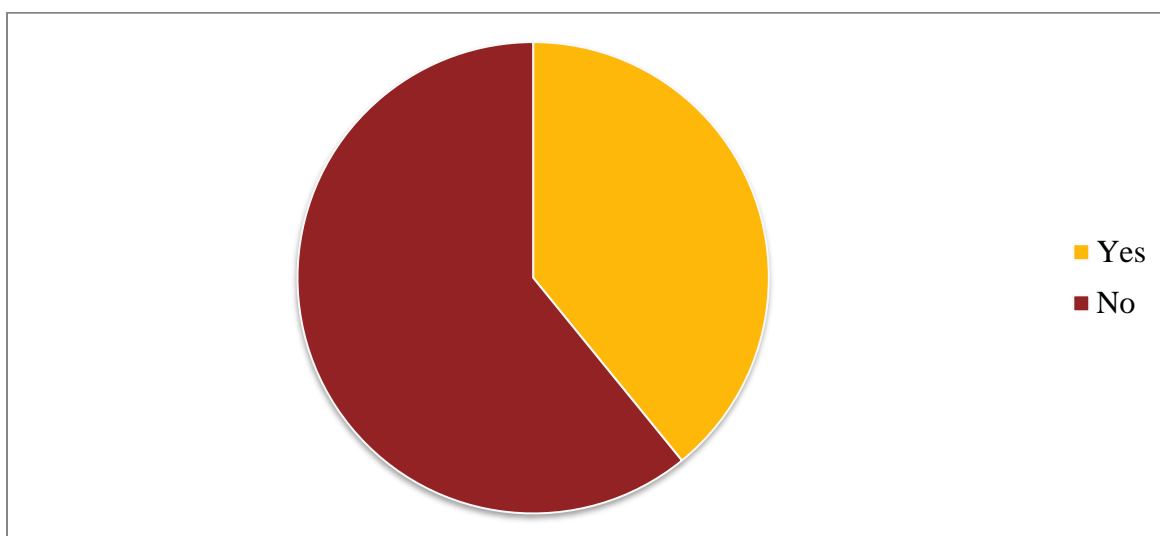


Figure 3: Sharing of Information Service through Bulk-SMS

Figure 3 shows that only few libraries (42.86%) used bulk-sms sending service to share information. Rest of 66.67% libraries has not used this bulk-sms service for providing their information services.

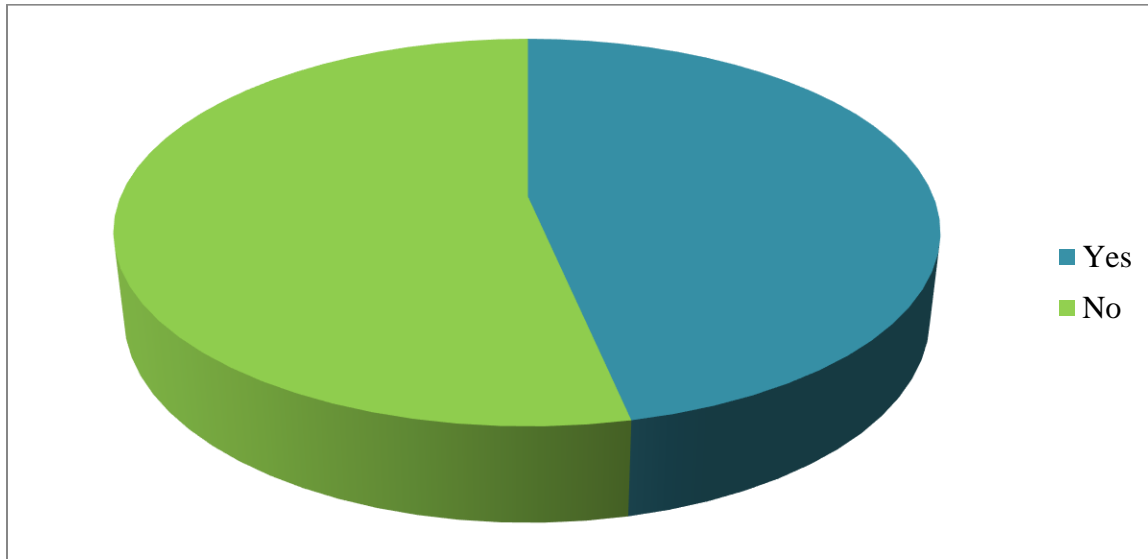


Figure 4: Sharing of Information through Social Networking Sites

Figure 4 shows that 46.67% libraries have shared their information by using social networking site, whereas 53.33% libraries have not shared their information through social networking portals.

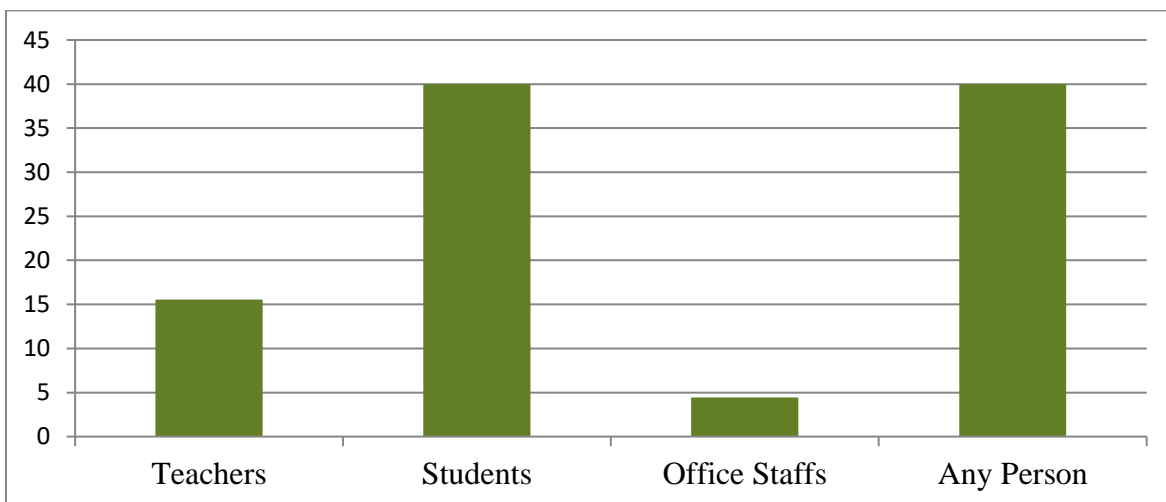


Figure 5: Person to take Library Services

Figure 5 shows that 40% libraries are providing teachers, students, research scholars and office staffs their library facilities, whereas other 40% libraries are allowing only students to

take the opportunity of using library services. The rest 7% libraries are permitting only teachers to use their library services.

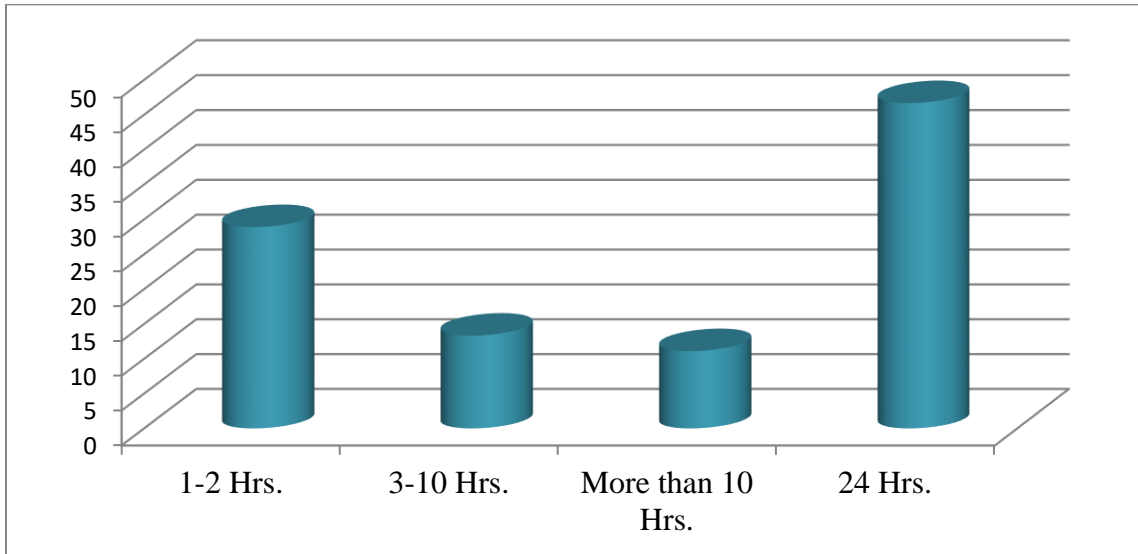


Figure 6: Library Service Using Hours

Most of the libraries (46.67%) provides their online library using facility 24 hours per day. 28.89% and 13.33% libraries are providing their library using facilities for 1 to 2 hours and 3 to 10 hours per day respectively (Figure 6)

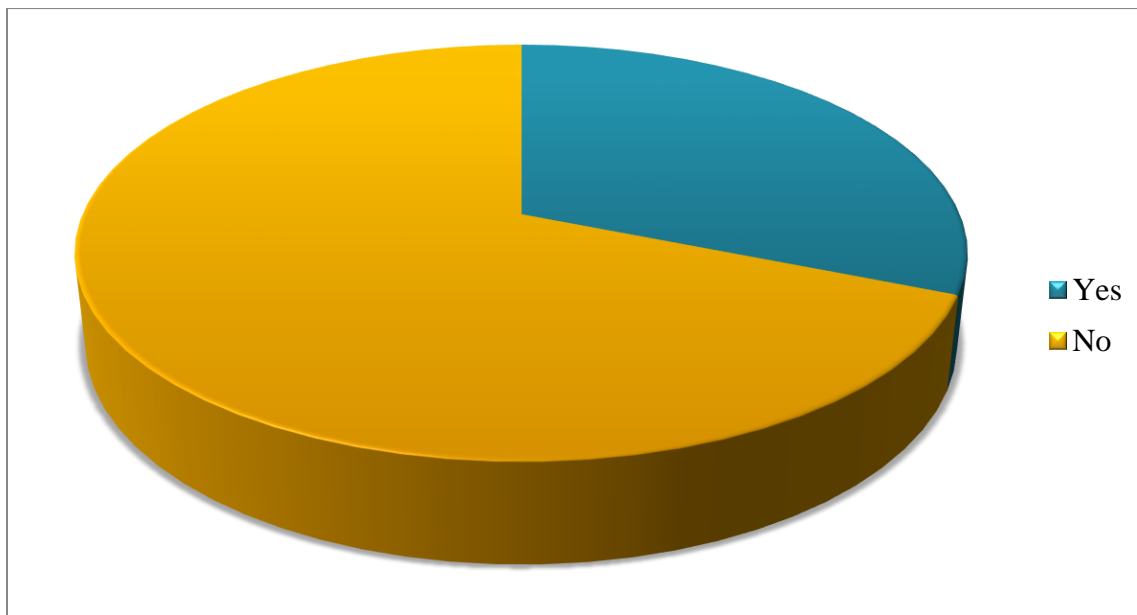


Figure 7: Organization of Webinar by Libraries

From Figure 7 we can able to see that only 31.11% libraries have organized webinar by their own initiative. But 68.89% libraries have not taken this initiative to organize a webinar. That means webinar is still now not become popular within library services.

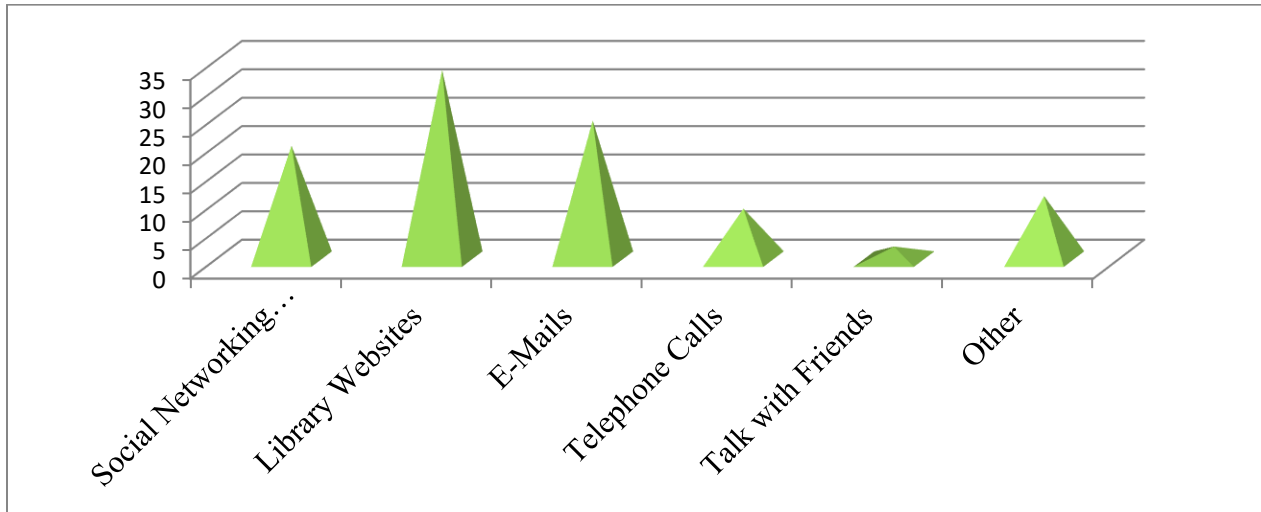


Figure 8: Way of Communication with Users

Library Websites (33.33%) and emails (24.44%) are the most popular way of communication with the library users. Other ways of communication includes social networking sites (20%) and telephone calls (8.89%), which we can see in Figure 8.

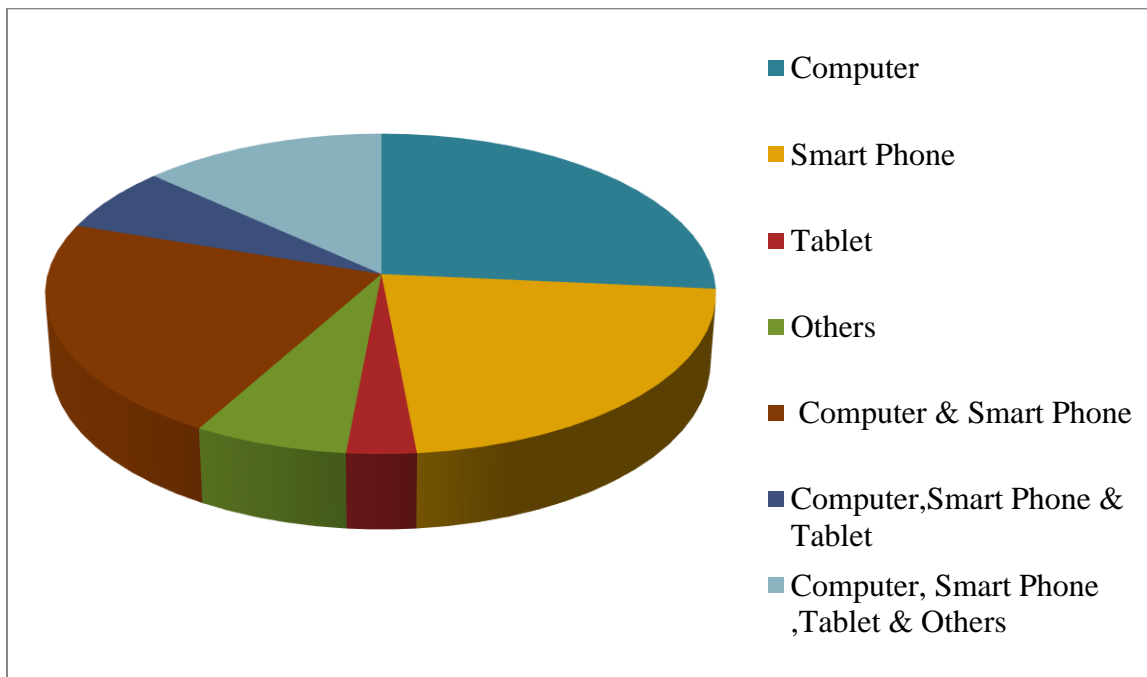


Figure 9: Library Service Accessing Devices

From Figure 9 we can see that the most popular device for online library service access is computer (26.67%), whereas 22.22% users can avail virtual library service through both computer and smart phone. The other popularly used device is tablet.



Figure 10: Responses of Users

Figure 10 shows that 44.44% users responded good in using online services of libraries during this lockdown period, 26.67% user's responses are satisfactory. Only 6.67% users are not satisfied by online services provided by the libraries.

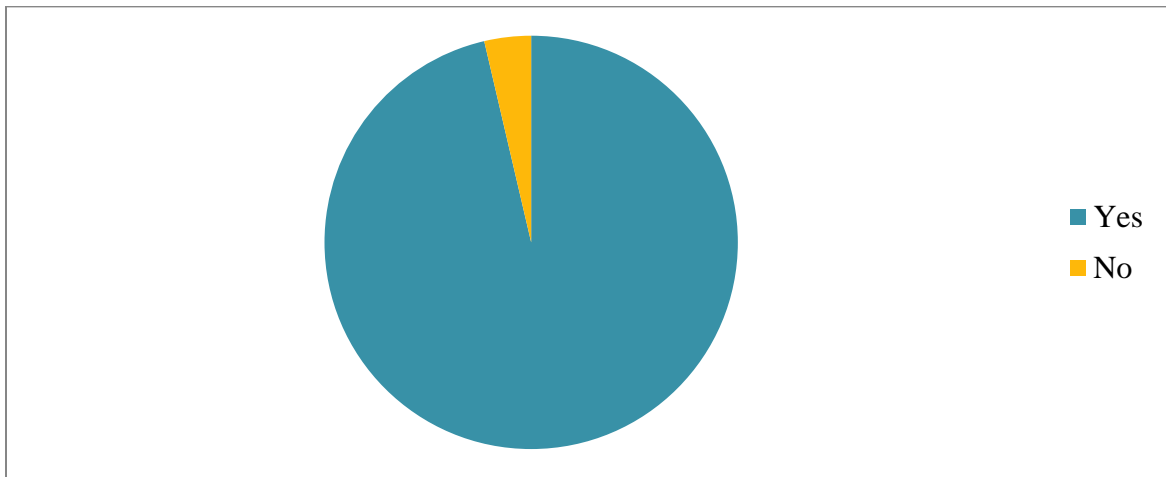


Figure 11: Plans of Libraries to Offer Remote Services

From Figure 11 it is seen that 84.44% libraries are planning to offer remote access discovery services like WebOPAC, e-circulation, e-learning or assist to virtual mode teaching. But other 15.56% libraries do not have such plans.

Apart from the above mentioned services different libraries are providing different kinds of library services which can differ from library to library. A list of those services are provided below –

- a) Sample question papers for online examinations
- b) E-library
- c) Database service
- d) Newspaper clips
- e) Providing services to students using social media
- f) COVID-19 awareness programmes
- g) Access to eBooks, thesis and dissertation. Own subscribed and open source resources, product presentation
- h) Web link to participate different types of competition
- i) Upgrade library system
- j) E-papers and subscribed e-journals
- k) Registration to online courses and webinars as and when demanded by the students and teachers
- l) Document sharing
- m) Question paper and book scan
- n) Creating of an app to provide service 24hours
- o) Online motivational classes
- p) Organize online activities like quiz
- q) Video lecture and practical classes
- r) E-document delivery via WhatsApp or Telegram groups
- s) Remote access to various business e-databases

### **13. Conclusion:**

A close interaction with specialist users and academic staff and regular users of a library strengthen the level of knowledge and skill of a librarian. A librarian has to be well informed about

the information seeking behavior of the online library users. A librarian has to learn about different government generated information system and services to serve the library users with appropriate documents in a easiest and time saving way. The main reference desk or the service points should be developed by a senior library professional with sufficient knowledge of the collection of the library to make the service more accurate during the lockdown period. The COVID-19 situation may lead to the development of a new cooperative behaviour and create a new well developed virtual library. Library and information science professionals may accordingly work to create a national standard for information resources, local, state and national level structure of information system. Current crisis during lockdown period is able to focus the mind of library professionals to launch a new information service system as per the requirements of library users.

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