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E-services & e-resources in pandemic COVID-19: A case study of GIFT University Library

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Abstract

Purpose – The goal of this research aims to explain how a university library handled the epidemic -19 that began in March 2020. This research examines the library's state throughout the dilemma and shows how the epidemic has posed unexpected hurdles to digital services. It also clarifies why the beginning of 23 March 2020, the library has converted some existing services to an electronic format and investigates various programmes and practices to assist with all aspects of the university's online learning and teaching.

Design/methodology/approach – During the COVID-19 epidemic, Many of the libraries' digital resources were employed to address the needs of their patrons. The methodologies employed were the author's own experiences working in an academic library, monitoring of the library's responses to the library's digital services and comments on what can be reviewed for development now and in the future. It stresses the establishment of plans and better practices for electronic library resources and services in the event of a public health emergency

Findings/Purpose –The purpose of this study is to enlighten the efforts of libraries of various universities to provide online services to their students and faculty during the epidemic. This article also revealed the issues faced by the library personnel and professionals during the provision of services while operating from home or distantly.

Originality/value –This report is highly helpful in giving insight with better practical suggestions for other libraries dealing with similar challenges and providing electronic library materials and services in the aftermath of an international health catastrophe**.**

Keywords-Covid-19 epidemic, Digital resources, Academic library resources and services, GIFT University Library

Paper type: A case study

Introduction:

Mohan and Vinod (2020) identified the Covid-19 pandemic as a new disease discovered on December 31, 2019, in China. There were a number of symptoms like high temperature, coughing, breathing problems and extreme exhaustion from the virus, which has a fatality rate that is many times more as compared to seasonal flu. It was a rapidly spreading global pandemic. The virus has infected a number of countries including Pakistan. WHO advised societal separation in 2020, lockdown, isolation, or quarantine due to the pandemic. Life had changed dramatically as a result of this unexpected tragedy. In the interest of human safety, the schools, colleges and educational institutes were all shuttered and all human activities were halted (Ayeni et al., 2021). On February 26, 2020, Pakistan saw its first case of coronavirus, which immediately swept across the country (Ilyas et al., 2020). Libraries, among other academic institutions, were targeted to shut down on March 14, 2020, as a result of national health committee verdicts and orders. (Dawn, 2020). Students, instructors and employees were encouraged to study and practice work from home methods. Most academic organizations including university libraries made online courses and seminars a new norm. The Pakistani Higher Education Commission (HEC) gave the directive to all affiliated academic institutions to develop and prepare online guidelines, infrastructure and learning management systems. For the entire learning community involved in higher education, the transformation was rapid and abrupt. Institutions welcomed open-source and commercially available software, which is still being investigated based on available financial resources and technology (Iqbal & Younas, 2021). Academic libraries being the heart of the universities were also under pressure to find new ways to support services. The libraries started work in many new directions which included the establishment of learning spaces, standards for operating procedures and the formation of rules and regulations for the staff with the new concept of working from home. Making policies and policies and SOPs with respect to overall institutional SOPs was a critical matter for the library employees as libraries are at the heart of academic institutions. Private as well as public colleges and universities discouraged the students to come on campus to take in-person sessions and switched to online learning (Ahmed & Merchant, 2021). To control the spread of the COVID-19 virus, several colleges and universities were compelled to close and switch to

online learning within weeks. This created a problem not only for the libraries to continue their routine services but teachers and students also faced a problem in utilizing online services.

During the shutdown educational institutions around the world shifted to online courses and used remote learning methods. Pakistan has attempted to adopt remote learning technologies in order to move the educational system online. University libraries played a critical role in offering better services to their users throughout the pandemic crisis including online access to reliable information and instructional guidance. Libraries, in developing countries particularly in Pakistan, are known for traditional knowledge.

Pakistani universities up-hold international academic principles and standards as well as updated their services skills and resources by utilizing the most current network which allows users to access library resources from their offices and homes, regardless of whether the library is physically open or not.

GIFT University was founded in 2002 with the goal of bringing about a noticeable change in society by providing superior education to Gujranwala's young. GIFT University is one of Gujranwala's first state-run universities, with the best contemporary campus extending over 320 kanals and a marvellous comprehensive university offering professional and liberal art degrees. It is a vast university in Gujranwala's region. GIFT enrolled about 6,000 full and part-time graduate, and undergraduate students in the fall 2019–2020 academic year according to Institutional Research figures. The university has the most degree programs available. The university's vast information technology and distance education resources are well-known. In 2002, the university library opened its doors. Faculty and scholars can use the library's services such as the library discussion room and research area. There are around 300 seats available in the library. For GIFT teachers, students, and staff, the library provides access to electronic databases in a variety of fields. Through DDS, GIFT Library offers a variety of services and resources. The GU Library has just constructed a Digital Finishing Corner for the GIFT Community In the finishing department there is a scanner, a digital punching machine, a digital sharpener, and all stationary. The prime concern of the distance learning library services is to facilitate students' instructors and staff with library materials and services. For the GIFT community, the GIFT university library provided a wealth of resources and services. Off-campus services ~~at~~ of the library included borrowing

privileges for students, as well as reference services, database access, research journals, magazines, and print circulation and delivery to the user's home.

Mohammadi and Yegane (2018) investigated the benefits and drawbacks of the internet in libraries for their research. Through technological information resources, the libraries' services shifted and converted into new designs as per the need of the hour like collection management, online services, gathering, analysis, data storage and sharing etc. New technology can assist libraries in improving their services and increasing their patronage and client satisfaction.

Challenges

During the present public health crisis, GU devised a short-term telecommuting strategy as a viable choice for employees. This website contains all pertinent information about the library's current action and response to the pandemic outbreak, as well as remote service access and other useful links. Following the GOVT's edict that all "non-life-sustaining" companies close physical sites to slow the spread of COVID-19, the Library was closed. The GU Library started webs based on services & resources. The GIFT University Library's vigorous authoritative online information resources include journal articles, e-books, and online databases from anywhere (off-campus) at any time. For more information or assistance, contact could be done through a phone, email, live chat, Facebook or phone, or WhatsApp and email.

There were a number of challenges faced by library staff which are as follows;

Challenges for library staff in a situation of working from home

Students, teachers and staff at most academic institutions, including university libraries, were required to learn/work from home. Online classes and courses quickly established themselves as the new standard for teaching and learning. The Higher Education Commission also issued standards in terms of online readiness and learning management systems to gain access to enabling student readiness and lab use (Ahmed & Merchant, 2021). Some library employees who were deemed necessary and willing to work were allowed to work at the library physically. They maintained a social distance and took extra precautions including wearing masks and gloves to protect their hygiene the library's holdings and the patrons as well as quarantining the items they handled.

Telecommunicating is the last option for library employees who are unprepared for quick change. Working from home involves the use of a computer; while few library staff had to wait for a

computer to be loaned from the library. Wi-Fi usage at home became limited due to the sharing of the same internet connection among many family members (Mehta & Wang, 2020).

They've had to deal with a variety of concerns, including infrastructure setup, internet connectivity, database access from home, print and copying issues.

Challenges for digital library services and users

Dissatisfaction with library services has been expressed by faculty and students. Two of the most regularly asked questions were how to renew your check-out items and where to return them. While some digital services may not require the assistance of library staff. Bibliographic instructions (BI), reference services, electronic resource accessible use and other digital creativity are among the available services.

Observations and experiences on the library's digital services

Not only has the pandemic changed online higher education teaching, but it has also changed the way ~~how~~ academic library services were delivered via the internet. To address the pandemic's need for library services, all librarians looked into ways to quickly told clients about new library services (Sukendro et al., 2020). Simultaneously, the library had been keenly marketing changes to library services for both students and instructors via social media, email and online public notice platforms. Digital library services and library employees have been hampered by the global epidemic.

The GFIT University community/users have access to the following services of the digital library.

Reference services

There seems to be that undergraduate students require the library to aid in terms of choosing and assessing assets, including using information morally one of the key techniques of research (Riehman-Murphy & Hunter, 2019). There are several reference services introduced and provided by the GIFT University library like e-books, articles, thesis, scanning, plagiarism detections, reference writing, circulation, DDS, TOCs etc. There are more than 50 online sessions (about searching online material, google advance searching, databases searching, subscribed resources and available resources access from home) conducted by the library during the pandemic break and the library got 100% readiness marks from the higher education commission report. ***Figure 1*** shows the details of GIFT university library introducing all mediums and channels that can be used to get help from the library

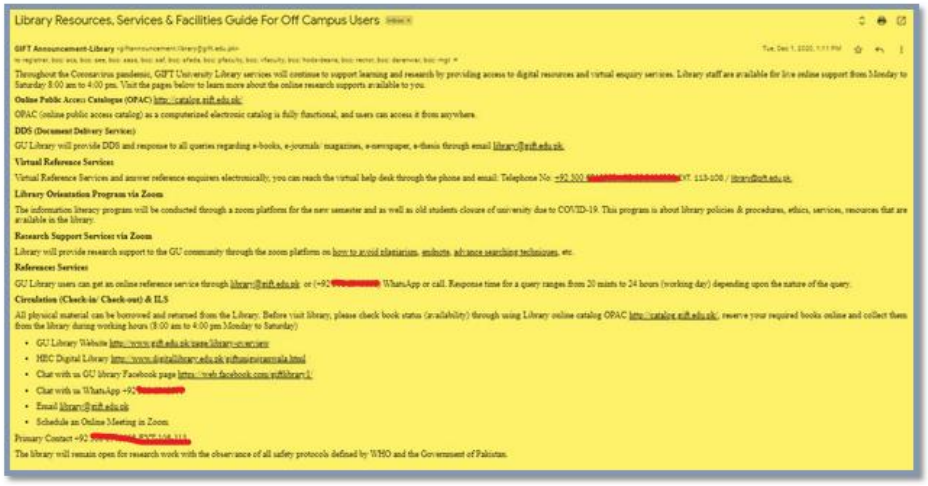


Figure 1 *Library e-resources, and e-services for off-campus users*

Providing electronic resources (e-resources)

Electronic items made up such a large part of the collection that the library had consumed an important chunk of the library's budget on subscriptions. Licensed databases, journals, e-books, video streaming and documentaries as well as some open-access online resources are the most frequent e-resources. During pandemics, the library's numerous search systems are easily accessible to end-users via the internet. The pandemic presented a great prospect to market e-resources to library visitors, especially undergraduate students who rely on Google for all of their course study and research requirements. Meanwhile, off-campus was the only way to get access to library online databases.

Support from the international publisher's **Figures 2 to 5** show details that during that pandemic a large amount of literature had grown up. There are many leading publishers like Emerald,

ProQuest, ASTM, Elsevier, Wiley, OVID and more that provided free access to their resources and librarians share information with their researchers.

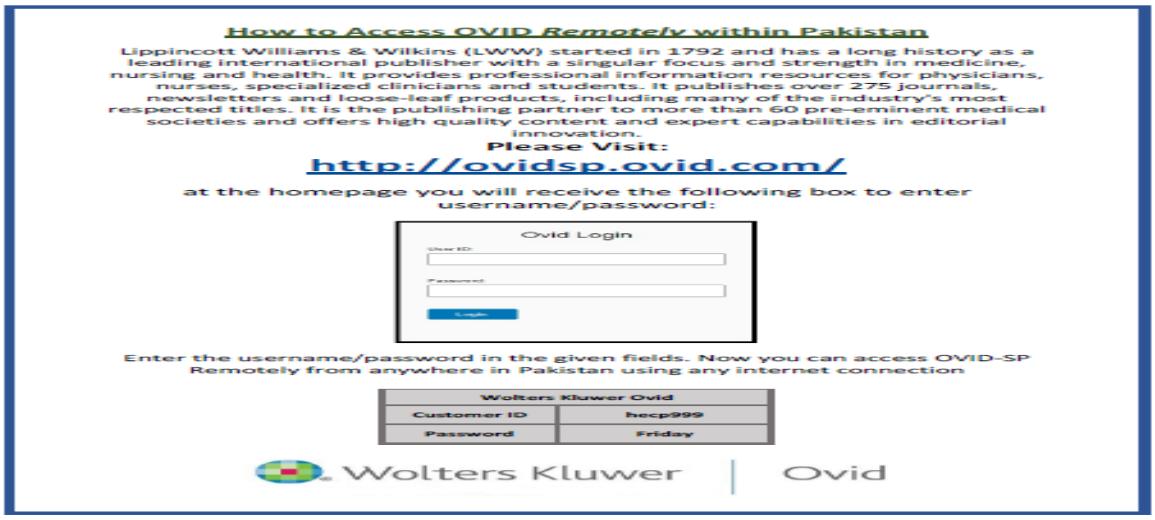


Figure 2 *Wolters Kluwer Support during COVID-19*

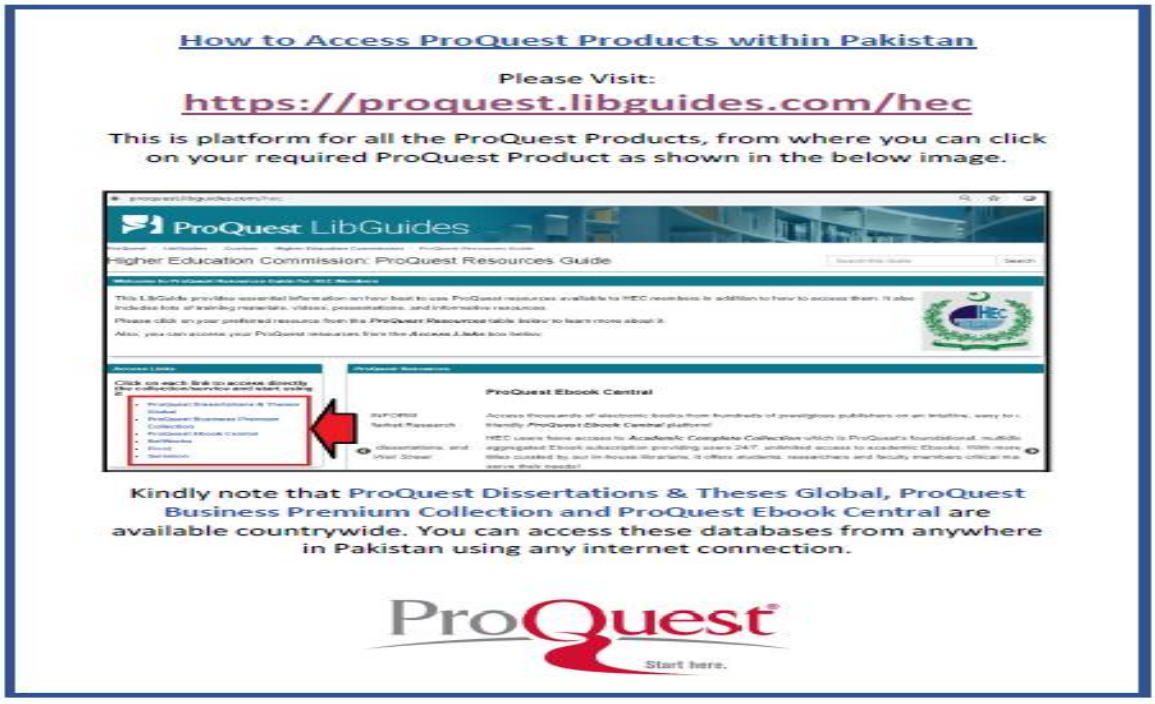


Figure 3 *ProQuest Support during COVID-19*

Figures 4 *ASTM Support during COVID-19*

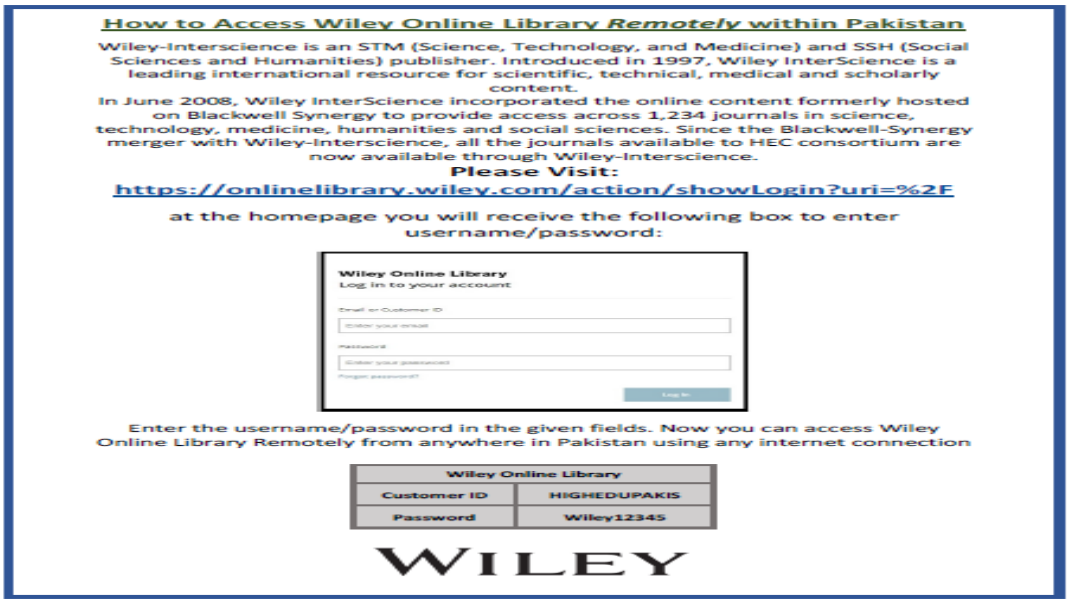


Figure 5 *Wiley Support during COVID-19*

On the other hand to give awareness and informative resources the GOVT of Pakistan has created a website http://www.covid.gov.pk/ to save people from shared information (Ali & Gatiti, 2020).

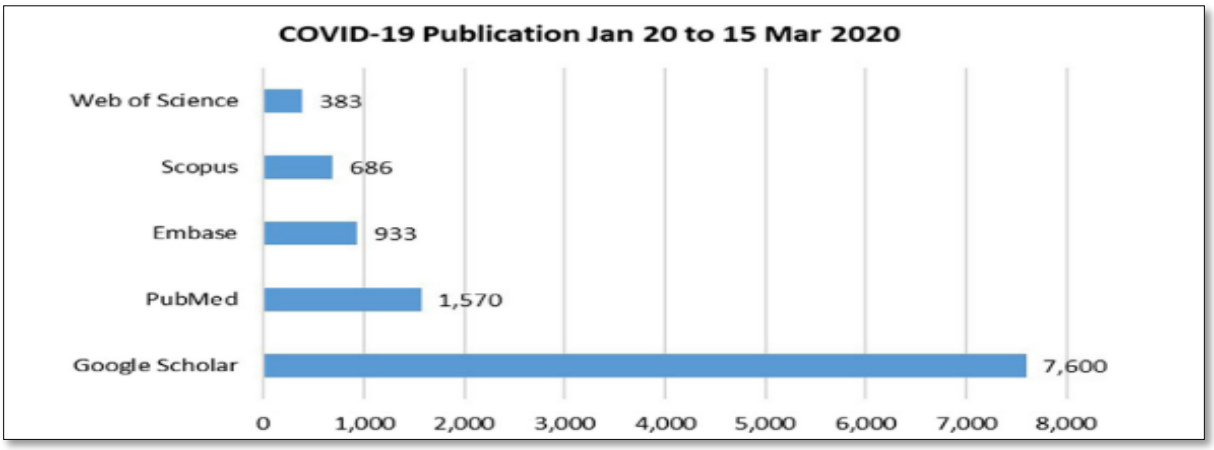
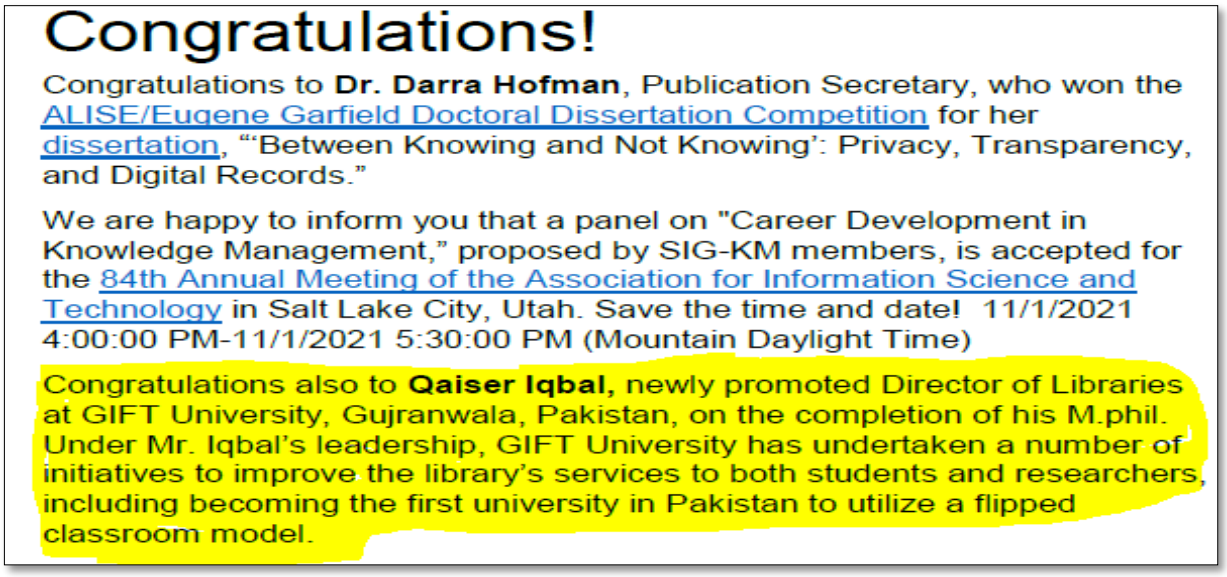


Figure 6 *COVID-19 Publications*

According to Ali & Gatiti (2020) “COVID-19 Publication, January 20, 2020– March 15, 2020, derived from various search engines and databases. Source: Chiara Formigoni (2020) [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com ”

Introduced New Hybrid Learning Model “Flipped Classroom Model”

The University library took lead and introduced "Flipped Classroom" a hybrid learning model first time in Pakistan. GU library has arranged a series of sessions with all schools/departments faculty successful and trained faculty and management to adopt this model. The successful application story was coved in an international magazine "ASIS&T SIG-KM, In the Know in Knowledge Management, Volume 1, Issue 2 Summer 2021” (Islam, 2021).



Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Dr. Darra Hofman**, Publication Secretary, who won the ALISE/Eugene Garfield Doctoral Dissertation Competition for her dissertation, "'Between Knowing and Not Knowing': Privacy, Transparency, and Digital Records."

We are happy to inform you that a panel on "Career Development in Knowledge Management," proposed by SIG-KM members, is accepted for the 84th Annual Meeting of the Association for Information Science and Technology in Salt Lake City, Utah. Save the time and date! 11/1/2021 4:00:00 PM-11/1/2021 5:30:00 PM (Mountain Daylight Time)

Congratulations also to **Qaiser Iqbal,** newly promoted Director of Libraries at GIFT University, Gujranwala, Pakistan, on the completion of his M.phil. Under Mr. Iqbal's leadership, GIFT University has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve the library's services to both students and researchers, including becoming the first university in Pakistan to utilize a flipped classroom model.

Figure 7 Hybrid learning model "flipped classroom"

Open educational resources materials

For students, finding affordable textbooks is a difficulty. Students' access to textbooks is crucial in the entire online teaching and learning environment, not just for people learning at home, but also for academics who want to make them available as part of their programme (Ayeni et al., 2021). The library was making free course reserves in addition to adopting the practice of loaning course reserves.

GU Library in COVID-19		
Session Title	**Targeted Audience**	**Remarks**
Recorded Lecture on Digital Resources for Online Classes	Spread in GU community	Arranged by GU-Library
Training on HEC Digital Library	MasterTrainers Faculty & Deans	Arranged by GU-Library
Literature searching techniques	For psychology students on requested by Dr. Umme-Laila	Arranged by GU-Library
Research like a pro: Insider tips on using IEEE Xplore Digital Library	For all engineering fellows	Arranged by IEEE
Publishing with IEEE: Preparation & submission	For all engineering fellows	Arranged by IEEE
Masterclass Workshop: "How to Write a Great Research Paper, and Get it Accepted by a Good Journal "	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	HEC Pakistan and Elsevier
How to Access ProQuest Resources in Pakistan during Corona Lock-down		Proquest Online Training Session in Pakistan
Journal indexing in Scopus	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	Arranged by Elsevier
HEC Digital Library/ Proquest E-book Centeral	Mphil Scholars/ Islmic.S	Arranged by GU-Library
HEC Digital Library/ Proquest E-book Centeral	Mphil Scholars/ Islmic.S	Arranged by GU-Library
HEC Digital Library Introduction	This is a general session, So the target is anyone who wants to use HEC Digital Library	
Ebook Central Advanced Training	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	
ProQuest Platform	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	Proquest Online Training Session in Pakistan
Advanced Training	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	
How to manage your bibliographic references using RefWorks	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	
Introduction to publishing in Academic Journals	Faculty members, Post graduate students and Researchers	
Access Free Databases		
SPRINGER LINK	Springer Link https://link.springer.com/	
ASTM	ASTM https://compass.astm.org/	
OVID	Ovid http://ovidsp.ovid.com/	
PROQUEST	ProQuest E-book Central https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hec-ebooks/home.action	

Figure 8 *GIFT University Library Services during COVID-19*

Students now had more access to digital content such as e-textbooks etc. Furthermore, several promotional online content providers/vendors have released patented technology digital content free to the general for a limited time, public or for university audiences. All Pakistan's libraries put up a list of free e-resources for teachers and students, utilizing all of the free offered accessible.

As a result of these new procedures, the responsibilities of library workers working on digital projects have altered. Other librarians are exploring by starting new projects or adopting current practices in their specialized locations, similar to the internet services described above (Ayeni et al., 2021).

GIFT University highlights best practices for digital library services

From March till the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've been responding to the coronavirus pandemic through different means which included:

1. Faculty and student email lists, faculty liaisons, social media and other similar resources.
2. Off-campus access to library e-resources and e-services as well as actively integrated digital content and services into the LMS and linked with GU academic community.
3. The online public access catalogue http://catalog.gift.edu.pk promoted digital library services such as table of contents, document delivery, scanning, and virtual keeping of print material. TOCs
4. Arranged and conducted several training and information literacy sessions and made necessary part with online regular classes during the COVID-19 pandemic

Conclusions

The GIFT University Library has always been at the head of the pack in providing digital services in COVID-19. The GU Library has worked really hard to adapt to the odd circumstances and keep these services available to its patrons. Aside from the initial response to the outbreak, online library services will continue to gain popularity in the future. The importance of a university library in assisting staff and students before during and after the crisis has never been and will never be overtaken by the global epidemic.

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