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Library Services during COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis

Atin Nandi
Deputy Librarian, Central Library, IIT Kharagpur

Abstract: ***The paper aims to project the essential steps that are to be taken by librarians under crisis period of COVID-19 pandemic. The author throws light upon library activities during and after the lockdown period, guidelines for making SOP for library, how to provide access to library resources to the users having print disability.***
Keywords: Aarogyosetu mobile App, COVID-19, Fishbone diagram, Print Disability, Standard Operating Procedure.

I. INTRODUCTION

Librarians are providing wide varieties of sophisticated services to their users. People of the world are passing through a crisis period due to spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Several changes in library services were notices during and after the lockdown period. Librarians have taken adequate precautionary measures in order to keep their staff and users safe. New techniques and technologies have to be adopted to disseminate knowledge using digital platform. Positive human touch is an integral part of human life. But at this present moment everybody is maintaining social distancing in order to prevent the spread of this pandemic crisis. This pandemic has tremendously affected the educational system. Teaching and learning cannot be imparted smoothly without library system. COVID-19 stands for **Co**rona **Vi**rus **D**isease of 20**19.** COVID-19 has created enough massacres and it is very active still now. Students are bound to manage with online mode. Librarians around the world are trying to pour vast resources of knowledge using digitized platform. People having Print Disability cannot extract information directly from printed materials because of blindness, visual disability, dyslexia etc. However they can make use of information using different accessible formats like – Braille, Audio, Large Print, Tactical Graphics, PDF, DAISY, MP3 etc. Every reader should enjoy equal access to information irrespective of any disability. Librarians should support them by providing information in alternative formats. Venders could not supply ordered books within time limit because of lockdown. Libraries in general accepted books through post as outsiders were not allowed to enter to the academic campus. However supplied books had to keep for a few days in closed rooms spraying with disinfectant. Vendors got orders after a long interval from the date of requisition. Because of price hike vendors could not supply many books for those libraries where there is no provision for extra sanction. Some librarians have started procuring books from online bookstores in quickest possible time. Some of the publishers came forward to support research activity on COVID-19 by providing free access to COVID-19related e-resources to scientific community. Some of the renowned publishers provide free access to e-books and e-journals to students, faculty members and research scholars to support curriculum activities as well as research work.

II. COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The causative agent for coronavirus disease is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first found to spread in Wuhan city of China in December 2019. This disease spread tremendously within human beings and within a very short span of time it became a pandemic. Report taken in March 2021 shows that death toll of 2.85 million people out of 131 million positive cases which have been taken place throughout the world. The first COVID positive was reported on 30th January 2020 in India. Symptoms of the disease are - Fever, dry cough, tiredness, pains, sore throat, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, a rash on skin etc .Crisis is increasing day-by-day as we are entering into the second phase of COVID-19. People need to take extra caution for that. Mutations are taking place as a result of which are coronavirus are becoming more contagious and deadly.

III. LIBRARY ACTIVITIES DURING LOCKDOWN

Libraries across the world were forced to close due to rapid spread of the pandemic. People had to stay at home because of quarantine or complete lockdown. At this critical juncture, Librarians thought for alternative mechanism that is to provide minimal and highly essential library services from home, i.e., work from home. Communication with library patrons could be done over phone or through e-mail. WhatsApp chatting also played very significant role. Academic institute started online classes. Librarians had to take very challenging role to satisfy their users.

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Vast electronic resources were made available to the off campus faculty staff members and students through EZproxy service and Virtual Private Network (VPN) services. Some libraries of foreign countries (e.g., University of Toronto Libraries, Van Houten Library, Harvard Public Library) offered Curbside Pickup Service for printed books for their users during lockdown period.

IV. POST LOCKDOWN LIBRARY ACTIVITY

Libraries started reopening after the lockdown period. Library staff slowly came back to their working place. Considering the severity of COVID-19 pandemic, librarians round the world made new strategies, revamped web pages, conducted information literacy program (online mode) in order to provide essential library service following COVID-19 safety protocol.

1) *Policy Making:* Observing the Pandemic situation Librarians were bound to bring about some changes in Policy for their libraries. Library authority stressed on developing e-collection (E-books, E-journals and Electronic Theses & Dissertations) in lieu of paper collection.
2) *Webinar Software for Ushering Virtual Platform:* Using Webinar software large number of audience can be communicated very easily at the real time. Many libraries are using nowadays webinar software for dissemination of knowledge. Some of very useful software is – Google Meet, CISCO Webex, Zoho, Zoom etc. Central Library, IIT Kharagpur conducted Library Orientation Programme to the fresher (PG, UG, Research Scholars) using Google Meet software.
3) *SOP for Library:* SOP is the abbreviation for Standard Operating Procedure. It is systematic instructions for the employees / workers of an institute / organization to carry out routine jobs without any ambiguity in a consistent manner. SOP enhances quality of output, ensures legal protection and reduces ambiguity. Many Libraries set up SOPs during COVID-19 for smooth discharge of library activities. Guidelines may cover the following aspects.

a) Restricted library hours
b) Privilege for special category of users physically to come to library (e.g., Faculty members and Research Scholars but not PG or UG students)
c) Wearing of Masks are compulsory
d) Proper sanitization
e) Maintenance of social distancing
f) Not to bring personal books/laptops/bags within library
g) Permission not granted for group study
h) Temporarily closure of Digital Library
i) Suspension of Biometric attendance till further order
j) Promotion of paperless work culture
k) Use of AarogyaSetu app in mobile devices

V. READING IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA

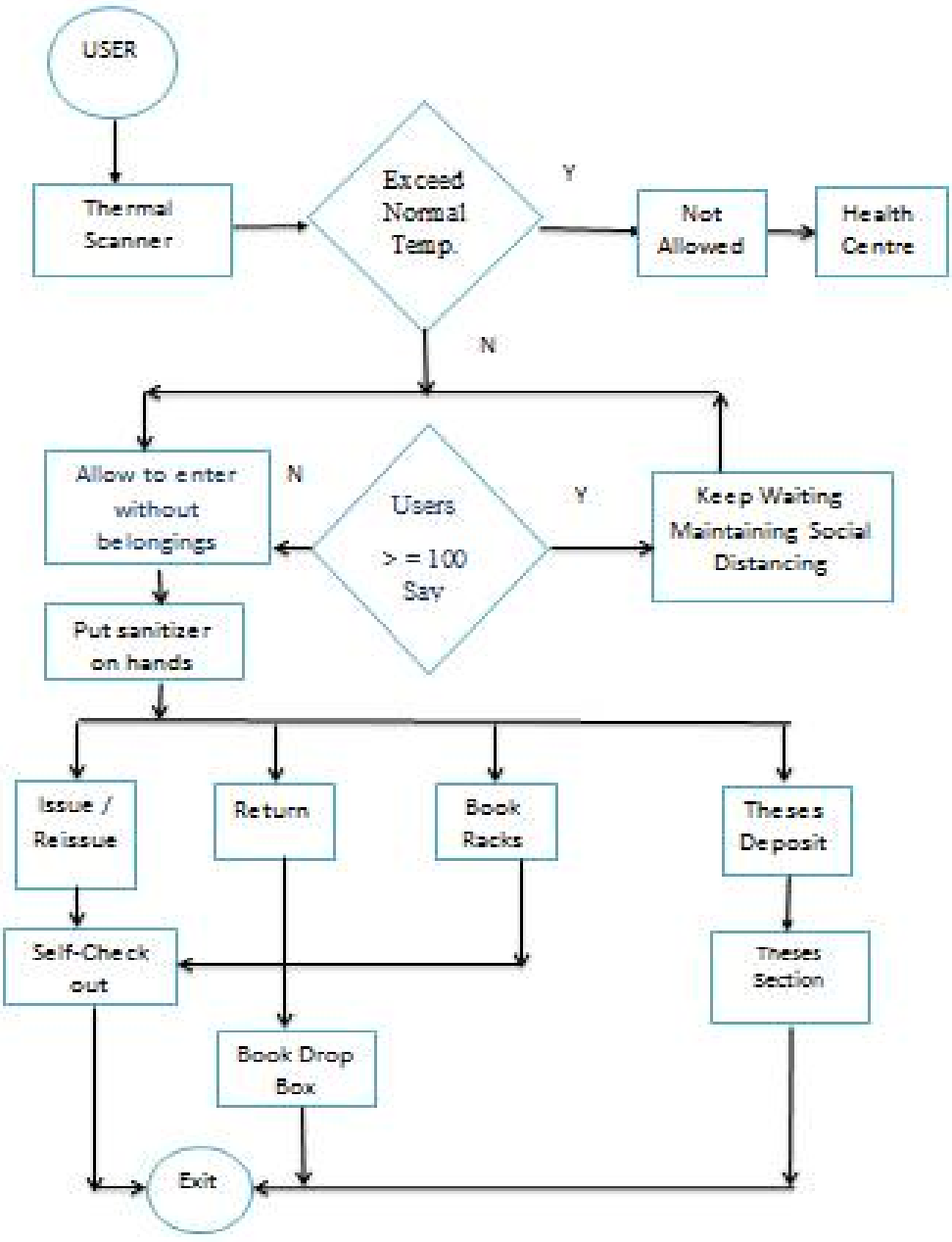
Librarians may encourage library users by providing electronic access to wide spectrum of documents utilizing the following platforms.

1) *EOD:* EOD is an abbreviation for eBooks on Demand. It is a document delivery service of copy-right free documents from the year 1501 to 1900.The books are delivered in PDF format. EOD service is being offered by 30 European libraries from 12 countries. eBooks of EOD can be ordered from Amazon.
2) *Sugamya Pustakalaya:* It is portal of accessible books that was launched on 24th August 2016. Documents are available in different languages in accessible formats namely DAISY, EPUB, BRF.
3) *Marrakesh Treaty:* Marrakesh Treaty was signed in Morocco on 28th June 2013 at Marrakesh by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in order to provide access to published works for the persons with Print Disability. COVID-19 pandemic makes people feel that Marrakesh is absolutely need to render a favorable platform for the people with print disability.
4) *Open E-book:* It having huge collection of very interesting electronic books which are available free of cost. Librarians should bring awareness to the users regarding this Open E-book.

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VI. FLOW DIAGRAM

Users' movements within library at the present time may be as follows.



Flow Diagram 1: Users' movements

Libraries have been reopened after the lockdown period and have started are rendering essential services. Limited number of users (e.g., research scholars, faculty members) is allowed to enter maintaining social distancing. Provision is there to apply sanitizers at different locations. Many libraries keep provision for self-issue and self-return. Collection of overdue charge, realization of cost for lost books – can be carried out through net banking. However many libraries waived overdue fines which incurred during lockdown period. Users have to deposit their theses to the Theses Section, but for consultation purpose they may browse the Institutional Digital Repository from Library website. Browsing of journal articles / e-books is possible using library websites. Library users are sending requests for plagiarism check through E-mail. Reprographic service has been kept suspended temporarily in many libraries. However Document Delivery Services has become very useful service at this present scenario.

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VII. AAROGYOSETU MOBILE APP

The Government of India has developed this application in order to combat COVID-19. This is available in eleven different languages (e.g., English, Hindi, Bengali, Gujrathi etc). This application uses Bluetooth as well as GPS technology so that the movement of infected persons can be tracked.

VIII. CAUSE-AND-EFFECT DIAGRAM

Cause-and-effect diagram was created by Japanese professor Dr. Kaoru Ishikawa, one of the Quality Gurus. The diagram is also known as Fishbone diagram. The root causes has been determined from the point of view of – Staff, User, Infrastructure and Process. All these causes give rise to negative effect, i.e., Low user satisfaction in COVID-19 pandemic. Fishbone diagram is highly useful tool to determine the reasons which are responsible for negative impact of a system.

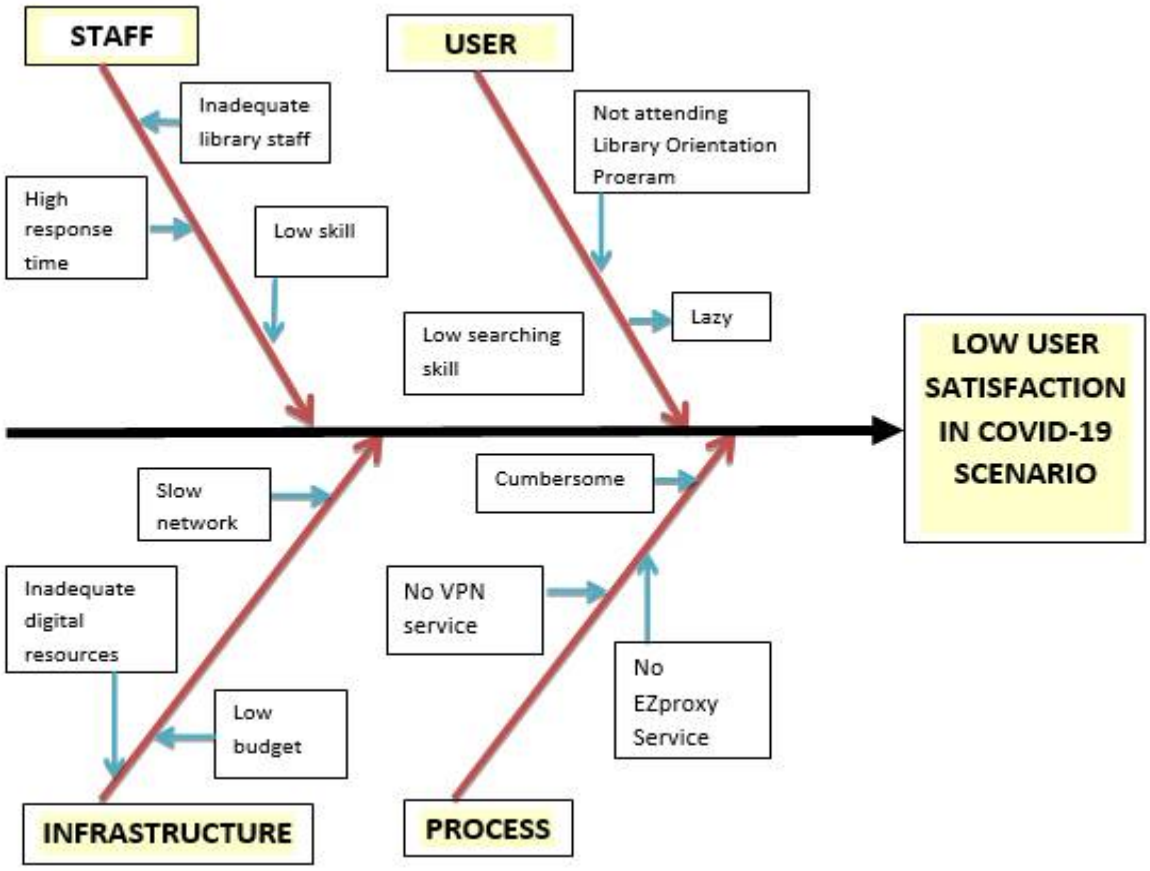


Fig. 1: Ishikawa Diagram relating to low user satisfaction in COVOD-19 scenario

IX. CONCLUSION

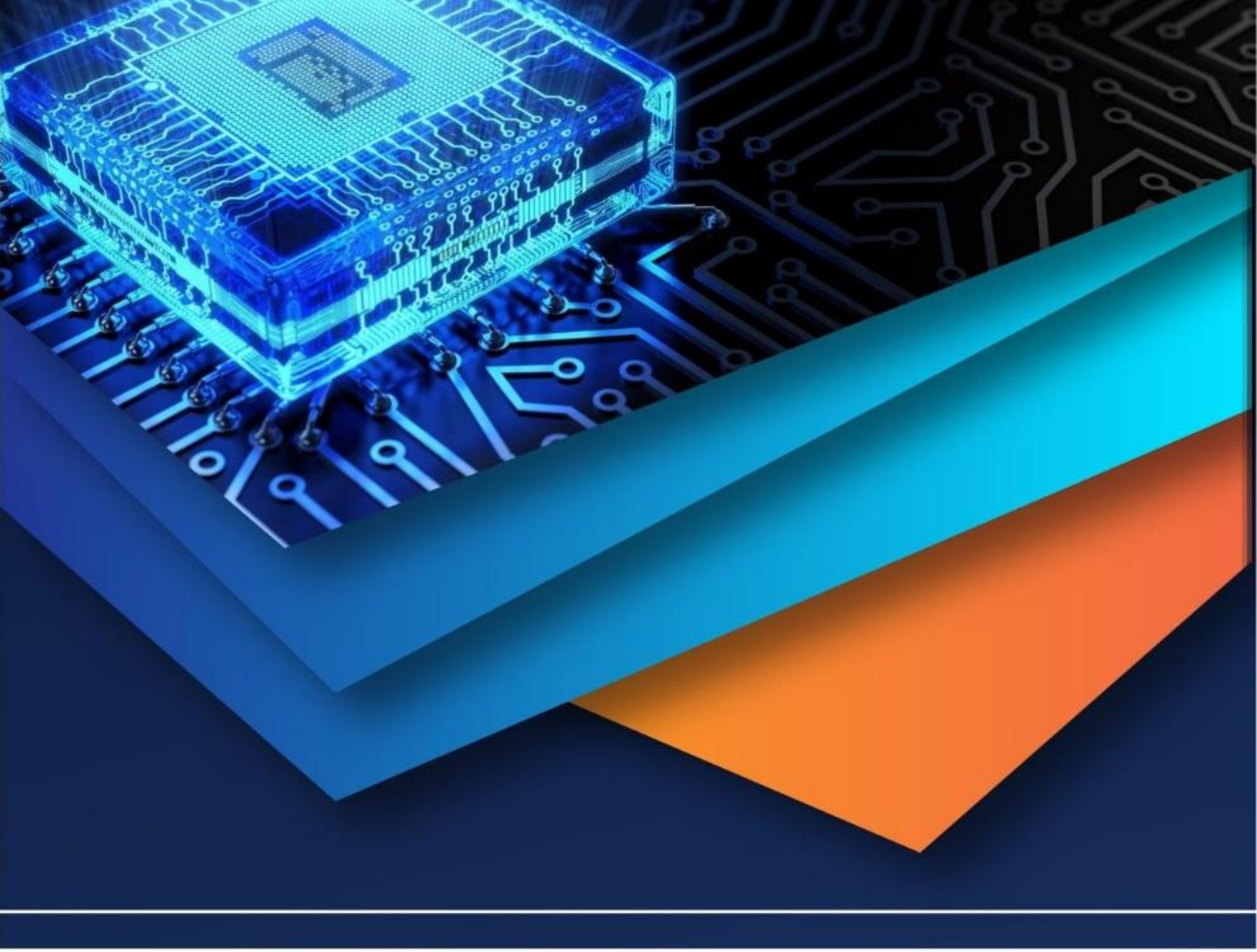
Libraries across the globe were closed down for a considerable period of time in order to reduce the rate of transmission of the Corona virus. During lockdown period library personnel tried their level best to provide virtual library service beyond the four walls of library. Although Libraries reopened after few months; limited numbers of patrons were allowed for limited hours. Libraries at different corners of the world have been tuned to provide equity services to the users of this dot com era. Librarians are very particular nowadays to maintain safety protocol – strictly following social distancing, sanitizing library building as and when required and keeping sanitizing materials at different places within library. Online library services was extrapolated for the off campus library patrons. This is an unprecedented global war, which can be overcome through isolation along with firm determination, cooperation and innovation. Biomedical researchers are immensely focusing themselves in developing biosensors which can detect the body temperature, heartbeat, and other anomalies for early detection of the effected case. Once such sensors are successfully developed can be placed at the entrance of the library gate which will ensure safer environment for library users.

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