Academic Library Services during Post-Covid Era: A Case Study

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Abstract*: Libraries and Information centres, from the last so many decades serve as a strong resource of information to the society. The libraries as academic institutions are considered as a heart of the parent organizations and the role is played in the current era very well by providing the online as well as print information resources to the clientele. During the last year, due to Covid 19 pandemic effect, the entire academic world has been badly affected and changed the global education scenario. It has changed the way of processes and delivery of education; being a part of the education system, academic libraries are also not exceptional for that. Academic libraries are also witnessing a sea change in the storage, processing and service delivery of information. Academic libraries will have to redesign, reform the nature of library collection, processes and also the service delivery of information in order to exceed the user expectations and remain sustainable in the present scenario of the Post Covid-19 era.*

Thus, the present work has highlighted an effort of a management Institutional library taken to reshape, reform and reorganize the library services and collection in order to meet the new challenges for sustainability.

1. Introduction

Change is inevitable and managing the risks is the quality of a manager to remain sustainable during the present frame. The COVID-19 undoubtedly has changed the way

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of life. Nabarro, David (2020) the World Health Organization's (WHO) Special Envoy on Covid-19 said, it's expected from us to "learn to Live with it". Thus, the entire corporate and the educational world is trying to cope up with the changing scenario more than ever before. As far as the education sector is concerned, impact is witnessed on the conduction and delivery. Educational world has focused totally on conducting all the activities necessarily through a virtual mode for the uninterrupted flow of the concerned academic year. In the same manner, the academic libraries also switched over to the virtual world in order to render the fruitful services to varied user segments.

1.2 COVID-19 & Technology Acceleration in Libraries & information Centres: COVID-19 certainly has accelerated the new technology and subsequent applications in the libraries and information resource centres all over the world. Unquestionably the infusion of new technology has been increased in such a way that the tech features which earlier intended for novelties or convenience are effectively becoming the necessities now.

It ranges now from providing a focused accessibility to extended online resources to replacing the physical reference service with the "ask librarians" window and utilization of QR codes forthe effective online access through the library web pages. Now remote access to information resources, attending user service desk through the chat box and what's App and stringent utilization of emails has been increased among the libraries. Utilization of cloud-based library OPAC and the Cloud based software has become very essential to streamline the library functions and the library services.

Theory of expectations says the customer expectation grows in a continuous manner; the present-day library users' expectations are higher than ever before. Now the users, after post arrival will expect the heightened hygiene standards, along with the enhanced application of ICT tools in the library premises. Libraries in the near future need to win brand loyalty.

2. Objectives

The present case study is a part of the situational leadership. It's an experimental study conducted after the situational analysis in order to face the challenges thrown by the COVID-19 pandemic on the academic libraries. Thus, the study has following objectives

1. To study and understand the Institutional Library's financial situation and redesign the library budget
2. To make the provision of additional e-resources by assessing the users online referencing needs.

3. To redesign the institutional library webpage for the provision of effective virtual mode library

4. To redesign the library activities on the virtual mode

3. About MES's IMCC

Institute of Management & Career Courses, a premier institute of Computer and Management science was established in 1983 under the umbrella of Maharashtra Education Society (MES). It is an age-old educational society providing education from KG to PG and research through establishing more than 70 educational institutions across Maharashtra state.

The IMCC provides quality education by conducting AICTE approved management programs and research centre along with the IGNOU study centre. Institute is recognized by Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) under Section 46 of Pune University Act, 1974 and Section 85 of Maharashtra University Act, 1994. The preamble of IMCC ``FACTA-NON-VERBA '' indicates the focus of the institute on producing the new breed of professionals, who will speak through their deeds.

3.1 MES IMCC's Library & Information Resource Centre: The library follows the continuous development feature since 1996 and onwards and focused on the benchmarking librarianship approach. Computerized SDI service to the faculty and research scholars with the embedded librarianship approach assists the library in rendering more effective customized services. The IMCC library provides access to ProQuest and N-list databases and the Summer Project Collection through the digital IR developed using d-space.

Apart from the core library activities, the library and information centre has taken a lead in coordinating the distance learning programs of IGNOU study centre as well as the YCMOU library science programs in IMCC. From the year 2015, institute conducts autonomous library science programs as a One Year Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Library Management, Automation and Networking (PGDLIMAN) and a focused program on effective utilization of advanced technology such as digital library techniques, automation, programming and networking in the libraries and information centres and the SET NET Training Program conducted every year to guide the library science professionals in the Maharashtra State.

4. Research Methodology

The present work is a focused case study method utilizing the experimental research approach for the sustainability of the library services of MES IMCC in the Post COVID-19 situation.

4.1 *Research design*: The following milestones were targeted, accordingly the strategic and administrative planning done followed by the required task planning and reassessment of the budgeted figures as well. The work was completed following an experimental research method. The different designs along with combinations of the e-resources were tested as a pilot work under the controlled environment before the final implementation. The milestones focused were as follows

The effort made through major 11sections as follows

Table 1. Activity chart of the planned milestones

Sr. No.	Milestones
i)	Reassessing the library budget and increased subscribed e-resources
iv)	Revision of Policy decision: accessibility to digital IR
v)	Up gradation of the Library Webpage
vi)	Provision of online Library Membership
vii)	e-book review
viii)	e-induction/user orientation *and innovative virtual library services*
ix)	e-newsletter-InfolibManager
x)	Focused utilization of social apps and emails
xi)	Redesigned Rules of maintenance and hygiene

These milestones were achieved through the focused action plan as traced out bellow

i. *Reassessing the library budget and increased subscribed e-resources*: Financial planning and provision of funds is the basic need of any project. Due to the situational contingencies the library budget reviewed to redefine and reallocate the budgeted amount under the head e-resources. Major user demand after reopening the institution was to provide a variety of e-text to the students and faculty as well as the research community on the institutional campus. It is therefore decided to build-up an e-resources collection. Additional provision was made in order to provide increased accessibility to the e-contents to the user community. Through the increased budget for e-resources, additional collection of Management and Computer science e-books has been subscribed for 5 years. Additional e-resources by ProQuest were also subscribed along with the N-List database subscription. The subsequent collection links have been provided on the library webpage of the institutional website. Now the users are able to access the same through their login from their homes as well.

ii. *Revision of the Policy decision: accessibility to the digital IR:*The digital Institutional repository developed by using d-space previously restricted to the institutional campus through the Intranet. The policy was revised in order to provide

remote access at home also to the students, faculty and the research community. The hyperlink uploaded on the library webpage for getting increased effectivity.

iii. *Up gradation of the library webpage:*Before the COVID-19 pandemic closure, the library developed a static webpage on the institutional website, where the developmental data of the library related to the academic year including the collection, services, automation along with the e-resources list was uploaded. During the closer period and after the reopening of the library, the demand for e-accessibility of the resources was increased, the library decided to redesign the library webpage for providing effective remote accessibility to the information resources as well as to render the remote services.

The effort was done in the direction and studied web designing technique, further a new design created and submitted to the institutional networking section expert for the necessary upload. The new design now provides access to the large collection of e-resources along with the necessary services.
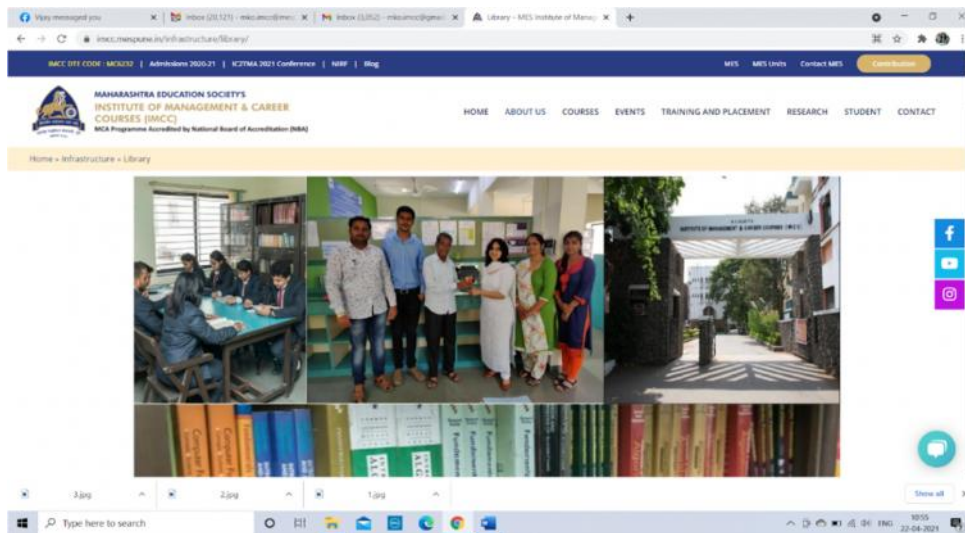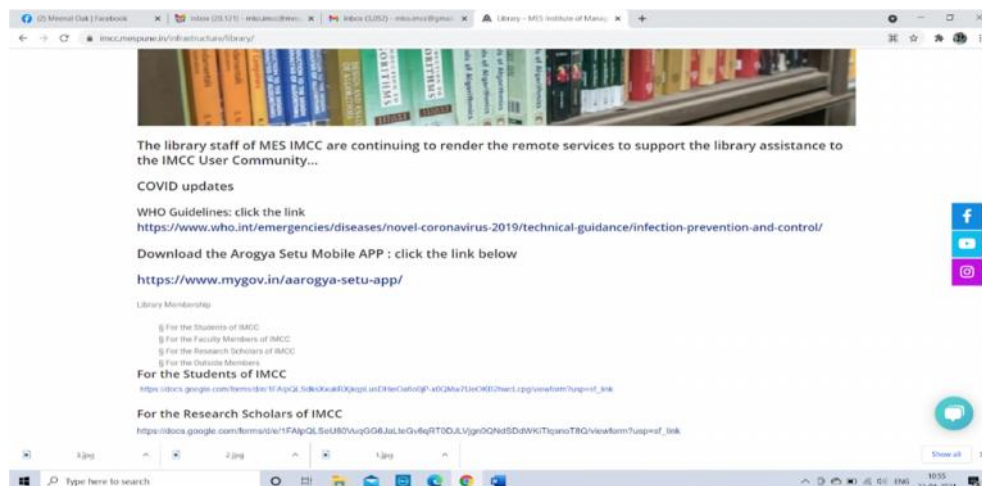

Fig:1 Redesigned MES IMCC Library webpage.

Fig:2 Screenshot of MES IMCC Library webpage highlighting the e-resources collection.

iv. *Provision of online Library Membership: A* google e-form is now developed for the different user segments mainly students, research scholars and the faculty members which has assisted enormously to the library members in getting the membership without any physical visit to the library as it is accessible through the library webpage.

v. *Accessibility of online Union Catalogue of MES Institutions through web OPAC:*Last year, the MES (Maharashtra Education Society) completed its ambitious MES-koha project of library automation using the cloud computing technique. The MES's IMCC library and information resource centre has taken the lead in automating the functions and services of the libraries and information centres under the umbrella of MES institutions by the effective utilization of an open library software initiative- koha including execution and coordination of the implementation work of the member institutional libraries of MES. Further, the work extended the boundaries to knowledge organization as well as preparation of databases, data migration work and finally, proper implementation of koha software modules in MES Institutions. MESinstitutional web OPAC has been created for the member libraries of MES koha Project. The cloud computing technique is used to provide access to the catalogue collection of every member library of MES koha project and now the OPAC link is also provided on the upgraded web page of the library.
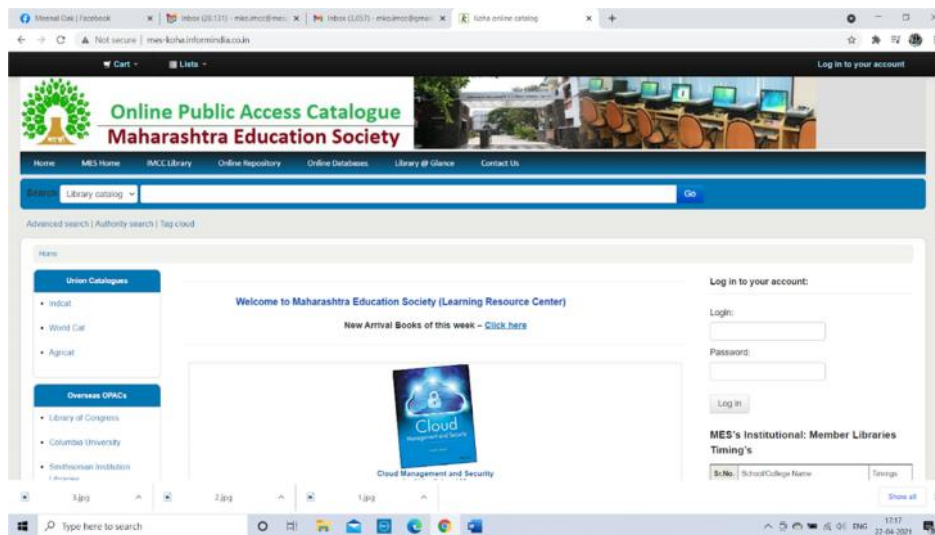
Fig 3: Screenshot of the MES koha web OPAC.

vi. *e-book review Activity:* Library has a practice for the students of the first year to conduct a book review program for getting acquainted with the rich library collection and also to inculcate the habit of reading in a continuous manner. Basic purpose of this activity is to focus on the overall development of the students,as reading habit is one of the most impacting habits in the students' life. Every year, the books selected from the general interest; so also, the domain reference collection also focused along with. The printed books are distributed among the total population of the new entrants / first year student learners of the MBA and MCA programmes.

This year, the same procedure is followed continuing with the focused ebooks collection. The titles selected on the motivational spiritual as well as the biographies. Preference was given to the open-source eBooks' collection. Thus total 6 groups were formed per division, consisting of 10 students in each. The book circulated among the participants of one group and after completion of the reading process the review process was completed as a group activity and presented during the book review assessment day. This promotes not only the reading skill, but also the team work and presentation skills among the participants coming from the undergraduate level.

The Committee for the Book Review activity was formed where the Director, Coordinator, MCA program and the Librarian were the members. The presentation was conducted and the grades were given. The students also rated the activity and gave a nice feedback.

vii.   *e-induction/user orientation and innovative virtual library services:* Every year, the user education program is been conducted through the classroom session, during this academic year, the library followed the practice by utilizing the virtual mode for conducting the user orientation including the orientation of updated library webpage , online membership process, koha User OPAC , innovative activities for the users such as e-book review, utilization of faculty-Library WhatsApp group, email and FB page utilization by the library for the users, increased accessibility of the e-databases along with free information resources through the library webpage etc.

It has created a positive impact among the users regarding the need of resources of their academic programs and their subsequent accessibility.

ix.   *e-newsletter-InfolibManager2020:* Library newsletter is one of the effective ways to inform the masses about the library updates during a stipulated time period. MES IMCC library and information resource centre annually publishes "InfoLibManager"-a printed newsletter highlighting the activities and the programmes conducted by the library during the entire academic year. It's a valuable resource of information for the users about the library's current affairs. The newsletter is a unic activity of the library among the MES Institutional hub. This year, InfoLibManager- has been published in an online G-format. It's now more accessible and retrievable to the readers and to the entire academic fraternity through the web link. The new form of e-newsletter has increased the awareness among the user fraternity regarding the library e-services provision.
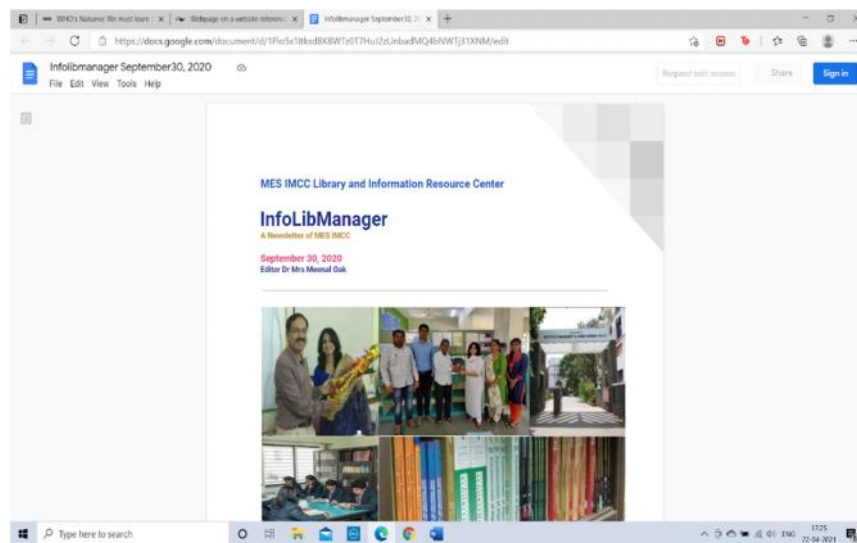

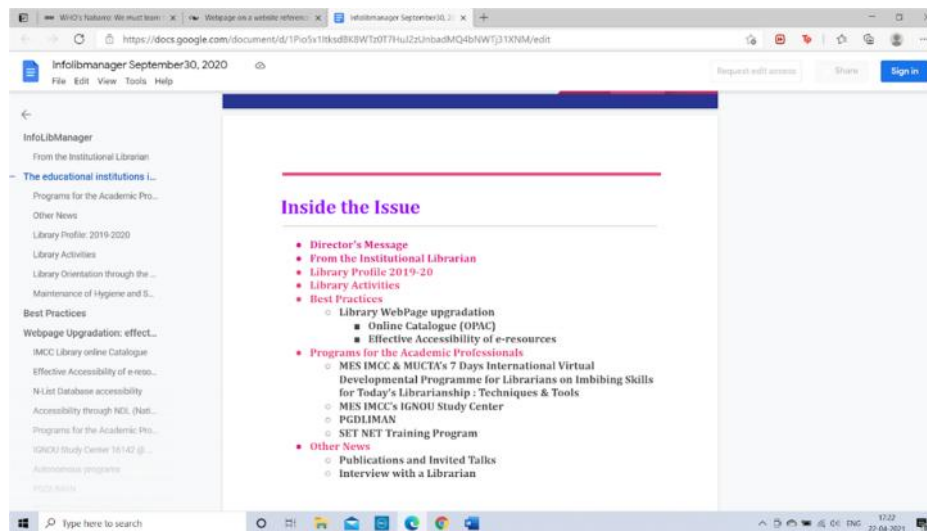**Fig.4**: Screenshot of the e-newsletter InfolibMnager

Fig. 5. Content page of newsletter Infolib Manager

x. *Focused utilization of social apps and emails:* For maintaining a continuous and regular communication channels with the user fraternity, the WhatsApp group for the faculty members "IMCC Library-Faculty" has been created for communicating the library updates and also to share the e-resources. This group helped tenaciously in understanding the information needs of the faculty members even in the lockdown period and also to satisfy their micro level information needs through supply of e-resources. It has got excellent feedback from the faculty members specially pursuing their research. Similarly on-line SDI service is also provided throughout the year to the academic fraternity.

A consistent communication through emails to the entire student population is maintained; specially to inform regarding the new addition of e-books, e-journals, conduction of the e-user orientations and e-books reviews. Attempts have been done to create an effective communication channel.

xi. *Library restructuration and redesigned rules of maintenance and hygiene:* After the post COVID period, the reopening of the libraries was really a major challenge for the entire information world on the globe. The reopening plan for the IMCC's library and information resource centre was prepared and the SOPs were formed to operate the library in the safer and secure zone.

Further, the library restructuration has also been done to maintain the social distancing, sanitization. The revised system for reshelving and returned documents etc also

channelized. It has created confidence among the library staff and increased work confidence level has been witnessed.

5. **Results and discussion**

The covid-19 has badly impacted the library world. The libraries at the initial stage of Covid-19 speared, majorly followed the restricted access, minimal service and full closure mode. Thereafter, the libraries started promoting online services offered to the user community in a focused manner.

The EBLIDA Executive Committee on 26 March 2020, the EBLIDA Executive Committee created a checklist for library associations and libraries to face of Covid-19 crisis. The basic purpose of the checklist was to indicate the new ways to the European libraries by redesigning the library services in the virtual mode for the more effective service delivery. The major five points in the post covid 19 agenda for the European libraries were as follows:

1. Exponential social distancing: a well-connected two-meter library;

2. Technologies are mutating and shaping libraries in new ways;

3. Uncharted economic territory: review the library budget composition;

4. Library governance at central and local levels;

5. Do not forget the climate change opportunity and threat.

A comparative analysis of the traditional academic libraries in China and Italy during the lockdown period was done to study the measures undertaken by them. Study used a questionnaire technique to get the response from a population frame of 102 library patrons through a random selection. The results showed the same direction followed by the libraries in both the countries but the difference in the technological development is observed by the researcher in the libraries of both the countries affecting in the final decisions. Further its also mentioned by the researcher that the chinse libraries are more effective as compare to Italian libraries in overcoming the quarantine restrictions.

In another study conducted by Medawar, K and Tabet, M (2020) on provision of Library collections and services during the COVID-19 period at the Qatar National Library. The paper has elaborated the adopted ways and innovative procedure followed by the Quatar University library in order to sustain the services during the COVID-19 period. It includedInterleading and online Document Supply (ILDS) , redesigning of services after the reopening of library such as health and service measures , redesigned borrowing

privileges and SWOT analysis concluding the importance of digital transformation of the library serves as a boon to the users and the libraries.

On the similar lines a study is conductedon "e Impact of COVID-19 on the Use of Academic Library Resources",by Connell, R, Wallis Lisa and Comeaux,David (2021) on measuring the changes in use of library resources at three different institutions including Louisiana State University, North-eastern Illinois University, and Valparaiso University in the time of COVID 19 closures at USA. The key observation of the study was an increasing virtual communication among all the three libraires, experiencing a severe impact of COVID-19. Additionally, the use of library websites, discovery tools and the major subscribed databased was decreased among all the users of these libraries during the COVID timeframe.

In another study conducted on measuring "Covid-19 impact on the Caribbean academic library: Jamaica's preliminary response to people, place, product and services", by the Harris, S Y (2021). The study has focused the impact of a coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on people, place, product and services in Jamaican academic libraries. The study found that COVID-19 has had a positive-negative impact on library people, place, product and services and has created a new normal for Jamaican academic libraries.

The MES IMCC Library and Information Centre also tried to reshape the digital services, invention of new ones as well as promotion of use of the same was targeted further to channelize the service activities to satisfy the variety of information demands from the user community through effectively utilizing the virtual medias which are focused. The library has developed a virtual mode service platform for the user community in order to meet the information needs through the virtual mode. The lockdown period started the experimental basis work of the library focused on the testing e-resources subscribed packages and need assessment through the e-mode. The redesigned digital facilities and electronic library services were introduced after post COVID-19 period in a consistent manner. After the provision, the service quality assessment done through the user feedback. An informal what's app video interviews in personof the faculty members and that of the students of MBA and MCA were conducted which resulted in understanding of the effectiveness of the library utilizing the ICT world at maximum in the benefit of the users' community. An evident positive impact is been witnessed on the library users due to the provision of online library catalogue, remote access to library resources, online

SDI, e-newsletter and e-book review as indicated by the users. It has underlined the importance of the library's role on the institutional canvas of MES IMCC.

The COVID-19 period really was and is still a major challenging issue Infront of the globe. The innovation and the work consistency are the two major areas for the service institutions to remain relevant in the current scenario. The change management is a key in today's scenario for the library professionals for sustaining and also to convert the challenges in the opportunities. The real challenge for the library professionals is effectively attending and providing the information to the users by focusing on the innovative techniques and their successful applications in the libraries. The virtual mode has provided an opportunity even to reach the unreached section of the library users.

6. Contributions and recommendation of the study:

The present study is an experimental research work of redesigning the traditional library manual procedures into the virtual based services focused on the users' current need satisfaction. It will serve as a roadmap for the LIS professionals on the globe in chalking out the milestones of virtual library service design. It will be a practical guideline for the professionals in the actual process implementation.

The change is inevitable and ever-changing demands of the users as well as a variety of global impacting factors along with the internal are witnessed by the libraries and information centres during the last year. The need of the hour is to adopt the new online techniques to remain relevant and simultaneously its effective implementation in the libraries is of the prime need.

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Acknowledgments