

## **Online library services provided during the COVID -19 pandemics: In association with the websites of the University Libraries of Sri Lanka.**

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### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 epidemic, which started in China and spread to Sri Lanka on March 24, 2020, has now become an unavoidable situation. In the face of this situation, the government closed the country from time to time to prevent the spread of the disease from the time it started. This catastrophic situation affected more or less every sector of the country and universities can be described as one of the most unique fields. In the face of this situation, university libraries continued to provide education to students through online methods, and students also had to adapt to online schooling. With this online education, the current environment is conducive for university libraries to provide students with the information they need for their learning, teaching, and research online. The main purpose of this study is to study through their web pages what services are provided by university libraries in a way that readers can access online in the face of this epidemic.

*Keyword: Online services, Library, Covid – 19, Website, University library Srilanka*

### **Introduction**

To stop the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, governments around the world have put their countries under full or partial lockdown. These lockdowns, however, had serious economic and social effects, posing unique issues in the educational sector, forcing not only students but also policymakers and service providers, such as librarians, to adapt and use technology as a viable and important tool. However, due to the pandemic's condition, Sri Lankan universities have chosen to cancel all examinations. However, the sudden onset of lockdown and shut down for several months has caused many students faced to an uncomfortable predicament. This scenario called into question how academic libraries used to work. Due to the suspension of in-person services and the loss of access to physical collections at the universities' libraries, students, teachers, and library professionals had to consider technology.

### **Objective**

To identify the services provided by the university libraries web site during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To identify the differences in online services provided by university libraries.

### **Limitation of the study**

The study's findings are solely based on the contents accessible on the day of the website investigation. Due to the transient nature of web information, some library services supplied during the pandemic may not be reported in the study. Second, services provided by the libraries under investigation that were not uploaded to their websites could not be examined.

As a result, there is no way to claim full coverage.

### Methodology

State Universities under the University Grants Commission were selected as the population. Currently, there are 15 government universities in Sri Lanka under the UGC. All libraries of these universities were selected as the study sample using the purposive sampling method. For easy to collect data I have divided all current online services into four categories and based on that have collected data. I do not include library online services and electronic sources in these categories because libraries have been providing online services and electronic sources since before the epidemic.

*Table -1 : List of Sri Lanka State universities*

S.N	Name of the University	Web address	Abbreviation
01.	University of Colombo	<a href="https://cmb.ac.lk/">https://cmb.ac.lk/</a>	CMB
02.	University of Peradeniya	<a href="https://www.pdn.ac.lk/">https://www.pdn.ac.lk/</a>	PDN
03.	University of Sri jayawardhanapura	<a href="https://www.sjp.ac.lk/">https://www.sjp.ac.lk/</a>	SJP
04.	University of Kelaniya	<a href="https://www.kln.ac.lk/">https://www.kln.ac.lk/</a>	KLN
05.	University of Moratuwa	<a href="https://uom.lk/">https://uom.lk/</a>	UOM
06.	University of Jaffna	<a href="http://www.jfn.ac.lk/">http://www.jfn.ac.lk/</a>	JFN
07.	University of Ruhuna	<a href="https://www.ruh.ac.lk/">https://www.ruh.ac.lk/</a>	RUH
08.	Open University	<a href="https://www.ou.ac.lk/">https://www.ou.ac.lk/</a>	OU
09.	Eastern University	<a href="https://www.esn.ac.lk/">https://www.esn.ac.lk/</a>	ESN
10.	South Eastern University	<a href="http://www.seu.ac.lk/">http://www.seu.ac.lk/</a>	SEU
11.	Rajarata University	<a href="http://www.rjt.ac.lk/">http://www.rjt.ac.lk/</a>	RJT
12.	Sabaragamuwa University	<a href="https://www.sab.ac.lk/">https://www.sab.ac.lk/</a>	SAB
13.	Wayamba University	<a href="https://www.wyb.ac.lk/">https://www.wyb.ac.lk/</a>	WYB
14.	Uva Wellassa University	<a href="http://www.uwu.ac.lk/">http://www.uwu.ac.lk/</a>	UWU
15.	University of the visual & performing Arts	<a href="https://vpa.ac.lk/">https://vpa.ac.lk/</a>	VPA

*Findings Table – 2 : Types of facilities and services*

Types of online services	CMB	PDN	SJP	KLN	UOM	JFN	RUH	OU	ESN	SEU	RJT	SAB	WYB	UWU	VPA
The online User Training program	√			√	√		√	√	√	√	√			√	
Webinars for users	√	√	√	√								√		√	
Virtual Tour in library			√	√	√							√			
Resources Related to COVID-19	√		√	√				√		√	√		√		

## Result & Discussion

### Online User Training program

Due to this epidemic, the process of admitting students to universities took place online as well as a group of students who have been conducting their examinations online since the day they started their university activities. Their examinations are also conducted online. In such a situation, they are trying to get the information they need through the library. If they can get information online through they can easily get the information. But some users don't have any idea about getting information online. To this end, the library should educate readers on how to obtain information online using library sources. In this study, 9 libraries (CMB, KLN, UOM, RUH, OU, ESN, SEU, RJT, UWU) saw how such reader awareness was conducted through the websites. Out of these, about 2 libraries have informed about how to access a database and how to obtain information from it.

### Webinars for users

University libraries are specialized institutions that contribute to the learning, teaching, and research activities of students and teachers. In research work, readers have to search for the literature they want in different ways. They have to search for information using different databases. Many university students may not be aware of this. Also, in such a situation, it is important to educate the readers through various online workshops on the specific means of obtaining information as it is not possible to make the readers aware of it in a formal way. Out of the above-selected libraries, six libraries (CMB, PDN, SJP, KLN, SAB, UWU) have conducted such webinars continuously. In particular, the workshops focused on areas such as how to obtain accurate information and how to write an expert article using a variety of subject-specific databases.

### Virtual tour in the library

In general, university libraries are spread over a large area of university space. Those university libraries have different sections so it can be difficult for a reader who comes to the library at the same time to go to the relevant sections of the library. Before the covid situation, all university students were taken to libraries to learn about the library. but now the library can not do such a physical tour. so, to inform the new student about

the library online is the responsibility of library staff. Three libraries from the sample selected above have videotaped each section of the library and embedded it in the website. Other libraries include a map of the library, and many libraries include a library manual on the web.

### **Resources Related to COVID-19**

Although the COVID - 19 epidemic is recent, many researchers have already researched it. Research is being done day by day. As the scientific community across the globe is racing against time to develop a definitive treatment for the disease, access to as much as and as quickly as possible published literature to accelerate the ongoing research is the need of the hour. Notably, a lot of commercial publishers and vendors have taken a significant initiative and have provided open access to materials related to COVID-19. Others have facilitated access by making it easier to log in and access materials from outside of official networks. In conducting such research, researchers will be able to carry out such work without interruption if the information relevant to the research is not obtained from an official website but a library website. But the selected library's websites have not provided online access to literature about COVID-19. However, seven university libraries have (CMP, SJP, KLN, OU, SEU, RJT, WYB) included information about COVID - 19 in their websites.

### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 epidemic necessitated urgent and radical changes in the provision of library services, as severe social isolation and locking measures were imposed in the early stages of the epidemic. Internet and web technologies have created a new and unique environment in which libraries can enhance and strengthen research, teaching, and learning, even in these difficult and uncertain times. The concept and practice of giving libraries remote access to e-resources are not new, but the user-friendly methodology used by many libraries and the number of resources they acquire during the plague are exemplary. Based on the data available, this study shows that with this epidemic situation, many university libraries, as usual, offer their services online to readers. The study also shows that several university libraries have not yet paid much attention to these online methods.

### **Recommendations**

Should be developed on adding more online information which is useful to library patrons.

Should include useful online guides for education and research purposes.

Should include literature and up-to-date information about COVID - 19.

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