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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### MANAGING CLIENTELE SERVICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF LIBERAL ARTS BANGLADESH (ULAB) LIBRARY

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#### ABSTRACT

It was a big challenge to provide prompt and quality services to the library clientele groups during coronavirus surge and covid-19 pandemic situations. Students and faculty members were unable to visit the Library physically for receiving services and supports, such as - borrowing and returning library resources, study in the library and others due to lockdown and other restrictions. Online and E-resources become more popular and essentials to teachers, students, and learners. They preferred to use e-resources for their teaching and learning. They accessed e-resources remotely from home and off-campus. The World community experienced the same situations. Service delivery through digital and online means became an integral part for ULAB Library as well as for the educational institutions.

## INTRODUCTION

Universities and academic institutions thrived to provide uninterrupted services to their clientele during covid-19 pandemic crisis. Some institutions changed and shifted their service delivery methods for the patrons. Online and digital service delivery became very popular and essentials to teachers, students, and learners. They preferred to use online and digital services delivery for their teaching and learning. They accessed e-resources and online resources remotely from home and off-campus. "Online Learning helps more beneficial usage of time which gatekeepers individuals from spread of COVID-19 (Moorthy, 2021)." University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) Library is an academic library and it provides services to the clientele, such as undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty members. ULAB Library transformed its services into digital delivery for the users during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown to control and containment of coronavirus surge. Philanthropist, Kazi Shahid Ahmed founded the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) along with the Library (ULAB Library) in 2004. Dr. Kazi Anis Ahmed is the co-founder of the University. ULAB Library provided services and supports to the users in full-fledged despite of obstacles occurred during lockdown for Covid-19.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

Students and faculty members were unable to come to ULAB Library physically for taking services (such as - borrowing and returning library resources, and study) due to lockdown/ Covid-19 pandemic

restrictions. The Government issued order and educational institutions remained closed since March 2020 to 11 September 2021. The schools and colleges (except universities) were reopened on 12 September 2021 after 18 months closure. The universities (public and private) were reopened after 15 October 2021. So, digital and online service delivery became an integral part for the educational institutions the users. No such pandemic (Coronavirus /Covid-19 pandemic) situation was faced before by the educational institutions in Bangladesh as well as the whole world. Providing services and supports to the library users without interruption was a big challenge for the library and information science professionals of Bangladesh and for the world. So there were requirements for transformative and better arrangements to serve the library's clientele than the traditional method. "Technological innovations were quickly introduced into the daily life of society, which was gradually organized to face the social isolation proposed by the Covid 19 epidemic (Oliveira, 2022)."

## RESULTS

ULAB Library transformed all the usual/traditional library services into digital/online delivery during the covid-19 pandemic so that the students and faculty members received services and supports from the library remotely/off-campus without interruptions. Library provided services digitally/online to the users to meet their academic requirements. ULAB Library introduced some innovative services and support systems to serve the users with ceaseless services to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic crisis management. These arrangements decreased the anxiety and stress of the library administration for rendering smooth and continuous services to the library users.

**Table1. ULAB Library Initiated Service and Support during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Sl	Service	Sl	Service	Sl	Service
1	Live Chat	11	Library Documentary and Video	21	Providing Access to JSTOR Digital Library
2	HelpDesk	12	Library Audio Clip	22	Providing Access to UGC Digital Library (UDL)
3	WhatsApp Service	13	Video Consultancy	23	Training on Information Literacy
4	Email Service	14	Audio Consultancy	24	Training on Similarity Check / Plagiarism Detection (Turnitin)
5	Text Message/SMS	15	Research Support	25	Library User Guides
6	Online Service Delivery	16	Training on Reference and Citation Management (Zotero & Mendeley)	26	Providing Access to BBRI E-Resource and DataBank
7	Online Requisition	17	Ask Librarian	27	Virtual Participation at Webinars
8	Procurement of e-copy of Library Resources	18	Service through Social Media Platforms	28	Providing Access to Internship Reports
9	Remote Access to E-Resources through RemoteXs	19	Virtual Library Tour	29	Virtual Library Office
10	Online and Virtual User Orientation	20	Providing Service to E- Resources	30	Scanning Service

Following are the some examples of services and supports that ULAB Library initiated during the Covid-19 Pandemic. A partial of these services had in operations (upgraded during Covid-19) before the Covid-19 pandemic and the rest of the supports and services were initiated during the coronavirus surge in Bangladesh. The Library's supports and services were initiated and rendered to the clientele from March 2020 to September 2021. "In this ongoing covid-19 pandemic situation, e-resources and online resources have become a vital part to the users and they can access these e-resources remotely (Hossain, 2022)." Some of the other leading university libraries, such as-Dhaka University Library, IUB Library, NSU Library, BRAC University Library, and WEU Library in Bangladesh transformed their library services into digital/online delivery during the covid-19 pandemic to meet up the users' requirements.

## DISCUSSION

ULAB Library shifted traditional library services and supports into digital delivery mode during covid-19 pandemic from the very beginning of the declaration of lockdown of the educational institutions in Bangladesh in the March 2020. Library introduced and implemented services and supports and the library users received these services and supports without interruptions and obstacles. These changes were implemented for providing quick and smooth services to the clientele of the library. "The current situation has transformed into an interconnected online arena where students, faculty bodies, and academicians have shifted to the new normal, the work from home culture, where there is a vast dependency on online learning, meeting, and communicating systems (Chowdhury, 2021)." Students and faculty members received services and supports of the Library from remotely/off-campus through digital and online delivery mode during the covid-19. The results of the implanted changes were very positive.

## CONCLUSION

"The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about phases of lockdown that have changed the way humans work, lead their everyday lives and how they communicate (Fuchs, 2021)."

ULAB Library shifted the traditional library services into digital library services and provided services and supports to the patrons with digital delivery system during the covid-19 pandemic crisis time. ULAB Library implemented these changes and processes for providing nonstop services and supports to users during the covid-19 pandemic. The processes were fairly straightforward and Library Administration and Staffers did not encounter any obstacles.

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