

**How to Cite:**

Laskar, R. U., & Choudhury, A. S. (2022). Enabling our libraries for continuation of services during pandemic like situation: A study of degree colleges of Barak Valley, Assam, India. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S1), 399-410.  
<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS1.4782>

## **Enabling Our Libraries for Continuation of Services During Pandemic Like Situation: A Study of Degree Colleges of Barak Valley, Assam, India**

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**Abstract**---Purpose: A tiny virus can be a threat to the entire World it could not be believed ever before, but the COVID -19 has given a clear message that we should prepare for the pandemic like situations to the coming days. Library is the most reliable source of information which should remain uninterrupted to provide “right information to the right user, at the right time”. To continue the library services we need to re think our entire system and enabling our library accessible and ready for providing services following alternative ways and Standard Operating Protocols (SOP) set by the international bodies. Methodology: The present study is a descriptive research using Goggle Survey to collect primary data from the respondent. The study population is the whole population of degree colleges of Barak Valley including North Cachar districts of Assam. Findings: 59% libraries took necessary step to subscribe e-resources, 18.2% are going to install disinfected machines, 59.1% suggested to provide adequate fund for necessary preparation to fight with COVID like situation in future. Originality: This is an original research works conducted using Goggle Survey by the researcher in the degree colleges at Barak Valley, Assam.

**Keywords**---Assam University, college library, COVID-19 challenges, library services, pandemic.

## **Introduction**

The sudden outbreak of COVID made a disaster to each and every parts of life. Solution to the new and emergent problem, libraries used social media tools for continuation of library day to day services to support its user community. Infrastructure were developed to cope up with the sudden outbreak and to deliver services at doorstep. The present study is to find out the initiatives taken by the college libraries to meet the requirements of its end user with the utmost concern of health as per the Govt. SOPs ([American Library Association, 2020](#)).

## **Background of the study**

COVID-19 pandemic has impact over libraries that bound the libraries to re think its process of delivering services. Online library services emerged at a large scale and manual services like reading, lending and reference services have put forwarded following some preventive measures such as Standard Operating Protocols etc. The present study is to understand the alternative and preventive, innovative measures taken by the libraries and preparations to enable to handle future pandemic situations ([Ali & Gatiti, 2020](#); [Friday et al., 2020](#); [COVID, 2020](#)).

## **Scope and limitation**

In the pandemic libraries were badly affected by the sudden emergent situation, the services were delivered using deferent social media tools. But when the libraries started to reopen the real challenges began for the professionals especially for the safety and security of the user community. The libraries has to follow some preventive measures to continue the services, therefore the present study is going to reveal the initiatives taken to enable the degree college libraries of Barak Valley to regularize its services. The present study covers the degree colleges of three districts of Barak Valley including the North Cachar Districts of Assam which are affiliated to Assam University Silchar.

## **Literature review**

[Laskar & Mazumder \(2021\)](#), have discussed the alternative ways of libraries to deliver services online during COVID-19 pandemic. They found the college libraries have utilized different Social Media tools as an alternative for providing library services. Largely, Whatsapp 100% and 45.5% used facebook, remaining used Youtube for the continuation of library services. [Purkayastha et al. \(2021\)](#), have discussed the importance of MOOCs the online learning portals such as swayam, egyankosh, eklavya etc. for continuation of library services during the COVID-19 in her study 'Unstoppable study with MOOCs during COVID-19 pandemic: a study [Oche \(2021\)](#), has conducted a study on "Observance of COVID-19 protocol and effective use of library resources and services in the state universities in North Central Nigeria". He found that library services were poorly provided by the university libraries during the COVID-19 lockdown in the state owned University libraries of Nigeria ([Jana & Rout, 2021](#)).

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has affected the regular mode of library services. The study preparedness of libraries have focused on recent pandemic of

top 100 academic institutions in India during COVID-19. The findings of the study revealed that 64% of the libraries have failed to secure their score of 50% on predefined parameter. Rafiq et al. (2021), in their study 'University libraries response to COVID-19 pandemic: a developing country perspective' through telephone interview, seven university qualitative data were analyzed. The study found libraries were engaged with their users during the pandemic using university portal and social media tools.

Dadhe & Dubey (2020), studied on 'Library services provided during COVID-19 pandemic: content analysis of websites of premier Technological Institutes of India (IIT). They explored the types of services provided through their websites. They found significant initiatives taken by the libraries of IITs which can be followed by the other libraries to meet such crisis. Neog (2020), conducted a study on 'library services through social media during lockdown'. His study found that open access resources were mostly delivered library services during pandemic, WhatsApp is the most used social media tool in lockdown period. Mestri (2020), has put forwarded a study on 'Reopening of libraries in COVID-19 pandemic: challenges and recommendations'. He suggested to rethink the library policy based on the recommendations of SOPs according to the level of the intensity of the pandemic while reopening the services. Ladan et al. (2020), in their study 'COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Media News in Nigeria: the role of libraries and library Associations in Dissemination of Information' found that the libraries and library associations have a large role to play as authentic information source against all the fake news and propaganda theories to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Objectives of the study**

The present study is put forwarded on the basis of following objectives.

- To find out the preparation of COVID-19 in the degree college libraries of Barak Valley, Assam
- To understand the precautions and health measure taken in the libraries for the continuation of the library service during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To know the user responses of library services delivered during the pandemic in the college libraries of Barak Valley, Assam.
- To suggest for the preparation of college libraries to deal with the pandemic situations in the future.

### **Methodology**

#### **Methods used**

Descriptive method of research using Google survey with the help of structured questionnaire is used in this study. A questionnaire is prepared in 'Goggle from, and sent to the respective college libraries for data collection.

### **Sample size**

The entire study population is the Degree Colleges of three districts of Barak Valley including North Cachar Districts of Assam which are affiliated to Assam University, Silchar. This study has covered the whole population of 22 out of 29 degree colleges affiliated to Assam University, Silchar.

### **Data sources**

A Google form was designed with help of structured questionnaire and distributed to the respective college librarian of the degree college of Barak valley which are affiliated to Assam University, Silchar. In order to get primary data, a Goggle form containing questions on the basis of research objectives is constructed and distributed to the college librarians of the college under this study.

### **Data collection tools**

An online questionnaire using Goggle form was designed and distributed to collect primary data for this study.

### **Data analysis**

The collected primary data through online questionnaire were analyzed using the statistical technique such as ranking, rating, frequency distribution, percentage and Graphical representation using Microsoft Excel and necessary interpretation were made to find out the research findings as per the study objective and interpretations were made on the basis of data provided.

### **Data analysis and interpretations**

In this study the study population is total population of the degree colleges affiliated to Assam University, Silchar. There are total numbers of 29 degree colleges which were selected as a whole population and Goggle forms were distributed but 22 out of 29 has responded which is 75.86% of the study universe.

Table 1  
Distribution of questionnaire and responses received

Questionnaire Distributed	Frequency	Percentage
Total Questionnaire	29	100%
Responses Received	22	75.86%
Not Responded	07	24.14%

In the following graphical representation it has been shown that 22 out of 29 colleges responded and participated with their primary data provided through Google form distributed to during the survey.

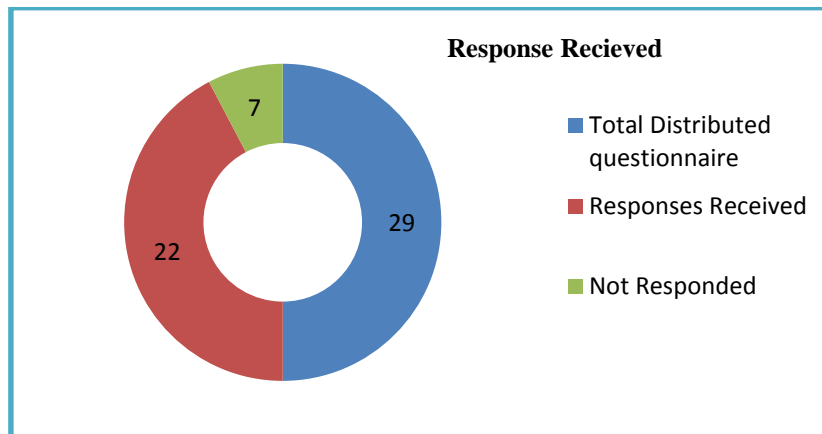


Figure 1. Total numbers of responses received

### Library services during pandemic situation

The preparation of libraries for providing online library services during pandemic has been asked to check the preparedness to libraries in providing online services to the users. The data reveals that, (64%) of the colleges have taken initiative to provide online services during pandemic and remaining (36%) either have not taken any initiative for providing online library services or planning to provide online services.

Table 2  
Preparation for providing online library services

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	63.60%
No	2	9.10%
May be	1	4.50%
Planning to provide online services	5	22.70%
Total	22	100.00

The following graph clearly reveal the fact that 63.6% libraries are taking preparation for providing online library services 9.1% libraries are not taking any preparations.

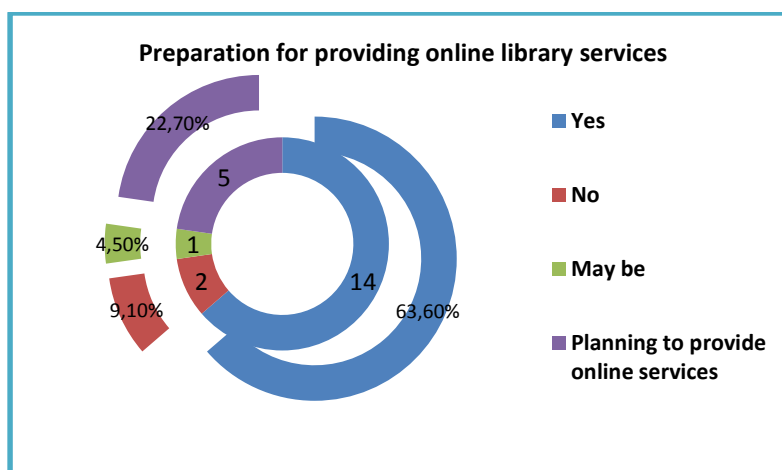


Figure 2. Preparation for providing online library services

### Preventive measurement taken by the college libraries

In response to the question asked in the questionnaire about necessary steps/ measures taken by the college librarians (59.1%) college librarian is of the opinion that college should made available necessary fund for library to subscribe e-resources, (22.7%) college librarian suggested to design and develop dedicate college library website, (54.5%) college librarian suggests to College library to create the blog to connect library users, (63.6%) college librarian suggested that College library should arrange online webinar on how to use online resources, (68.2%) college librarian is of the point of view that library need to organize online orientation / user awareness program by inviting subject experts, (63.6%) college librarian opine that libraries need to develop adequate ICT Infrastructure for online access to resources, (40.9%) college librarian opine that libraries need to become member of library network and consortia, (40.9%) college librarian suggested that libraries need to explore the availability of free open education resources to user, (59.1%) college librarian suggested that cooperation from all library staff is needed, (50%) college librarian opine that need to have trained manpower training, (54.5%) college librarian suggested that to adopt all guidelines and SOPs issued by the Govt. of India/ State Govt. to work in lockdown, (40.9%) college librarian opine that enable to remote access facilities of available resources, (45.5%) college librarian suggested that prepare library as per new normal guidelines after re-opening of the library after pandemic/lockdown.

Table 3  
Preventive measurement taken by the college libraries

	Steps/ Measurement taken by the college libraries	Frequency	Percentage
1	College should made available necessary fund for library to subscribe e-resources	13	59.10%
2	Design and develop dedicate college library website	5	22.70%
3	College library may create the blog to connect library users	12	54.50%
4	College library should arrange online webinar on how to	14	63.60%

	use online resources		
5	Need to organize online orientation / user awareness program by inviting subject experts	15	68.20%
6	Need to develop adequate ICT Infrastructure for online access to resources	14	63.60%
7	Need to become member of library network and consortia	9	40.90%
8	Need to explore the availability of free open education resources to user	9	40.90%
9	Cooperation from all library staff is needed	13	59.10%
10	Need to have trained manpower training	11	50%
11	To adopt all guidelines and SOPs issued by the Govt. of India/ State Govt. to work in lockdown	12	54.50%
12	Enable to remote access facilities of available resources	9	40.95%
13	prepare library as per new normal guidelines after re-opening of the library after pandemic/lockdown	10	45.50%

### **User satisfaction of library services delivered**

User satisfaction of the services delivered during the pandemic were asked. The responses shows that (9%) of colleges have got excellent responses from users about library services, (50%) have got satisfactory responses from the users, (32%) have got average responses from the users and (9%) have got poor responses from users.

Table 4  
Responses from the users

Sl. No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Outstanding	0	0%
2	Excellent	2	9.10%
3	Satisfactory	11	50%
4	Average	7	31.80%
5	Poor	2	9.10%
	Total	22	100.00

The graphical representation clearly shows that 11 out of 22, (50%) users are satisfied with the services provided using different social media tools during the pandemic.

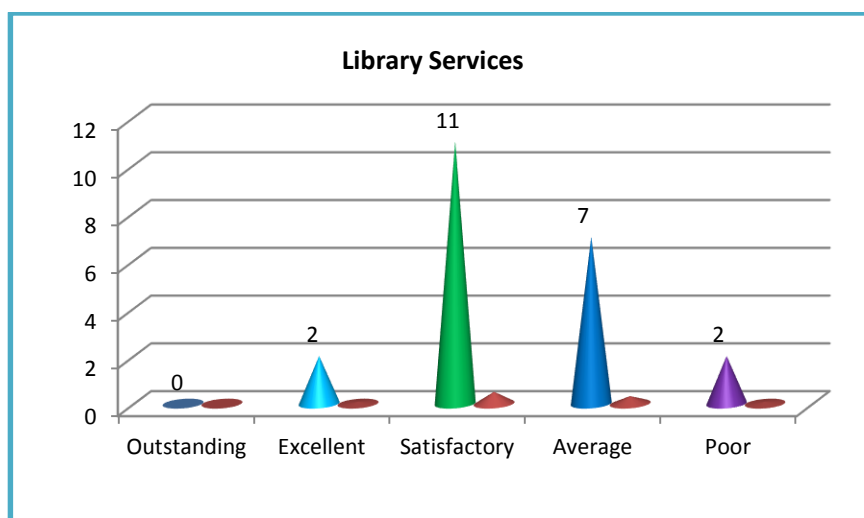


Figure 3. Library Services during pandemic

### Sources for health awareness

Library is the safest place known for its authentic information. During interrupted library services the sources which were accessed to aware health information by the library users during the pandemic are Internet, Newspaper, Social media, Govt. Bulletins etc. The study shows most of the user followed Internet and Social media which is used to share spread fake information, therefore the library should remain uninterrupted for authentic information.

Table 5  
Health information sources

Opinion	Television	Internet	Newspapers	Friends	Parents	Medical journal	Govt. Bulletin	Social media	Health care works	E-books on journal	Family members
Very important	7	16	14	3	7	7	10	11	10	7	8
Important	12	6	7	15	12	13	11	9	11	13	13
Not Important	2	0	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Can't say	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0

The following pictorial representation reveals that Internet, social media, newspaper and Govt. bulletin were found very important tool for health information during the lockdown period.

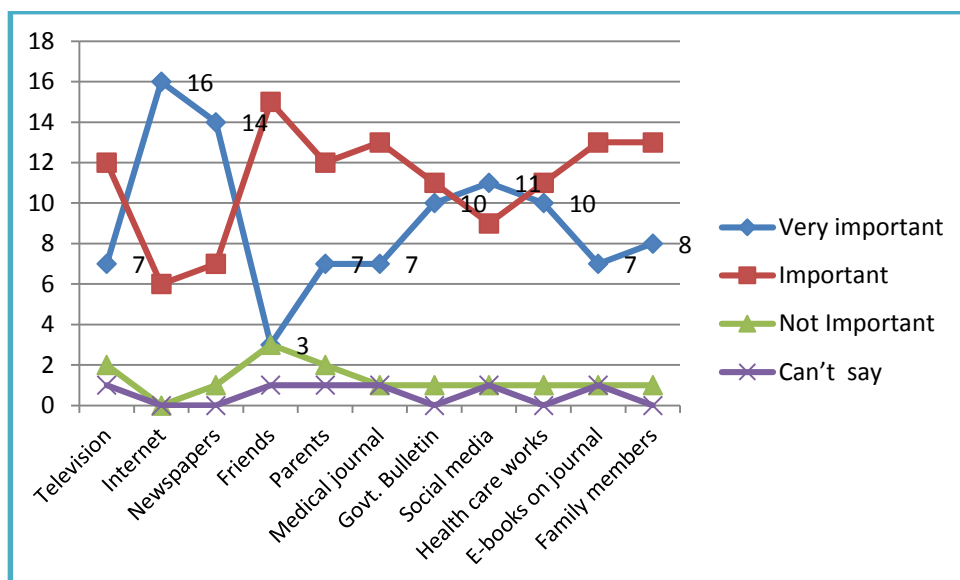


Figure 4. Health information sources

### Preventive measures for healthcare

We are living in the 21st century where people mostly depend on automatic machine because it saves time and manpower. Now modern libraries are installing automatic machine in front of institution to kill virus. The study result shows that (64%) college libraries have not installed any automatic disinfected machine, (18.2%) college libraries have not any idea about this and (18.2%) college libraries will install such types of machine according future need.

Table 6  
Installation of disinfected machine

Installation of disinfected machine	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0%
No	14	63.60%
No idea	4	18.20%
Planning to procure for future need	4	18.20%
Total	22	100.00

In the following graph it can be seen that 64% of college library have not installed disinfected machine to sanitize its library, only 18.2% libraries are planning to procure for future need.

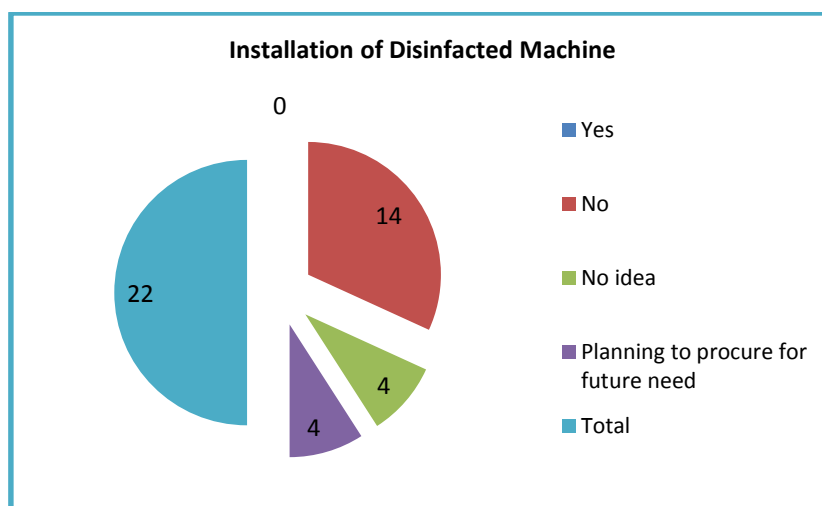


Figure 5. Installation of disinfected machine

### Suggestions from respondents to fight COVID-19 pandemic situation

Suggestions were asked from the end of the college librarian in the survey the college librarian has given some valuable suggestions to fight against COVID-19, (90.9%) respondents have given suggestion to follow all SOPs issued by the Govt. (59.1%) is of the opinion that adequate financial assistance should be provide by the college authority to develop necessary infrastructure to fight COVID-19 pandemic. (59.1%) opine that to observe COVID-19 appropriate behavior, (72.7%) opine that college libraries need to organize online webinar for college students and faculty members for making them aware about all the matter related to COVID-19, (90.9%) suggested that after opening of library, all precautions of social distancing, wearing of masks and frequent sanitize the hands should be followed, (73.3%) opine that in case of any symptom of COVID-19 immediately college authority should be informed and take necessary help from the doctors and (68.2%) suggested that library should also procure e-resources with remote access facility.

Table 7  
Suggestions from respondents

Suggestions from respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1 To follow all SOPs issued by the Govt.	20	90.90%
2 Adequate financial assistance should be provide by the college authority to develop necessary infrastructure to fight COVID-19 pandemic	13	59.10%
3 To observe COVID-19 appropriate behavior	13	59.10%
4 Need to organize online webinar for college students and faculty members for making them aware about all the matter related to COVID-19	16	72.70%
5 After opening of library, all precautions of social distancing, wearing of masks and frequent sanitize the hands should be followed	20	90.90%

6	In case of any symptom of COVID-19 immediately college authority should be informed and take necessary help from the doctors	17	77.30%
7	Library should also procure e-resources with remote access facility	15	68.20%

### Findings and Suggestions

- The study found that 64% colleges have taken initiatives to provide online services where 36% have not taken, only 22% libraries are planning to provide online services for its user community.
- 59.1% libraries took necessary steps to subscribe e –resources and 22.7% suggested to design and develop college library website for smooth delivery of information.
- Libraries found alternative ways to disseminated information and services during the pandemic. The user satisfaction for this services are not found up to the mark. Only 9% colleges have excellent response and 50% have satisfactory responses from the users.
- The study found that the major sources of Health information are Internet, Social Media, Newspaper and Govt. Bulletins.
- To enable virus free environment only 18.2% libraries are going to install automatic disinfected machine and 64% colleges have not installed yet.
- As per the suggestions received from the librarians end, 90.9% have given responses to follow Govt. SOPs, 59.1% suggested to provide adequate financial assistance for necessary preparations for COVID-19 in future.
- 72.7% suggested organizing online webinar for college students and faculties to aware for libraries to use in such situations.
- 90.9% suggested to procure preventive measure such as social distancing, wearing musk, frequent sanitization as a mandatory protocol in the libraries.
- 68.2% suggested to procure e- resources with remote access to handle such situations to come.

### Conclusion

To wrap-up this study it is found to be crucial that libraries have to be enabled taking as a lesson from what happened in the past days. Libraries of the present generation should have e- resources and digital platform to access library resources remotely which is the need of the hour. Library should have a health section to aware its user about health information. There should be an arrangement to control viral diseases such as Delta, Omicron etc. All the libraries must follow a standard protocol for the safety and security of the health of both the users and end users. The authority should provide necessary funds to ready a library for such situations to overcome. They suggest to procure born digital resources to develop a digital platform to access the library resources 24/7 to handle such situations to come.

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