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GUEST EDITORIAL

LIBRARY'S TAKE AWAY FROM THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

All of a sudden, the world has changed forever. Our life styles, practices, processes, preferences, perceptions and perspectives have all underwent a tectonic shift. In a highly connected world, overnight, we have been asked to live a totally disconnected and an isolated life. We now find a lot of things otherwise would have been normally odd, as the new normal.

It is now clear that the post Covid-19 life will not be the same as that of our good old pre Covid-19. That is to say the BC and AD, which we used to mention the timelines, will now have to be rephrased as "Before Corona" and "After the Disease". Several of the norms for the lockdown period due to coronavirus pandemic such as social distancing or physical distancing, hand wash, masks, sanitisers, gloves, PPEs, work from home are almost common place now.Adaptation seems to be the only key here, and as Charles Darwin told, those who are most adaptable to change only can survive. In other words, it is survival of the quickest, and NOT the intelligent or the fittest, any more.

Though it originated in Wuhan-China, interestingly enough, the most advanced countries are the worst affected ones, and jokes apart, all the countries are affected including India, with varying degrees of devastating socio-economic damages and mortality. The relentless global fight against the corona virus is still going on, leaving no signs and traces as to when we will finally tide over the ordeal.

The world economy is plunging into an all-time unprecedented recession, and so is the prediction for India too.Many of the dominant industries have been badly and severely affected. Aviation, hospitality, tourism, transportation, shipping, logistics, traditional industries, cinema, event management, real estate - and the list is almost endless - all have lost their businesses beyond imagination. Millions have either lost their jobs or got displaced or lost wages.

The story is no different in the field of education. The sector has been shattered so much so that even the world's wealthiest universities are facing unprecedented recession and disruption in their revenue streams. It is now clear that the format of education will be more and more of virtual and online learning and less and less of conventional class room based learning. On the other hand, there are some winning industries too. Almost all IT based industries such as software industry, e-commerce, electronic media, e-entertainments, online services, food supply chains, some of the pharmaceuticals - have made fortune these days.We may not know, sometimes new and innovative industries and business may even start emerging and flourishing.

Libraries too are not exempted from this, and in order to sail through this troubled times, we will need to embrace sort of "forced" entrepreneurship, if we want to survive and to be relevant before the

stakeholders. Also as stated above, the increased stress on e-Learning will have a strong bearing on libraries to provide large amount of e-Resources towards meeting the demands of teaching-learning. In other words, at the earliest, we will need to digitally transform our libraries to overcome this crisis. To put it briefly, "crisis-forced digital transformation" will shape the future of our libraries.

The dire need of the hour is succinctly captured and shared by Professor Sandeep Krishnamurthy, Dean of Bothell School of Business at University of Washington and Co-Chair, AACSB's Digital Transformation Affinity Group - "In today's all-online, all-at-once learning environment, digital transformation is no longer an abstract concept for business schools to consider and plan for future enhancements. The time for thoughtful, intelligent technological change is now.Digital transformation is about automating, transforming, and personalizing knowledge work."

This assumes greater responsibility for libraries during the lockdown and beyond, and ensure that our patrons – faculty, students, researchers, and in the case of other libraries, the general public too – are kept in confidence that their information and knowledge requirements are adequately met with uninterrupted, at a time we are disrupted, without having to come to the libraries physically.

Prof. Sandeep Krishnamurthy underlines that digital transformation is about automating, transforming, and personalizing knowledge work. Today, technology is matured enough that the library's collections and services along with state-of-art discovery facility, are reaching out to the users at their desktops and handheld gadgets, hassle free. In other words, while technology will always change how we deliver our services, the essential central truth of our mission will remain constant, though the modus-operandi does.

The library's major mandate such as selection, acquisition, description (metadata), curation/ preservation and delivery of content and services will continue to be the same even in the new format and technology life styles. Catching up with the technology trends, the dynamics of the information science transformations, and also in line with the user sentiments of the IIM Kozhikode campus, the library has launched a special academic support service to its users on 28th March 2020, and it is accessible @https://iimk.ac.in/libportal/

Therefore it is high time for us to have introspection as to whether we are future-ready, or at least present-ready?

To match up with the above scenario, there has to be a check-list of the following:

1. *Does the library have a critical mass of e-Resources, and if not, it is high time to build up the digital collection;*
2. *Is the library's catalogue online, and if so, make it accessible to patrons;*
3. *Does the library provide patrons to engage in a chat mode communication with the library colleagues, and if not, do it immediately;*
4. *Does the library have a website or a portal, and if so, make it accessible to patrons;*
5. *Does the library provide "Ask a Librarian" facility in the library website, and if not, do it immediately;*

6. *Is the e-Resources under subscription got integrated and aggregated into the ERMS/Portal, and if so, make it accessible to patrons;*

7. *Does the library have a subject guide to help the users to navigate deep into each of their subject preferences and browse through the content relevant to their needs, and if so, make it accessible to the patrons;*

8. *Do you have open access collections of e-Books, e-Journals, educational resources (OER) and other e-Resources, and if so, make it accessible to patrons;*

9. *Does the library host an Institutional Repository (IR), and if so, make it accessible to patrons;*

10. *Does the library have a Web Scale Discovery Service, and if so, make it accessible to patrons;*

11. *Does the library have VPN access/ remote access, and if so, make all library resources accessible to patrons*

Libraries, without adaptability as a key, will be dealt a severe Darwinian blow if we lack majority of the above aspects. Evolving digitally and accommodating technology in our genetic set up (i.e., to encode into the library's DNA) is what will give us the ability to compete, survive, and sustain as we journey forth into previously uncharted territory.

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