

## **Reopening the academic library in the post-pandemic season: a lesson-learned from the COVID-19 pandemic**

I. D. K. L. Fernando<sup>1</sup>, P. K. Jayasekera<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

Information has becoming the most valuable asset in the emerging world. Hence, information has become one of the major driving forces that lead a country towards sustainable development. While the libraries and other information centers are closed around the world, it could be adversely affected on the economy and general livelihood of the society. Thus, continuing the information services uninterrupted is a matter of significance. However, the continuum of library services during lock-down situations and post-pandemic scenarios should be practice with proper care and understanding, especially during the post-pandemic conditions when re-commencing work in an academic library after the lock-down situation. Prevailing COVID -19 pandemic has provided an eye-opening lesson for academic librarians to re-think the way they perform and in what ways they can prepare for the post-pandemic reopening of the library. With the knowledge of the COVID -19 pandemic and related pathological nature of the virus, the present approach attempts to formulate an input while reopening the academic libraries of Sri Lanka. The concept also is applicable while planning to provide library services in similar post-lockdown scenarios. Practical safety precautions were suggested after conducting a thorough literature search in relevant and reputed journal databases, magazines and official websites. It can be recommended that the library should formulate a dedicated body, with the leadership of one senior member of the library staff for the overall monitoring and assessment of the pandemic-safety in the reopening time. Awareness of the libraries' stakeholders via

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<sup>1</sup> Senior Assistant Librarian, Library, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

Email: [kusala@lib.ruh.ac.lk](mailto:kusala@lib.ruh.ac.lk)  [https://orcid.org/ 0000-0003-1570-6746](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1570-6746)

<sup>2</sup> Senior Assistant Librarian, Library, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

Email: [kancahana@lib.ruh.ac.lk](mailto:kancahana@lib.ruh.ac.lk)



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different mediums, develop policies for disinfection, meetings, and other official tasks can be suggested. Following a country-specific existing-strategy that developed for the libraries of Sri Lanka is highly recommended. As a summary, the academic library should formulate an integrated pandemic prevention protocol to serve the library patrons with a delightful post-pandemic reopening experience.

**Keywords:** Academic libraries, COVID-19, Existing strategy, Library services in a pandemic, New coronavirus, Reopening strategy

## **Introduction**

Information has become one of the major driving forces in a country in the sustainable development perspective (Christine, 2019). The Economist magazine highlighted that the data has become the most valuable commodity in the world (The Economist, 2017). Therefore, providing information services or required data for the community should be an uninterrupted service under any circumstances. It is a doubt that how far the existing conventional academic library setup will meet with this requirement, especially when a pandemic situation is prevailing in the county. According to the Eberhart (2010) "A library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is (1) organized by information professionals or other experts who (2) provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and (3) offer targeted services and programs (4) with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole" (p.1). Hence, the conventional library is mainly made up of printed and digital library materials, infrastructures and human resources.

The main components of the library and their composition may vary depending on the type of the library. However, the conventional library collections are mainly consisted with more printed and moderate to a low number of digital materials. Thus, it will become a great challenge to continue library services with more tangible library materials under a pandemic condition. The nature of the printed materials can vary as: paperback, laminated hardback, leather cover and polythene cover. Libraries are using shelves and cupboards made with wood, glass or metal to organize and display their library materials. Similarly, most of the desks and chairs in the libraries are made with wood, plastic and metal. Other than that, some libraries are providing computers for their patrons to search their catalogues and some have electronic device lending facilities (e.g.: laptop, eBook readers). Human resources that mainly come across with the library are staff, patrons and other stakeholders.

Depending on the type of the library, the composition of patrons may vary. As an example, university libraries have academic staff, non-academic staff and undergraduate and postgraduate students as their user community. However, a public library must serve a large population of patrons, including young children and the elderly. Likewise, school libraries and special libraries are catering to specific populations only. The library staffs include librarians, library assistants,

library attendance and other staff including security officers, janitors, drivers and labourers. Environments within a library are also depending on the type and size of the library. Most of the libraries have open areas with or without fans for air circulation such as general collection areas and reading areas. Additionally, some libraries have closed areas such as auditoriums, mini-lecture theatres, computer labs and special collections within the library with or without air conditions and fans. Besides, large libraries have specific office areas, several washrooms and dining rooms inside the library. Librarians need to reconsider about these devices, furniture and other surfaces while providing services in the reopening time. Similarly, the adoption of information technology can also be used as a supplement to the conventional library services.

As a result of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), digital technologies have been adopted by many firms as solutions to continue information services during the pandemic situations as well (Javaid et al., 2020). This led people to find new gateways to reach their libraries and information centres during the pandemic lockdown season. The BBC (2020) highlighted that people in the UK has reportedly surged towards online browsing and access to electronic resources during the pandemic lockdown time. Ali & Gatiti (2020) revealed that there will be a significant role for librarians and information specialists during a pandemic situation in a country. They listed the expected role of a librarian as follows;

- i. to promote public health awareness by creating and disseminating information relating to preventive measures;
- ii. to support research team, researchers and faculty, by providing information regarding the latest developments, research and literature;
- iii. to meet the core needs of regular library users (Ali & Gatiti, 2020)

Thus, the information professionals including the academic librarians shall act accordingly to bridge the gaps of information requirements of their patron base.

Technologies that emerged as a result of 4IR can be adopted to serve this need and it also prevents the spread of misinformation by providing required information through a reputed professional channel (Javaid et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the American Library Association (ALA) highlighted that most of the education-related libraries have to be transformed towards e-resources in favour of online learning initiated by those educational institutions (American Library Association,

2020a). The ALA (2020a) treating this emerging trend as a possible future challenge for all the education-related librarians as;

Many libraries have adapted services to support online learners while campuses are closed. A future challenge might be in supporting more hybrid mixes with some online learners and some in-person learners. Additional demands - in a time of likely limited resources - could further stress library workers.

However, the recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only been a mass destructor, but also a trigger that leads people to think and act differently in their usual work. As par with fulfilling the role and responsibility that the society required at the moment, academic librarians should get ready with reopening the libraries in near future. Thus, academic librarians should have a keen understanding of the prevailing situation, the pandemic, information about the pathogen and the mode of transmission. This information will helpful for them to provide a better post-pandemic experience for their patrons and prevent the community from leading towards a second wave of the pandemic.

### *The Pandemic*

According to Kelly (2011), a pandemic is “an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people”. The pandemic is different from other related terms, epidemic and outbreak (Healthcare, 2020). An epidemic “is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region” (Healthcare, 2020). An outbreak is limited to a country or a specific region and could become an epidemic if not controlled. When a country or region is experiencing an outbreak, they should try to avoid it becoming an epidemic state and when there is an epidemic, the authorities should try to make it to an outbreak or control not becoming a pandemic. When it has turned into a pandemic, the entire world trying to control the number of new cases and limit the spread of the pandemic. This study is commencing in such a time that the COVID-19 had become a pandemic and the entire world has undergone a lockdown situation.

### *The COVID-19 pandemic*

The recent outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was initially reported on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, when Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei Province and COVID-19 was eventually identified (WHO, 2020f). Since then the COVID-19 outbreak has become a pandemic situation that spread over more than 187 countries (WHO, 2020c). Most of these countries, territories and regions have limited its services to prevent the further spread of the disease conditions. Being a country that connected and opens to the outer world, Sri Lanka has faced to reporting suspected patients with COVID-19 symptoms.

### *COVID-19 history of Sri Lanka*

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka was reported on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services, 2020). According to the situation report 01, (2020.01.28) published by the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services, Sri Lanka this patient was a Chinese national who visited Sri Lanka, before two weeks, she was identified. The same report highlighted, at that moment of the first situation reported, COVID-19 has been reported from 11 countries with 2798 confirmed cases and 80 deaths. According to the situation report published by the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services (2020) Sri Lanka initiated to practice following main preventive modalities;

- “Avoid close contact with people suffering from the flu.
- Frequent hand washing.
- Avoid contact with the live or dead animal.
- Always cover the nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing (with disposable tissue/cloth or cough to the armpit).
- Do not touch mouth/nose/eyes unnecessarily” (p.1).

Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services (MOH) updated their guidelines in the situation report 03, published on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 advising to keep social distance and avoid gathering in groups. Subsequently, with reporting more and more confirmed cases, Sri Lanka initiates lockdown in the country starting from the high-risk areas. Due to the lockdown conditions and curfew imposed, civil lives began to transform into a sedentary life. Universities, schools, public libraries and other government and private organizations were closed to

control the rapid spread of the virus. Since most of the supply services were limited, people tend to isolate in the places that they were when the lockdowns were imposed. Students of different ages were unable to continue their studies and the newspaper services and most other printed information services were halted. However, people tend to access online resources to fulfil their information requirements. Universities and schools also initiated conducting teaching via online teaching/learning platforms, social media platforms and chatting apps (such as Viber, WhatsApp, imo, etc). Academic librarians of Sri Lanka started to establish providing off-campus access to all possible library services, including, institutional repositories, online journal databases, and electronic books via the campus networks.

Most of the pandemics are communicable diseases. They are very hard to control since they can transmit from one person to another, especially in an academic library set up where people from different parts of the country and visitors from the overseas meet together. Most of the academic libraries around the world may probably close during the prevalence of the pandemic (Ali & Gatiti, 2020). Thus, the libraries need to use existing online library services with new supplementary services to promote the teaching and learning in the university (Ali & Gatiti, 2020; American Library Association, 2020a). Similarly, the librarians and other information professionals should have a proper plan to reopen the library services to the patrons soon after the lockdown conditions are lift-off. As prominent bodies related to the library sector in Sri Lanka, National Library and Documentation Services Board (2020) and National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (2020) have created reopening guidelines that can be adopted by Sri Lankan libraries.

### *Problem statement*

Academic librarians, the same as the other academics in the university is only having a basic literacy of health. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has made a way for these academics to learn more towards pandemics, and the way to maintain their universities and services with proper care from such pandemics and similar encounters. There are several main functions taking place in libraries that require special attention during a pandemic situation, such as; circulation, processing and handling of library materials, reference services, acquisition, usage of library computer labs, auditoriums and mini lecture theatres. In every stage of these

activities, library staff must interact with the patrons as well as library materials and outside personal. Therefore, the present study attempts to provide a better understanding of the COVID-19, its mode of transformation, and the measure to take into account when reopening the libraries and services after such a devastating communicable disease. With a proper understanding of the pandemic, academic librarians can perform well in library re-opening time and similar pandemic conditions in the future and provide a better post-pandemic experience for patrons in the library reopening.

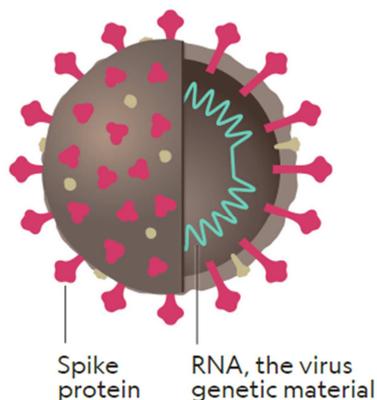
### **Research Objectives**

The objective of this study is to provide important safety points required for the post-pandemic academic library reopening phase.

### **Literature Review**

The most recent devastating pandemic condition that prevailed in recent history is the COVID-19 (UNDP, 2020). Identification of the general properties of the COVID-19 may help to control the prevailing and future outbreaks of such pandemics (Li, Liu, Yu, Tang, & Tang, 2020). The awareness of such viral infections among the general public is of the utmost importance (Madhav et al., 2017), especially in academic libraries where a large number of patrons from diverse locations are gathering. Even though authorities have given safety measures, the public shall be aware well about the nature and mode of infection of the pathogen where people can be led to develop their safety measures accordingly with their specific type of living conditions.

“Corona” is pathologically a virus that belongs to the Coronaviridae Family which is caused by the pathogenic species of SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 Coronaviruses (Li et al., 2020; Malik, 2020). There are seven such human coronaviruses. Initially, the SARS-CoV virus was discovered in 2002 and the new coronavirus that reappeared in December 2019 in Wuhan, (Hubei, China) is known as “Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2”, or SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19, or corona-2 (Li et al., 2020; Malik, 2020; Valencia, 2020). It has the shape of a crown (“corona” in Latin is for the Crown (Valencia, 2020) or a solar crown) that given by the club-shaped spikes that envelop the outer surface of the virus with a single strand of RNA inside. RNA, Ribonucleic Acid is the genetic material of the virus. CoVs viruses are approximately 125 nm in diameter (Malik, 2020). Figure 1 is depicting the graphical explanation of the new coronavirus.



**Figure 1. New coronavirus**

Source: Mckeever (2020)

It contains all the information to regenerate in a host body. According to Malik (2020), SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV are zoonotic viruses that originated in bats. It was in 1960 the zoonotic coronavirus identified before it identified as a pathogenic coronavirus in humans in 2002 (Malik, 2020). There is evidence that these viruses can be visible in other intermediate hosts before man. Those are camels, civet cats, dogs, tigers, pigs, and possibly most of the mammals and all other primates (Gollakner & Capua, 2020). Thus, the virus can be transmitted from another primate to humans (also a primate) and/ or human to humans.

The human transmission of the virus could lead to an outbreak, epidemic or pandemic. Malik (2020) summarized the mode of human transmission “Human-to-human transmission is primarily achieved through close contact (within about 3–6 feet) of respiratory droplets, direct contact with the infected individuals, or by contact with contaminated objects and surfaces”. It is also possible to get infected by touching surfaces or objects contaminated by the virus (Li et al., 2020; Malik, 2020; Ramesh, Siddaiah, & Joseph, 2020; WHO, 2020e). The viable virus will remain 72 hours in stainless steel and plastic surfaces (Mckeever, 2020; Valencia, 2020). Coronavirus in humans appears as a type of severe pneumonia condition (Gollakner & Capua, 2020; Malik, 2020). Transmitting the virus from an infected person is known as “Symptomatic transmission” (Malik, 2020). The virus remains in the upper respiratory tract for 3 days prior to the visibility of symptoms (Li et al., 2020; Malik, 2020). There is evidence of transmitting the virus to another person during this pre-symptomatic transmission period. Thus, an infected person

can be a vector (transmitter of the virus) even before them visible symptoms. Then the virus started to grow inside the host's body and this referred to as the incubation period which is 2-14 days for the coronavirus. (Li et al., 2020; Malik, 2020; Ramesh et al., 2020). These types of patients are even more dangerous vectors. Transmitting during the incubation period is known as asymptomatic transmission (Malik, 2020). The symptoms of the COVID-19 viral infection can be fever, cough, difficulty in breathing, pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or diarrhoea (Ramesh et al., 2020) Thus the mode of viral transmission, its possible hosts (definitive host, intermediate host, alternative host, and accidental hosts) shall be known well. It will help the general public to make their protective measures while working and living. At some time, the pathogenicity and epidemiology of the targeting pathogen shall be known and public awareness should be done adequately.

However, the reopening of the libraries is a national approach. “The Japanese Library Association’s guidance suggests a four-stage process, for example, analysing risks from surfaces, close contacts with people, the ways in which people use the libraries, and overall levels of infection in the region” (IFLA, 2020). When considering the Sri Lankan condition, the National Library and Documentation Services Board (2020) suggested four stages of a reopening plan for Sri Lankan public libraries. The summary of the aforesaid reopening plan is as follows (National Library and Documentation Services Board, 2020);

- Stage – 1: Close the library for users and stop lending facilities. Allow users to return borrowed items and quarantine them.
- Stage – 2: Provide lending facilities only for patrons booked their appointment before the actual visit. Adhere to the social distancing guidelines.
- Stage – 3: After taking the confirmation from the health officials in the area, open the library except the children’s section.
- Stage – 4: Open the children’s section when the government decided to reopen the primary sections of the schools.

Similarly, the National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS), University of Colombo prepared a guideline with the collaboration of National Library and Documentation Services Board of Sri Lanka (NLDSB), Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA), and Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) that can be

adopted by any library in Sri Lanka (National Institute of Library and Information Sciences, 2020). NILIS suggested a five-phase strategy. The stages of the 'Exit strategy from Covid-19 for libraries in Sri Lanka' as follows (National Institute of Library and Information Sciences, 2020);

- Phase 0: Adhere to the advice provided by the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health. Stop the circulation of library materials and equipment. Provide online services using websites and social media platforms.
- Phase 1: Start circulation with prior appointments and prior reservation of books. Provide closed access to the library collections as much as possible. Limit the number of users inside the library.
- Phase 2: When the community spread is over, allow patrons to use newspaper collection and reference collection. Provide open access to library collections. Inform users to adhere to proper sanitation practices.
- Phase 3: When the Ministry of Education starts schools, start providing library services to children. Start mobile library services with safety measures.
- Phase 4: Start the normal circulation and library services, when the government announced that the COVID-19 is eliminated from Sri Lanka.

## **Methodology**

A detailed review of the literature was conducted regarding the COVID-19 pandemics and provisions for library reopening after the pandemic. Literature search was conducted from April to May 2020. Appropriate keywords were used to find the required information and those keywords are: new coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic, to provide library services during and post-pandemic conditions, existing guidelines for reopening libraries, existing strategies for COVID-19 and how to conduct academic libraries during and post-pandemic seasons. These keywords were queried through different advanced searching techniques on the databases of PubMed, Oxford academic journals, Oxford medicine online, Emerald insight, Taylor & Francis, JSTOR, SCOPUS, Google Scholar, and websites of World Health Organization (WHO), Ministry of Health Sri Lanka, American Library Association, IFLA, in online magazines, National Geography, The economist, Time Magazine and Research Gate.

### *Reopening recommendations*

Commencing of libraries' work shall be conducted with proper dedication and awareness of the people at work and people who visit the workplace for their business (American Library Association, 2020a; Balzer, 2020; Centers for Disease Control, 2020b). Keeping better working safety during a pandemic is highly essential (WHO, 2020d), especially when the pandemic is fatal. The new coronavirus is a fatal virus and mortality may increase for old ages and co-morbid conditions (Ramesh et al., 2020).

Thus, both the employee and the employer need to be stick to a proper disease prevention protocol. Ramesh et al., (2020) summarizing the workplace safety strategies as “avoiding non-essential travel, identifying and isolating sick employees at the earliest, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, environmental hygiene and social distancing”. Library staff who are serving to their libraries during an on-going pandemic and/or post-pandemic situations should know the criteria to guess or identify a possible COVID-19 infected person prior to laboratory confirmation (American Library Association, 2020a; Centers for Disease Control, 2020b). According to Ramesh et al., (2020) there are three such criteria;

1. Fever and/or signs/symptoms of lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough or shortness of breath) with or without the requirement for hospitalization.
2. A history of travel from a place currently reporting confirmed cases of COVID-19 within 14 days of the onset of symptoms.
3. Any person, including any health care professional, who has had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of the onset of symptom.

It also advised keeping limited contacts with animals as pets or other sorts of contact (Centers for Disease Control, 2020a). Since the disease originally comes from an animal (especially a mammal) this concern is highly advisable for the patrons. Hand hygiene: hands have to be washed often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the washroom, before eating, when hands are visibly dirty and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (WHO, 2020a).

The World Health Organization has issued reopening advice to the public, through their website (WHO, 2020e). It indicates four main points to consider keeping workplaces in a better condition to re-open to the public. For the purpose of reopening an academic library, the below-mentioned points could be followed.

1. Prevent the spreading of the pandemic
2. Conducting safe meetings
3. Managing the travel of employees

According to the WHO (2020c), preventing the spread of the pandemic can be done by, keeping the workplace clean and hygienic, especially the surfaces and objects (e.g. furniture, telephones, computers, etc). Frequent cleaning of these places using a suitable disinfectant is highly recommended. Provide facilities for the employees and patrons (visitors) to promote regular and thorough hand-washing with sanitizers. Posters and notices should be placed in desired places to promote these hygienic practices among physical visitors. It is also advised to display posters to promote better respiratory hygiene in the workplace (library in this scenario). Safety precautions should be followed while conducting meetings in the workplace in the next concern highlighted by the WHO (2020), especially because an infected person can still be a vector without any signs or symptoms. With the age groups (especially 60+) the vulnerability of the COVID-19 despise can be getting high (Malik, 2020) and lung or heart disease, diabetes or conditions that affect their immune system also count under the high risk groups (WHO, 2020d). Meetings can be limited to online meetings, unless it is a “must be face-to-face” event. Even that, it is always better to take provisions from the higher authorities. Meeting supplies should be pre-ordered and disinfected properly and all the stakeholders of the meeting (food suppliers, participants, and other applicable parties) should provide their full contact details and whether they have come across any suspected person or activity recently that related to the pandemic. All the participants should be agreed to follow social distance and personal hygiene guidelines during the meeting and necessary personal hygiene supplies should be provided by the organizers (tissues, sanitizers, closed bins for disposal, etc.) after the meeting if a participant or any stakeholder develops even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 °C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate and relevant authorities shall be aware of the meeting and its other participants. Similarly, the WHO advice the employees who travel to

inform the authorities accordingly and keep a pre and post traveling safety plan and keep themselves safe while traveling.

In the meantime, the CDC (2020b) advises keeping a proper cleaning plan and a cleaning strategy for the workplace. Suitable disinfectants should be used to clean the desired places and objects, where the virus can span days. The American Library magazine highlights the public and staff safety as the most important aspect in the reopening library time and it suggested that the reopening could be done in a few stages, rather than not opening everything at once (Balzer, 2020). They have shared the experience of such a draft of the reopening stages of the library (Annex I).

Additionally, the American Library Association has suggested to formulate an individual library policy on illness and/or pandemic prevention and preparedness (American Library Association, 2020c).

#### *Disinfecting circulating books*

According to Nice (1912), Books can be vectors for small-pox, measles, scarlet fever, trachoma, diphtheria, erysipelas, dysentery, typhoid and tuberculosis. Thus, one of the main issues faces by the librarians while continuing the library works during a pandemic is circulating books. There is a high chance of getting a contaminated material to the library circulating counter under a prevailing pandemic situation. Thus, the disinfection of library materials shall be suggested. The American Library Association (2020b) suggests several methods to disinfect the returning library books. According to them, the library staff working in the circulation counters should wear protective gloves. The returning items can be packed or bagged and kept in isolation for 24-48 hours. However, the American Library Association suggests keeping circulating books for 72 hours in quarantine (American Library Association, 2020b). Application of an Ultra Violet (UV) light is also a possible method. But there is also a possibility of deteriorating the paper-based library materials due to the light. So, the method shall be applying accordingly with the rareness, brittleness and the deterioration possibility of the material. Liquid disinfections are not recommended to apply on paper-based materials (American Library Association, 2020b).

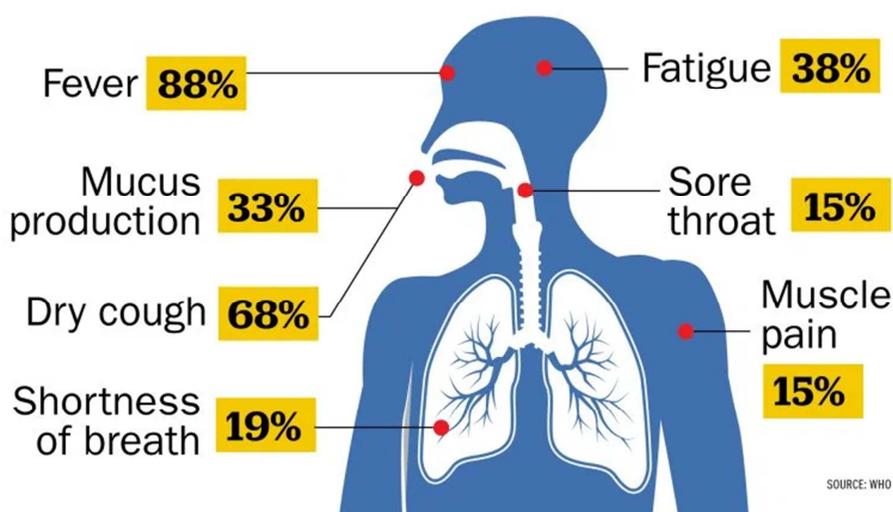
#### *Suggestions for academic library reopening phase*

The general public is always educating and aware by the mass media about the prevailing pandemic and its preventive measures. Thus, the patrons need to be

reminded about those safety precautions all the time while utilizing the library resources physically. Following are such suggestions that can simply adopted at the basic level at any library.

*Remind the patrons and staff with COVID-19 symptoms*

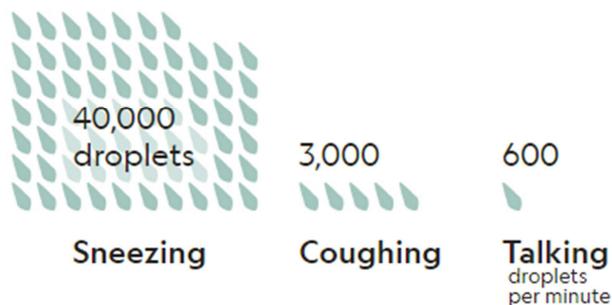
With the pandemic situation of the COVID-19, most literate and low literate parties were adequately aware about the symptoms and mode of transmitting of the disease. However, it is wiser to display the symptoms of the disease as a poster at the entrance, near the toilets, near the circulation counter and other places where the crowd is usually gathering. The following image is such an example.



**Figure 2. What are the symptoms of covid-19**

(Source: Times staff, 2020)

At the same time, the modes of transmission information can be displayed in the focal points in the library. The following are such a graphical presentation of the mode of transmission published by the National Geographic Journal (McKeever, 2020). These posters may remind the library physical visitors what are the symptoms of the disease (Figure 2), which they can use to check themselves and check the symptoms of others. The COVID-19 is communicable via the human droplets. Physical visitors can aware of the nature, type and capability of such droplets, that can make them sick (Figure 3).

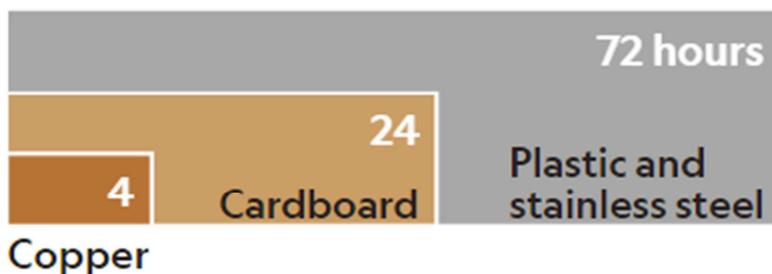


**Figure 3. Be aware! with droplets**

(Source: Mckeever, 2020)

Sneezing, Coughing, Talking are common human practices, even a library is a place that required utmost silence. Whenever a person makes a sort of droplets, even he/ she is not symptomatic, the people around that person may psychologically disturb. In such incidents, displaying these sorts of postures is highly helpful to get safe and make up their psychological fitness.

Touching different types of surfaces by hand is an involuntary response of people that mostly happen without their knowledge. The same psychological unwell can happen, especially under the prevailing pandemic situation in physical users. Aware about the different surface types and the viability of the new coronavirus (in this situation) will be helpful to those library users (Figure 4). With the frequent cleaning of the library surfaces and the possibility of getting contaminated, users themselves can come to a conclusion about the surface they touched.



**Figure 4. COVID-19 survive in these surfaces**

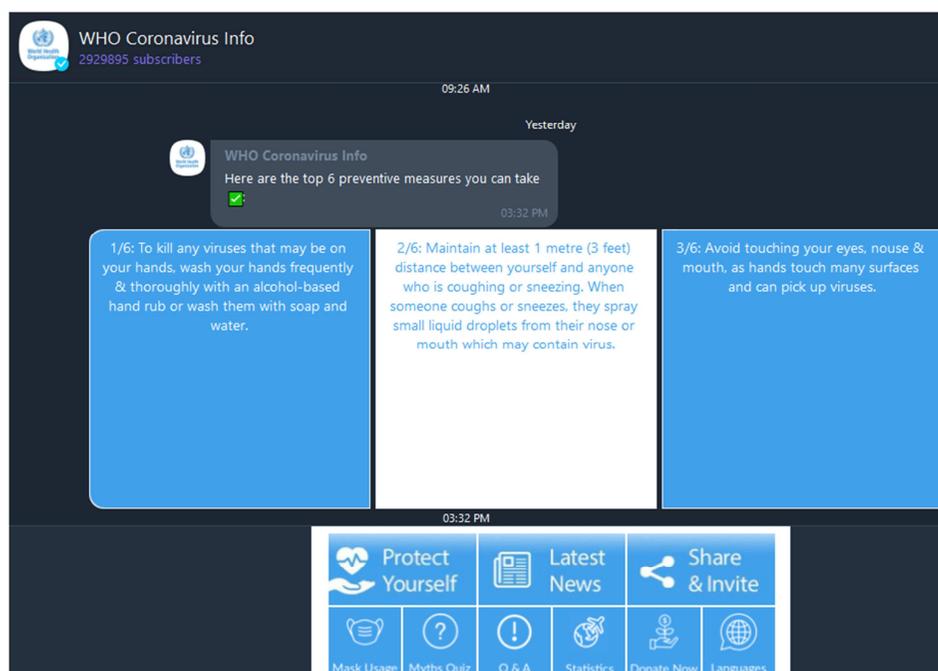
(Source: Mckeever, 2020)

In addition to these, the world health organization has let the public download warnings and keeps personal hygiene safety precaution posters from their web site. These posters can be found at the World Health Organizations “advice for the public” page (WHO, 2020b). Interested parties can download these posters free.

Since the situation and the next trend of the pandemic is unpredictable, these safety precautions and guidelines may tend to update. More related information and downloads are also available at the website of the Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka (Epidemiology unit Ministry of Health, 2020).

Thus, even in this review, it is really hard to mention an exact safety regulation. The best practice is to keep a dedicated personal in searching of the information about the pandemic and leading the overall pandemic control of the library.

Additionally, this information can go beyond limiting to the library display boards. This information can be shared by conducting frequent awareness programs via social media and chatting apps (such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber, Imo, etc.). This effort can be done by a dedicated, knowledgeable person in the library. The World Health Organization has opened its information to the public via Viber chatting app (Figure 5). Library stakeholders can be invited to subscribe to those social media channels to receive the latest updates about pandemic and safety measures. The library can also enable a SMS (Short Messaging Service) gateway to its patrons to share important, urgent updates.



**Figure 5. WHO Viber information service**

(Source: WHO Coronavirus info Viber page)

Formulating library policies to conduct routine activities such as circulation, computer use, other equipment use is essential in this setup. All these policies shall include pandemic preventive measures such as disinfecting, quarantine, etc. The library should develop a policy to disinfect different places, surfaces, other materials and personals in the library will be so mushing helpful in the post-pandemic reopening of the library. All the meetings and other official gatherings of the library shall be conducted safely according to a well-established policy.

### **Conclusion**

Library staff and all the stakeholders (people who involve in affected) shall have a general understanding of the pandemic, its causes, pathogenicity, symptoms, and preventive measures. Controlling the spread of the pandemic must be taken place from personal level prevention and control. As a supplement and to emphasize the preventive information to the physical visitors is highly recommended in the reopen season of the academic library. All circulating materials and the staff involved with the circulation shall be disinfecting and or quarantine accordingly. Apart from that, library staff while moving with other official activities shall stick to the safety guidelines mentioned in the text (and updated related body, such as WHO, Ministry of Health, CDC, etc.). A dedicated person should be appointed among the senior staff of the library for the overall monitoring and assessment of the pandemic prevention in the library. He/ she can lead all the safety protocols, policies, getting touch with the latest updates about the pandemic, disinfection practices in the library. Formulating a pandemic prevention team in the library is also important. However, every citizen must keep their workplace healthy and clean to favour a better service to the public. Integrated pandemic prevention practices can lead the academic library to provide a delightful reopening experience for all its stakeholders.

### **Conflict of interest**

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## **Annex I**

### **Public Services Return to Work/Library Re-Opening Plan**

- Stage 1> Some staff work in the building according to set schedule for distancing (one person in work area at a time); providing limited reference, interlibrary loan (most libraries closed), and full ArticlesPlus services; handling mail; handling TSB processed materials; taking care of fiscal, personnel, and statistical tasks
- Stage 2> All bureau staff work in the building ONE WEEK, collections work caught-up (TSB processing checks/corrections, shelving); circulation updated; files/work transferred back to office work stations; office work routines restored; security services restored; interlibrary loan services for libraries and reference services continue, full ArticlesPlus service continues.
- Stage 3> Some public services restored OUT OF BUILDING – curb side delivery/pick-up of library collection materials; limited reference services continue; interlibrary loan services restored.
- Stage 4> Additional public services restored IN LOBBY ONLY- security guard on duty in lobby; public laptop wireless computer(s) available at security desk to look for and request library collection materials which will be left outside library door for pick-up by public; telephone reference/research assistance/ immediate real time conversations with librarians behind the glass wall; full email reference services restored; full interlibrary loan and ArticlesPlus services continue
- Stage 5> LIBRARY OPEN to public with EXTRA PRECAUTIONS and provided adequate public area sanitation supplies are available – LIBRARY OPEN to public and all library services for the general public as well as state government and libraries are provided as scheduled Monday through Friday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM with social distancing accommodations in place such as moving public seating and computers 6 feet apart, perhaps limiting the number of people allowed at one time and limiting computer time to 45 minutes or by appointment so that sanitation can take place between users, and closing the seating wings to reduce sanitation requirements as well as provide a storage area for extra tables and computers

Stage 6> LIBRARY OPEN to public, business as usual, all library services for the general public as well as state government and libraries are provided as normal and as scheduled Monday through Friday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Courtesy of New Mexico State Library, 4/23/2020

Source: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JS-s8xKVUV2yKjhMFZrNb4S5aQCLdh8C/view>