



LIBRARY SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DURING COVID 19



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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes University of Zambia (UNZA) Medical Library's services that were provided to its end-users during the COVID-19 pandemic. The University of Zambia Medical Library supports 4 schools namely, School of Medicine, School of Nursing Sciences, School of Health Sciences and School of Public health with approximately over 4000 students and clinician/health professionals in the University Teaching Hospital (UTH). Before the Covid19 pandemic the Medical Library had normal operations and was working during weekends and public holidays. Following the first reported case of COVID-19 in Zambia in March, 2020, the government announced the closure of all schools, universities and colleges, effective Friday, March 20, 2020 . The University of Zambia (UNZA) management announced the indefinite closure of both the Main and Ridgeway campuses until government provided guidance on re-opening of the institution. However, final year students from Medical and Health related schools remained at the Ridgeway campus. UNZA Medical Library therefore remained open to those students on campus despite that they could not physically access the library.

AIM

To audit and document the service provision of UNZA Medical Library during COVID-19 pandemic

METHODS

This is an exploratory study of the services of UNZA Medical Library during the COVID-19. The approaches used are the authors' experiences working at the library, observations of the library's responses with regards to its provision of services, as well as their reflections on what can be considered for improvement in the service provisions now and in the future.

RESULTS

As nations gradually started getting to normal, Universities and libraries gradually started opening to the public. University of Zambia library management introduced several measures in response to the pandemic as follows;

1. Adherence to national public health guidelines



- Water buckets were procured to ensure running water at entry points
- Temperature screening for all students and users entering the library
- Cleaning disinfectants for regular surface disinfection
- Regular fumigation of library
- Staff with flu like symptoms were to stay home
- Mandatory isolation of infected staff

2. Rotational work arrangements

In line with national and institutional guidelines on staff working during the pandemic, the Medical Library resorted to working in rotations so as to minimise staff exposure

3. Access to physical resources

Medical Library had to safeguard the physical resources, by ensuring students checked in the books before indefinite closure. There was no access to physical resources. Medical students were encouraged to use electronic resources via The University of Zambia website.

Remote Library Services

The University of Zambia library quickly took the lead in training both lecturers and students on how to navigate the eLearning platform (Moodle). Instruction videos were created and posted on the University eLearning platform. The integration of the eLearning platform with the library was one of the strategies used. The library sourced for a RemoteXs platform to ensure students/faculty have access to library resources remotely. This followed immediate registration of patrons to RemoteXs and provided access via Moodle and UNZA website.. Patrons were engaged online through email, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google meet and other virtual platforms.

CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

1. Physical space worsened by social distance guidelines
2. Funding
3. Drastic switch from physical services to virtual services
4. Internet connectivity inconsistencies
5. Skills to run online classes and services by librarians
6. Activities to enhance library skills and development for library staff were cancelled

FUTURE

- ⇒ We are taking a hybrid approach
- ⇒ Intensify engagement via online platforms
- ⇒ Need for bigger/modern library
- ⇒ The learning experience provides a basis for library to be ready in case of future eventualities.