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**Challenges and Opportunities for
Libraries in the New Normal**



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**THE SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF USAGE OF LIBRARIES
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EXPERIENCES OF FACULTY OF
ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO**

M. A. Dishan Madushanka¹ , K.A.A.N. Thilakarathna²

¹ Department of Sociology, University of Colombo

² Institute of Human Resource Advancement, University of Colombo.

E Mail: akalanka@ihra.cmb.ac.lk

Libraries play a significant role as a social institution in the day to day lives of people. The social significance of the public library is fundamentally its influence on all the individuals of the community and on the interactive relationships among them. The importance of libraries can be judged by the efficiency of their organization and the degree to which they are fulfilling their mission. During the Covid-19 pandemic most of the library facilities available to the students of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo were curtailed. This research aimed at finding the adverse effects of closing physical facilities, and it remains to be seen whether the digitalization of the physical library enables the maintaining of social significance of the use of the library. A sample of 48 students who are enrolled in a four-year special degree programme, with a compulsory research component which requires the use of the library extensively, was used for this study. A semi-structured questionnaire was distributed among them using the Google forms asking them to narrate their experiences. The results revealed that, the social significance of the use of libraries has remained static despite the closing of the physical libraries. However, the narrations provided by the students indicate the need for integrating the faculty-wise library facilities with the main library and the need for a direct connection to main library facilities through the learning management system (LMS), enabling students to carryout their studies even during the pandemic.

Keywords: *Sociology; Library usage; Covid-19 pandemic.*