Using Web Conferencing Environment for Teaching and Learning Process in Library and Information Science in India during COVID-19: A Study

Laltu Aich[1] and Dr. Swapna Banerjee[2]

[1]M. Phil, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata - 700073, West Bengal, India, Email: laltuaichdlisc@gmail.com

[2]Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata - 700073, West Bengal, India, E-mail: sbanerjee63@yahoo.co.in

Abstract:
Webinars in Library and Information Science are on the rise during the COVID-19 period. This is much more visible in the Indian scenario. This article is an empirical study. This article gives a glimpse of the number & types of webinars in LIS from April 2020 to June 2021. The designation and gender of resource persons, the platforms of organization hosting these webinars, the frequency of the webinars and the subject matters of these webinars have all been focused clearly here. The methodology followed is the content analysis method of the various webinars held during COVID-19 period. The findings depict that total 460 national and international webinars were conducted during this COVID-19 period from April 2020 to June 2021, May and June 2020 were peak time of webinar 131 (28.47 %) followed by July 2020, 52 (11.30 %) and September 2020, 46 (10.00 %). This article therefore points towards the direction the subject Library and Information Science is heading and specially its design and ramifications in India.

Keywords: Academic webinars, LIS link, Resource persons, YouTube, Webinar platform.

1. Introduction:

Webinar is a term combining two terms-"web" and "seminar". The Oxford English Dictionary defines webinars as a seminar conducted over internet. It is an occasion when a group of people visit the digital platform on the internet at a particular time to discuss or study something. So we can define webinar as a web-based seminar, a presentation, lecture, workshop that is transmitted over the web. It is an event held virtually totally, and which is exclusively attended by online audience.

The first incident of webinar can be traced back to 1960, when the PLATO computer learning system allowed students to collaborate on networked computers to accomplish learning tasks, but the networking was not accomplished through World Wide Web. In the late 1980s, real-time text chat facilities such as IRC appeared. In the mid 1990s again, web-based chat and instant messaging software appeared. But in the late 1990s, the first true web conferencing became available from Starlight Networks. Webex appeared after this. The trademark for the term Webinar was registered in 1998 by Eric R. Korb, and was reassigned to Inter Call.

Communication in different types can be easily visualized through webinars. It is a form of one too many communications. The main advantage of webinars is that the presenter can reach a large number of online viewers through this. A key feature of a high-quality webinar is its interactive elements- the ability to transmit, receive and discuss information. The main features of a webinar is that it requires online platform, it requires specific software: requires an internet connection, participation is usually by registration or invitation: live event; the duration is limited to one to two hours using audio, video sharing screen, PowerPoint presentation etc.: interaction with participants can be made via audio, chat, quizzes, surveys, whiteboard, hand raising etc., and the host of the webinar can provide different freedom of choice to the participants, such as making them "presenters", screen sharing, file sharing etc.

2. Review of Literature:

Here the review of literature mainly focuses on the research studies on webinar in library and information science held during lockdown period and these have been arranged chronologically from present to past. The instances are as follows-

Anene & Idiedo (2021) examined, in their article, the level of proficiency development workshops by the librarians in Nigeria in the time of COVID-19. This study includes a survey method using an online questionnaire. [1]

Idhalama, Igbinovia & Ezeabasili (2021) reveals, in their article, the stages of librarians' Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills regarding webinar contribution, and the majority Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals working deliberately in Nigeria used smart phone and laptop accessories for webinar participation, followed by tablets. Most of the webinar participants are on Zoom app alongside YouTube platforms. [7]

The present technical development and protective actions taken in order to improve the information of library professionals to promote library property and

services during COVID-19 pandemic situations were discussed by Asif & Singh (2020) in this article, and this has been included in our suggestions in this study. [2]

Bilawar (2020) this paper shows in brief how COVID-19, lockdown period and the online/ live academic programmes/ activities/ learning rendered by different universities, colleges and associations/ institutions have engaged students and teachers/ faculties in their teaching learning and extension process in India with more emphasis on online events of library and information science. [3]

Deepika, Soundariya & Kalaiselvan (2020) in their joint article conveyed the education system is being remodeled again and again during the crucial time of COVID-19 pandemic, opening the doors of different forms of electronic learning. This paper gives emphasis on different methods of e-learning that has been used in this terrible time we are passing through. The aim of this article is to discuss about the methods and tools of e-learning that bring a revolutionary change and can modify the traditional ways of content delivering, record maintenance and assessment and feedback system. [4]

Dhiman & Singh (2020) in their paper assessed in all total 38 webinars, their value and analyzed these during the COVID-19 period from 27.4.2020 to 12.8.2020. This paper also defines title wise list of webinars, speaker wise list of the webinar and organizer wise list of the webinar. This is a very important paper, where content is reflected in the study carried out in this paper. [6]

Dhawan (2020) in this paper viewed the value of online teaching learning process in the time of pandemic. This study, in addition, suggestions for educational institutions as to how to deal with challenges related with online learning. [5]

Ishtiaq, Sehar & Shahid (2020) in their collaborative research article, centered attention on the role of university libraries of Sindh, Pakistan providing the information services during the lockdown period. In this study, an online survey of 29 private university libraries of Pakistan was made. This work framed the background of this study. [8]

Sidpra et al. (2020) in their research study identified total number of 50 most useable web based video conferencing platforms, and preferred the most appropriate platforms from these, based on features like per month cost, memory, ease of access, safety and conference length. This study was very vital in conducting this study. [9]

3. Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are many fold. The primary objective of this study is to reveal the details of the webinars on Library and Information Science taking place in India. It is to be mentioned that the webinars studied have been held from April 2020 to June 2021. The objectives are discussed as below:

    i.   To find out the total number of webinars held from April 2020 to June 2021, both on monthly basis and yearly basis;

    ii. To find out the types of organizers of the webinars;

    iii. To assess the subjects and the facts on which the webinars were held;

iv. To bring out the type, number, gender and designations of the resource persons in these webinars;
v. To experience the platform of these webinars.

4. Scope and Coverage:

The present study has created scope and coverage to restrict various national and international webinars when lockdown reached its peak in this period of April 2020 to June 2021.

5. Methodology:

Methodology is away to systematically solve the research problem. For this study, the data included online events information hosted as revealed through lisworld.in, LIS link, WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Telegram channel, and also from the personal email received for participating in such webinars. Therefore the main methodology followed here is content analysis method. Content analysis is a method of research. In this method written communication material is analysed for identifying important elements of facts. The content analysis is also known a library method or research. In is mostly used in literary research studies. Thus content analysis helps in the systematic, numerical and quantitative presentation of social phenomena. From various online sources, a list of approx 460 national and international webinars is collected. With a view to attain the objective of this study, all the collected data have been tabulated and analyzed.

6. National (India) and International Level Webinars in LIS during the Pandemic Scenario:

A survey of the webinars in India during the pandemic period in the LIS field, shows that a huge number of webinars have taken place from the time period April 2020 to June 2021. In May and June 2020, the numbers of webinars were much more compared to other months.

Many organizations and institutes have been organizing webinars during this lock-down period. The institutes like CDC, IMLS and UNESCO have been continuously organizing webinars, thus giving the people updates on the different issues of the pandemic, the pros and cons, the safety measures to be taken, the health hazards etc. UNESCO has run weekly webinars since March 2020, and has covered a range of topics. These webinars dealt with very important issues like school opening, disinformation and hate speech, protecting learner data, privacy and security, connectivity for learning, skills development during the pandemic, distance learning strategies, ensuring quality learning, and also equity in remote learning and these are linked in any way to the education and libraries. The Cornell University library conducted a four part webinar series devoted to academic libraries' role in a sustainable future, and there was also a discussion of how three libraries in China have responded to the pandemic. The various suggestions, and the do's and don'ts of the libraries evolved out of this seminar. The Massachusetts library System has organized a

number of webinars on the COVID-19 crisis, and its impact on libraries, which are very resourceful. The subjects range from the ways to advocate the libraries during COVID-19 era, how the librarians can adapt and thrive through COVID-19, Library book club partnerships etc. ALISE also organized a number of webinars on information literacy, resources for library instruction at a distance, data gathering and dissemination in real time and the academic library's response to COVID-19 crisis.

7. Data Representation:

Table 1: Distribution of Month in Which Webinars Were Held:

Sl. No.	Month of the webinars	Total number of webinars	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	April, 2020	2	0.43 %	15
2	May, 2020	131	28.47 %	1
3	June, 2020	131	28.47 %	2
4	July, 2020	52	11.30 %	3
5	August, 2020	32	6.95 %	5
6	September, 2020	46	10.00%	4
7	October, 2020	11	2.39 %	7
8	November, 2020	4	0.86 %	10
9	December, 2020	4	0.86 %	11
10	January, 2021	2	0.43 %	14
11	February, 2020	3	0.65 %	12
12	March, 2021	7	1.52 %	8
13	April, 2021	3	0.65 %	13
14	May, 2021	5	1.08 %	9
15	June, 2021	27	5.86 %	6
Total		**460**		

Table 1 show that the month in which webinars were held during COVID -19 lockdown from April 2020 to June 2021, accordingly ranking of the month capacity was done based on total number of webinars held. It is especially clear from the data presented in table that in total 460 webinars were organized during this COVID period by different academic institutions, research institutions and the library associations' etc., both national and international. The study clearly explains that month of May and June 2020 was the peak period of webinars 131 (28.47 %) followed by July 2020, 52 (11.30 %) and September 2020, 46 (10.00 %).

Table 2: Distribution of Organizations Hosting the Webinars:

Sl. No.	Type of Organizers	Total number of webinars contribution	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	College library	192	35.48 %	1

2	Other institutions	131	24.21 %	2
3	Library association	114	21.07 %	3
4	University library	97	17.92 %	4
5	Research institution	5	0.92 %	5
6	School library	2	0.36 %	6
Total		**541**		

[**Multiple options allowed]

Table 2 shows the distribution of webinars' organizer during the pandemic period; accordingly ranking of the webinars' organizers was done based on total number of webinars contribution. The study brings out the fact that most of the organizers of webinars are college libraries 192 (35.48 %). Then comes other associations, other institutions 131 (24.21 %) followed by library association 114 (21.07 %) both in the national and international spheres.
[**Here total number of webinars contribution 541 but total number of webinars 460 because same college or institutions jointly/ collaboratively organized webinars]

Table 3: Distribution of Highest (Maximum) Used Subject in the Webinars:

Sl. No.	Main subject	Number of main subject	Percentage (%)
1	Library services	53	15.82 %
2	E-resources	32	9.55 %
3	Research	27	8.05 %
4	LIS education	20	5.97 %
5	Librarianship (Role of librarian)	17	5.07 %
6	Research publication	16	4.77 %
7	Library software	14	4.17 %
8	Role of libraries	14	4.17 %
9	LIS professional	13	3.88 %
10	IPR	11	3.28 %
11	Virtual learning	11	3.28 %
12	E-learning	10	2.98 %
13	NDLI	10	2.98 %
14	Copyrights	9	2.68 %
15	Online library services	9	2.68 %
16	Digital library	8	2.38 %
17	Information literacy	8	2.38 %
18	Others	8	2.38 %
19	Library discovery services	7	2.08 %
20	Library future	6	1.79 %
21	Plagiarism software	6	1.79 %
22	Preservation	6	1.79 %
23	Academic libraries	5	1.49 %
24	NAAC awareness	5	1.49 %
25	Reference management software	5	1.49 %
26	Role of metrics	5	1.49 %

Total	335	

Table 3 clearly shows the number of discussed subjects in the webinar. It is seen from table that most of the webinars are conducted on same topics, but there are few which covered single topic at a time.   Here showed only highest (maximum) used subject in the webinars.

Table 4: Distribution of Designation of Resource Persons:

Sl. No.	Resource person designation	Number of resource person contribution	Percentage (%)
1	Librarian	251	30.49 %
2	Professor	230	27.94 %
3	Assistant professor	54	6.56 %
4	Director	52	6.31 %
5	Assistant librarian	41	4.98 %
6	Deputy librarian	40	4.86 %
7	Associate professor	35	4.25 %
8	Others	26	3.15 %
9	Scientist	20	2.43 %
10	Seiner manager	17	2.06 %
11	Vice chancellor	16	1.94 %
12	Head	9	1.09 %
13	Dean	8	0.97 %
14	CEO	6	0.72 %
15	Fellow and project coordinator	6	0.72 %
16	President	6	0.72 %
17	Technical assistant	6	0.72 %
Total		**823**	

[*Multiple options allowed]

Table 4 depicts the list of resource persons in webinars during the period- April 2020 to June 2021. This table discloses that Librarians 251 (30.49 %) formed the highest number of resource persons, followed by Professors 230 (27.94 %) and Assistant professors 54 (6.56 %).
[*Here total number of resource person contribution 823 but total number of webinars 460 because four to five resource person have joined in a webinar]

Table 5: Distribution of Gender of Resource Persons of Webinars (Male/ Female):

Sl. No.	Gender	Number of webinar contribution	Percentage (%)
1	Male	691	83.96 %
2	Female	132	16.03 %
Total		**823**	

[*Multiple options allowed]

Table 5 displays the gender of resource persons of webinar (Male/ Female) during the period of April 2020 to June 2021. The table given below shows that maximum resource persons are of male category 691 (83.96 %); on the other hand few resource persons are in the female category 132 (16.03 %).

[*****Here total number of webinar contribution 823 but total number of webinars 460 because four to five resource person have joined in a webinar]

Table 6: Distribution of Webinar Platforms:

Sl. No.	Platform of webinar	Number of webinar contribution	Percentage (%)
1	YouTube	195	39.79 %
2	Zoom	85	17.34 %
3	Cisco Webex	76	15.51 %
4	Google Meet	66	13.46 %
5	GoTo Webinar	33	6.73 %
6	GoTo Meeting	11	2.24 %
7	Microsoft Teams	09	1.83 %
8	Facebook Live	08	1.63 %
9	BlueJeans	03	0.61 %
10	Blizz	01	0.20 %
11	Own W1ebsite	01	0.20 %
12	Google Classroom	01	0.20 %
13	Swecha	01	0.20 %
Total		**490**	

[*****Multiple options allowed]

Table 6 depicts the webinar platform used in Library and Information science (LIS). There are in total 460 webinars organized during the period April 2020 to June 2021. It is observed that thirteen types of webinar platforms are used. The study clearly explains that the most usable web conferencing platforms are YouTube 195 (39.79 %), Zoom 85 (17.34 %) and Cisco Webex 76 (15.51 %). So, YouTube is a very popular platform because it is accessible from any place at any time.

[*****Here total number of webinar contribution 890 but total number of webinars 460 because a webinar used three to four platforms simultaneously]

8. Findings:

The following findings are obtained from the study:
  i.   Total 460 webinars were conducted during the COVID-19 period from April 2020 to June 2021.
  ii. The study clearly explains that month of May and June 2020 were peak time of webinar 131 (28.47 %) followed by July 2020, 52 (11.30 %) and September 2020, 46 (10.00 %).

iii. The present study explains most of the webinar organizers are college library 192 (35.48 %), other institutions 131 (24.21 %) and library associations 114 (21.07 %) national and international countrywide.

iv. This current study exposes that the number of discussed subjects in the webinar. It is seen from table that most of the webinars are conducted on same topics, but there are few which covered single topic at a time. Here showed only highest (maximum) used subject in the webinars. There were very less discussion on topics like manuscripts, library movement, library innovation services, internet archive, green library, digital heritage, which should have been given more thoughts.

v. The resource persons expressing their thoughts in the webinars ranged from Librarians and Professors to Scientists, Deans and Technical assistant etc. So the typological variation of resource persons is noteworthy.

vi. The numbers of male persons attending the webinars are much higher compared to their female counterparts who attended the webinars.

vii. It is very interesting to note that there were a number of different platforms of the webinars some of which we are very much familiar with, like YouTube, Zoom, Cisco Webex or Google Meet others like Swecha, Blizz, BlueJeans are very lesser known, but these platforms were also considered by some organizations too.

9. Discussions:

Many major subjects of LIS, like knowledge organization, history of book bibliography, semantic web, metadata creation and management were not touched upon or with very less emphasis in these webinars. The fact shows that the major subjects are losing their importance day by day in LIS and these are more and more treated upon by technology oriented computer science related subjects. This encroachment is dangerous for own basic subject of LIS. Here, 53 are highest usable subjects that mean 15.82 % usable subjects in the webinar during the study period (April 2020 to June 2021). A good signal emerging from this study that the resource persons range from librarian to various other professionals like CEO, IAS, marketing specialist, senior software engineer to record management specialist etc. So there is a intermingling of various disciplines in this field, making the subject much richer. But more and more female participants should come forward to attend these webinars, as their presence has been faded out by the dominating male participants. It is noteworthy that many organizations are experimenting to broadcast their webinars on comparatively new platforms or experimenting their own platforms also. This is highly recommended, as these trial and errors can give use to newer platforms, on which people can depend and base their digital works.

Above all, it can be concluded that in the digital environment, communication is vehemently possible through the webinars. Therefore in India hosting the webinars of LIS by the organizations, thus bringing forth the discussions and exchange of ideas, will lead to a more and more brighter future of library and information professions.

10. Conclusion:

It is remarkable that the subject of Library and Information Science has deep impact in the society, as it's relevant from the number of webinars held during the pandemic. Through LIS are a professional subject and a very much practical oriented subject too, yet on the virtual platform, the discussions on the various aspects of the subject points out to its much popularity. The practical aspects of the subject could not be carried out often, but vivid and virtual discussions were held often, and attended by many professionals in this field. College librarians had been the host of maximum webinars, where as school libraries showed their presence in comparatively less numbers. School libraries are in fact very much weak in their organizations or associations, and they should come forward in a more progressive manner to focus their problems and prospects.

References:

1) Anene, I. A., & Idiedo, V. O. (2021). Librarians' participation in professional development workshops using Zoom in Nigeria. Information Development, 20(10), 1-10. Retrieved February 16, 2022, from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/02666669211026714

2) Asif, M., & Singh, K. K. (2020). Trends, opportunities and scope of libraries during Covid-19 pandemic. IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology, 5(1), 24-27. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from https://www.ipinnovative.com/journal-article-file/11777

3) Bilawar, P. B. (2020). Lockdown Period and Information Sources. International Journal of Engineering Research and Management (IJERM), 7(6), 7-16. Retrieved February 18, 2022, from http://www.unishivaji.ac.in/uploads/general/covid/bilawar/Bilawar%20Editor%20Final.pdf

4) Deepika, V., Soundariya, K., & Kalaiselvan, G. (2020). 'Learning from home': role of e-learning methodologies and tools during novel corona virus pandemic outbreak. Postgraduate Medical Journal, 97(1151), 590-597. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from https://pmj.bmj.com/content/97/1151/590.full

5) Dhawan, S. (2020). Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 49(1), 5-22. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0047239520934018

6) Dhiman, A. K., & Singh, S. (2020). Are Webinars Worthy: Analysis of Webinars Conducted in LIS during Lockdown 2020. Library Progress (International), 40(2), 307-327. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://bpasjournals.com/admin/upload/dynamic2/16Lib-211-2020P307-327.pdf

7) Idhalama, O. U., Igbinovia, M. O., & Ezeabasili, C. A. (2021). Use of webinar tools for teaching and learning by library and information professionals in Nigeria. Information Development. Retrieved February 15, 2022, from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/02666669211003923

8) Ishtiaq, S. M., Sehar, N., & Shahid, A. (2020). "Information Dissemination during Covid-19 and Lockdown: The Role of University libraries of Sindh,

Pakistan". Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal). Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4280/

9) Sidpra, J., Gaier, C., Reddy, N., Kumar, N., Mirsky, D., & Mankad, K. (2020). Sustaining education in the age of COVID-19: a survey of synchronous web-based platforms. Quant Imaging in Medicine and Surgery, 10(7), 1422–1427. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7358414/