

Prepared to function in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic: An academic library's experience in resilience and sustenance

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Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every strategic function in society. Although the pattern of the disease in the Caribbean from a health perspective did not differ from the wider world, there is the need to explore the approaches attempted to process and disseminate academic data. As universities were also forced to close their physical service, the academic library professionals had to find a rapid and focused response in order to transform operations to sustain services while giving quality and timely assistance to its clients. The reality here was that either one put up resilience or stood still, refusing to try.

Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate how libraries addressed the challenges brought on by the pandemic, and in particular the exclusive Work From Home (WFH) period which is the focus of this presentation.

Problem Statement

WFH - Chad (2020) described it as 'Telework', which simply is relocating the office to home



Working From Office (WFO)



Relocated to



Working From Home (WFH)

Problem Statement

Abby (as cited by Gormley, 2020):

People assume me working from home is being in front of a TV; with a laptop just incidentally beside me



However, spoiler it is not. This is what I do: sit at my desk with my stuff and mount my post it notes...



Problem Statement

According to Bennett et al. (2020) a librarian's day during the WFH period begins at 9:30 hrs. and involves:

Meetings/ Status Update



Catalogue clean-up projects

Orders & Invoice matters

Building the digital collection

Further, Goek (2021) indicated that during the initial stages of the pandemic, remote work took the form of:

Social Media Outreach

Engaging in PD

Administrative Work

Collection Development

Planning for reopening

Problem Statement

While the university's administration quickly began strategizing for the way forward, the Berbice Campus Library (BCL) personnel also commenced reimagining how we can support our parent institution. This resulted in the implementation of various initiatives to continue operations.

One of our notices reminding patrons that *our physical doors may be closed but we are still open to serve you...* indicated that we were ready to mobilize resources, be resilient and ready to serve patrons from home.

Visit us @ our virtual space

Our physical doors maybe closed but we are still open to serve you...

Consult a Librarian:

- Information literacy needs (referencing, citation, database...)
- Accessing E resources
- Registration
- Clearance
- Questions, comments & more

651-4411/602-3278/642-7006
651-4411/602-3278/642-7006
berbice.library@uog.edu.gy /
ugbclibrary@yahoo.com
University of Guyana Berbice
Campus Library
UGBC Library
University of Guyana Berbice
Campus Library
Zoom sessions can also be arranged.

#Stay Safe

Problem statement

- » This presentation seeks to show the transformative attempts made by BCL personnel via teleworking to confront the challenge of the new reality created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » From the onset of the forced closure of the Library, to the time work recommenced, the researchers have identified *three approximate periods* when initiatives were undertaken.

Problem Statement

Phase 1

*Mar. 26 -
Sept. 4, 2020*

The initial stage -
Exclusive WFH period.

Phase 2

*Sept. 7, 2020 -
Nov. 23, 2021*

Dual mode period:

- WFO -2 days per week
- WFH -3 days & more per week with reduced hrs.

Phase 3

*Nov. 24, 2021-
April 29, 2022*

Dual mode period:

- WFO -5 days per week
- WFH -periodically.

Objectives of the Research



- ❑ To show how essential services evolved through teleworking.
- ❑ To identify some positives and negatives arising out of the imposed transition.
- ❑ To ascertain the staff's perception on the way forward after the exclusive WFH experience.

Methodology to Solve the Problem

1



After the closure on March 16, 2020, and with no perceived end to the pandemic, WhatsApp was used to discuss ways for staff to contribute to telework.



2

March 26, 2020 –staff visited the BCL to “grab” work.



3

Bundled materials for distribution -hard drives, laptops, library’s mobile, catalogue cards, information ledgers, etc.



Methodology...

4 Materials were deposited at the security hut to be collected by staff.



5

Other materials were delivered to some staff members' homes.



Methodology...

Utilizing a variety of WFH spaces

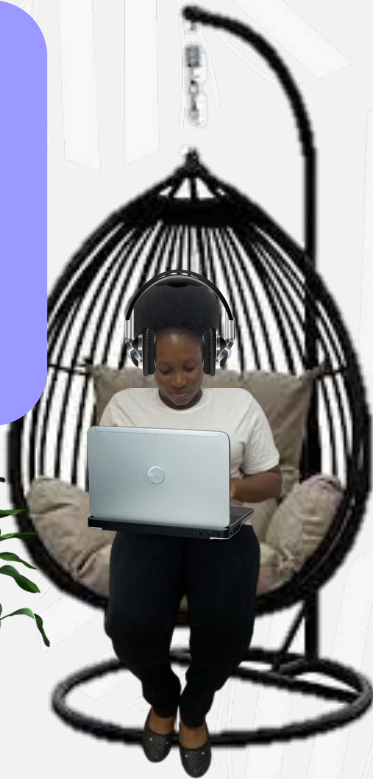
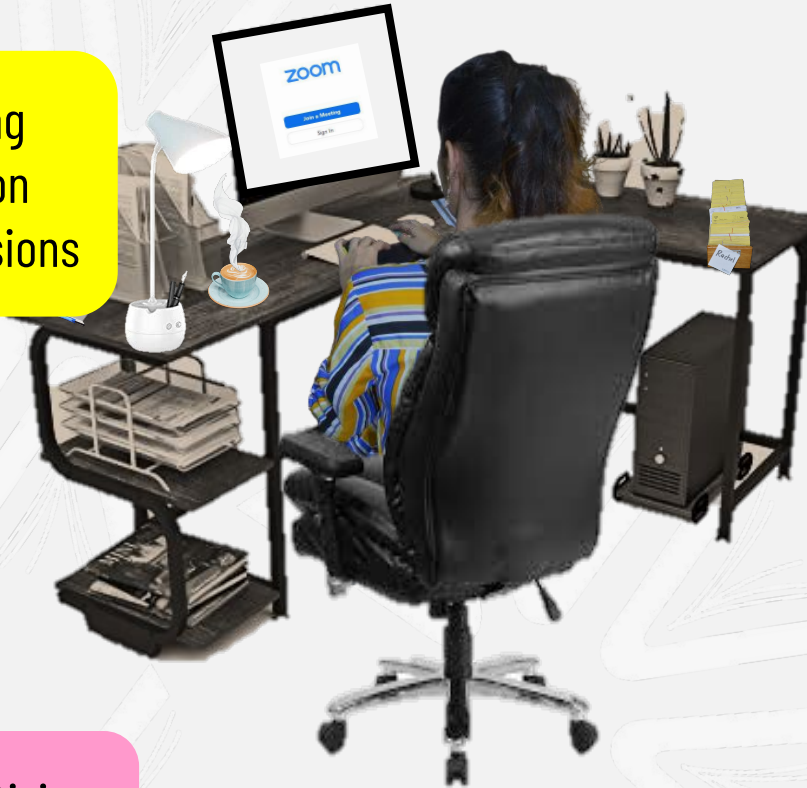
6

Responding to queries

Conducting Information Literacy sessions

Manually digitizing information

Creating shareable links for patrons to access materials



7

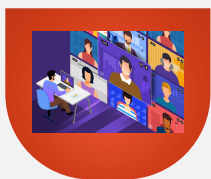
Methodology...

Some WFH Practices

Sent book chapters/articles (within copyright guidelines) via virtual platforms.

Reached out to colleagues for assistance from the wider world.

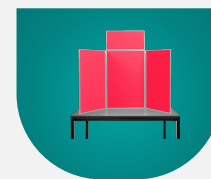
NB. Some staff even utilized their own resources.



Catalogued eBooks.
Participated in meetings, training, seminars...



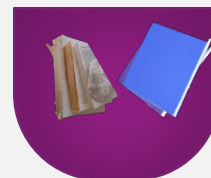
Searched databases, explored open access sites & build digital collection.



Designed virtual exhibitions, library tours, information guides...



Categorized videos & photos. Decluttered external devices.



Prepared damaged books for repairs.
Scanned documents.



Conducted admin work - compiled reports, liaised with vendors, planned for reopening...

Findings

Objective 1 – Evolution of the services

work from
Office

- Access materials (*hard copies & e-formats*) on-site & virtual
- Information/Help Desk (*90% on-site*)
- Exhibitions & Library Tours (*100% on-site*)
- Information Literacy sessions (*100% on-site*)

work from
Home

- Access materials (*e-formats only*) via virtual modes
- Information/Help Desk (*100% virtual*)
- Exhibitions & Library Tours (*100% virtual*)
- Information Literacy sessions (*100% virtual*)

Findings

Objective 2 –Negatives arising out of the imposed transition

Competition for resources (devices, workspaces, etc.) within home settings

No technical assistance to troubleshoot devices

Staff worked increased hours fulfilling overwhelming requests

Home distractions, mental exhaustion, poor internet connectivity, loss of major income for the library

Some critical work suffered due to the lack of certain resources & skills to execute work offsite

Findings

Objective 2 – Positives arising out of the imposed transition

1

Time to work on projects that were sidelined due to other demanding work matters.

2

Found gaps in work activities, & a refocus was done (e.g. digitization of the exam papers was made a priority).

3-4

Setbacks & the need to learn forced staff to engage in PD to enhance delivery.

Learnt and re-learnt skills & processes.

5-6

Work bars were dismantled & staff worked across designated duties.

Opportunity to observe the value of in person service.

7-9

Experienced teleworking.

Flexible schedule supported work and home life balance.

Discovered new tools.

Findings

Objective 3 – Staff's perceptions on the way forward

Rethink work procedures & practices and review work policies

Consider implementing aspects of work to fit a blended mode, and a flexible work schedule supporting work & home life balance

The need to continue and vigorously strengthen technical/digital areas for the department and library personnel

Opportunity to serve patrons in the blended mode

Significance of Findings

01

Provided a workable/
transferable
solution/response to
emergency characterized by
no face to face contact

02

Innovativeness of workers
collaboratively demonstrated
strategic thinking among
workers without reference to
hierarchy

03

Demonstrated movement from
practical approach to
problem-solving to
formulation of guidelines for
developing solutions in the
face of adversity

Conclusion

The pandemic was a source of igniting ideas during this forced transition, resulting in the telework experience. It is evident that the BCL stood the test and through various initiatives, remained on target with the theme "*Hurricanes, earthquakes, and pandemics: Towards the transformation of sustainable and resilient libraries*".

Library professionals learnt and re-learnt procedures. There was heightened inter and intra collaboration, and refocused processes after discovery of work gaps. Overall, the pandemic increased our resilience. It encouraged the excellence in creativity and for us, as librarians, to continue to exceed our own standards to *adopt, adapt & innovate* in order to sustain services and in the end, just being the support hub to our parent institution during this crisis.

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*Thank
You!*



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