

Impact of COVID-19 on Academic Health Sciences Library Programs and Services

 **Bart Ragon, MLIS, Ed.D**, Claude Moore Health Sciences Library, University of Virginia  **Elizabeth C. Whipple, MLS, AHIP**, Ruth Lilly Medical Library, Indiana University School of Medicine
 **Melissa L. Rethlefsen, MSLS, AHIP**, Health Sciences Library & Informatics Center, University of New Mexico

Objectives:

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the programs and services provided by Academic Health Sciences Libraries and to identify best practices for responding to future events.

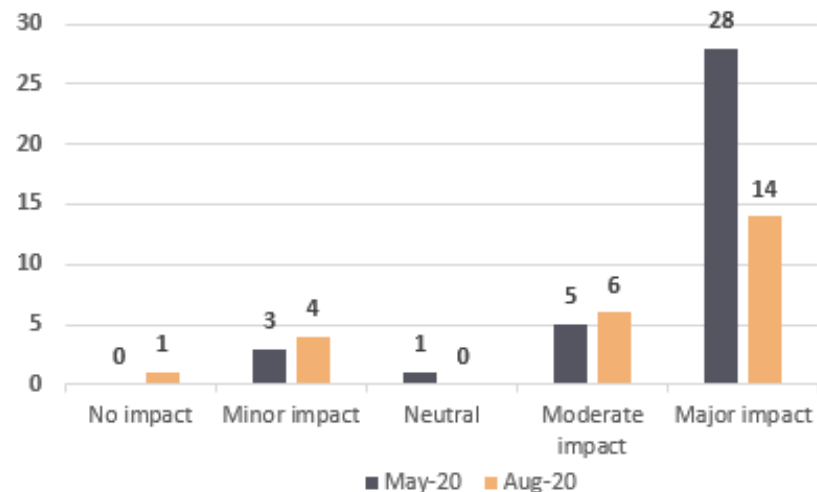
Methods:

This multi-site qualitative study captured the evolution of Academic Health Sciences Libraries during the pandemic. Surveys were administered in May 2020, August 2020, and February 2021 to gather data on the current state of library programs and services using a phenomenological approach.

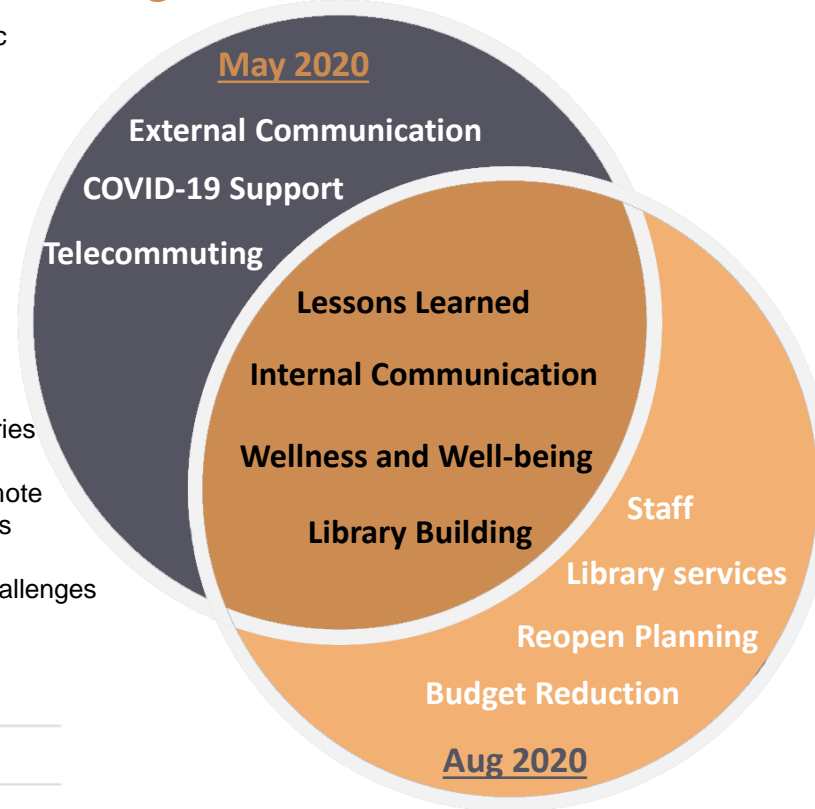
Results:

May 2020 and August 2020 data illustrate the transition of libraries during the early stages of the pandemic. In May 2020, library leaders were energized as they focused on the transition to remote services and well-being of staff. By August 2020, library leaders seemed exhausted, maintaining much of their focus on internal communication and well-being, but also working through the challenges of budget reductions and planning for reopening spaces.

How has COVID-19 affected library operations?



Overarching Themes



Approximately what percentage of your library's effort is dedicated to each of the academic medical center missions? (N=37)

Education	44%
Research	29%
Clinical	20%
Outreach/Community Engagement	7%

May 2020

- ❖ "Except for my commute, everything is the same."
- ❖ "We are resilient and caring people and we can really come together as a functional team when a crisis hits."
- ❖ "The library is more adaptable than we thought it would be."
- ❖ "We learned that we are nimble, and that we are deeply embedded in our organization, and were called upon numerous times for high level projects and decisions."
- ❖ "We were prepared for this thing without knowing it."
- ❖ "Honestly, the only thing I will for sure change is that when we need to replace/refresh employee computers they will all be laptops with docking stations and not desktop models. We need to all be able to walk out the door with our computers at a given notice with no idea of when we will come back."
- ❖ "[W]e have one person scanning about 6 hours a day -- more than during regular times! -- and have provided information to every continent except Antarctica."

August 2020

- ❖ "Increasing demands; decreasing resources. Sigh."
- ❖ "It is very hard for individuals to feel so powerless and so passionate and so isolated."
- ❖ "[T]he longer this goes on (libraries closed & employees working remotely), the harder it is on people. Team cohesiveness is suffering. Relationships that have been nurtured by daily contact are weakening. The idea that we are all on the same side and that we are all working towards the same goals seems to be fading."
- ❖ "I'm tired."
- ❖ "[T]he anxiety level of the library employees is rising because we have not heard specific details from the administration about fall plans other than 'the libraries will be open.'"

February 2021

- ❖ Pending analysis