

Project Proposal: Investigating Shifts in Public Library Engagement After COVID-19

Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the way public facilities, including libraries, are frequented and utilized. This study seeks to explore the evolution in the usage of public libraries following the pandemic, with a focus on variations in the borrowing of physical and digital resources, attendance at library-hosted events, and the general use of library spaces. The investigation is anchored by the question: "In what ways has the use of public libraries transformed since the COVID-19 pandemic?"

Target Audience

This project is designed for library managers, decision-makers, and academics in the field of library science who are keen on understanding the adjustments in library usage in the post-pandemic era. The insights derived from this study will be instrumental in guiding decision-making processes related to strategic planning, resource distribution, and the enhancement of library services to meet contemporary needs. Additionally, the broader public and library users who have an interest in how libraries are adapting to better serve their communities will find this analysis of interest.

Data Sources

To conduct this analysis, the project will leverage available public data from various libraries, which includes:

Borrowing Statistics: Comparative data on the lending of print materials, electronic books, and other media to identify changes in borrowing habits.

Event Participation: Information regarding attendance at events organized by libraries, both online and face-to-face, to understand shifts in community engagement.

Visitor Numbers: Data on the footfall in library premises to assess the fluctuation in physical visits.

User Feedback: Insights from surveys distributed to library users before and after the pandemic to evaluate changes in user preferences and satisfaction levels.

This compilation of data, sourced from the annual disclosures of libraries and possibly through direct inquiries with library staff, will shed light on the dynamic trends of library use.

Project Milestones

Milestone 1 - Gathering and Preliminary Analysis of Data (Week 4): Finalize the acquisition of data on borrowing trends, event attendance, visitor counts, and user feedback. Conduct a preliminary review to pinpoint obvious trends in library usage following the pandemic.

Milestone 2 - Detailed Examination of Trends (Week 8): Engage in a deeper exploration of the collected data to discern subtle variations in the use of library services, making distinctions across library types (such as urban vs. rural libraries) and the range of services provided.

Milestone 3 - Compilation and Presentation of Findings (Week 12): Assemble the research findings into a detailed report complemented by visual representations. Develop a presentation to highlight significant trends and their implications for the future of library services.

Project Objectives

Project Rationale and Relevance: Articulate the aim of the study and its significance in the context of the post-pandemic landscape, linking it to the central investigative question.

Data Exploration: Offer an exhaustive description of the data sources, including their integrity and the methods used for their collection, to maintain analytical transparency.

Methodological Documentation: Record the processes followed from data collection to analysis, emphasizing the application of the data in unveiling library usage patterns.

Analytical and Visual Presentation: Utilize fundamental data organization, analysis, and visualization principles to coherently and effectively present the findings to the intended audience.

Consideration of Audience Needs: Ensure the analysis and its outcomes are highly relevant and informative to library administrators, policymakers, and the wider public, providing them with practical insights for enhancing library services.

Critical Reflection: Critique the study's conclusions, discussing the limitations of the analysis and proposing directions for future inquiries into library usage trends.

Data Accessibility

While the exact datasets will vary based on selected libraries and geographical regions, most public libraries' annual summaries and user surveys accessible via their official websites will form the primary data backbone. For a more expansive analysis, data released by library associations and cultural departments at the governmental level can also provide valuable insights into broader library usage patterns.

This proposal outlines a methodical yet insightful examination into the evolving role of public libraries in the wake of the pandemic, delivering critical data for future strategic development and service enhancement in libraries.