



Role of Remote Access Services in Crisis Management: Perceptions and Expectations of A.C. Joshi Library Users

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to assess library users' perceptions and expectations of Remote Access Services (RAS) following COVID-19 at the A.C. Joshi Library, Panjab University, Chandigarh. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented crisis that severely affected the functions of academic institutions worldwide. During this period, RAS became an important part of how academic libraries deal with crises. The increasing number of COVID-19 cases and the enforcement of a statewide lockdown shifted the educational system to online learning. Moreover, all types of libraries were equally affected. This study discusses the continuity of remote access services that enable users to access academic library resources anywhere, anytime via Knimbus, MYLOFT, and RemoteXs, among others. It also explores their future expectations from such services, which offer them diverse electronic resources. The study employed a questionnaire method to get data from the research scholars at Panjab University, Chandigarh. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 100 respondents, out of which 72 responses were received. After analysing, the chi-square test and t-test were used to explore relationships among factors such as gender, age, education, users' perceptions, and expectations. The findings revealed that most users were aware of RAS. The study is limited to users of the A.C. Joshi library, which provides a snapshot of remote access services.

Keywords: A.C. Joshi Library, Panjab University, COVID-19, Pandemic, Remote access services (RAS)

Introduction

The swift growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has greatly impacted libraries. It has transformed them from traditional to digital systems, where almost all tasks are performed on computers. As a result, the role of libraries has shifted from being service-oriented to user-oriented. Emerging technologies have been integrated into library science. This shift has led to digital, hybrid libraries, libraries without walls, and Library 2.0 (Basumatary, 2020; Mittal, 2017; Santosh, 2017). Libraries are implementing emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Library Service Platforms (LSPs), and Remote Access Services (RAS) (Chingath, 2020; Liu & Shao, 2024). The advent of the Internet and its web services have necessitated that libraries adopt such technologies. Keeping in view the requirements of their tech-savvy Generation Y and Z clientele, who have grown up in the era of online networking, are constantly hooked to their electronic devices, and require information instantly, a sea change in digital evolution has been observed in libraries. Apart from acquiring physical

resources, libraries are now acquiring online resources such as e-books, e-journals, databases, etc., and, accordingly, are providing online services on-campus as well as off-campus, along with their physical services. Furthermore, the role of libraries has shifted from mere repositories of books to collaborative learning centres, offering a supportive environment for the joint use of resources.

Such a role for libraries became all the more important and necessary in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, users regularly visited libraries to take advantage of their services and access their resources (Dube & Jacobs, 2022). In response to the pandemic, educational institutions worldwide were compelled to suspend their physical library services and transition to online platforms to maintain library service provision for their users (Fasae et al., 2021). Hence, significant changes to library services occurred as a direct result of the pandemic (Davies, 2020). The integration of physical services into online services has led to a significant increase in e-resources supporting online education (Green, 2022). To accomplish this task, library management sought an innovative service that provided information in a manner appropriate for library users (Baikady et al., 2014). The pandemic transformed how library users access resources through remote logins, and remote access has emerged as the leading platform for e-resources. This research explores the users' perceptions and expectations about RAS. Nowadays, the efficiency of library services has become increasingly dependent on the availability of easily accessible information and user-friendly remote access tools and services (Dadhe & Dubey, 2020). As RAS provide convenience to access the library's e-resources without the boundaries of time and geographical area, the demand for such services has increased manifold, especially in large academic libraries.

Remote Access Services (RAS)

A remote access (off-campus) service is very important for the secure handling of network or device resources from any location at any time (Hewlett Packard Enterprise, 2023; Ruambo et al., 2025). It allows users to use the information resources when the physical library is closed (Jagadish & P, 2018). At present, providing a remote access service is the most effective method for optimizing the utilization of the library's electronic resources. The effectiveness of service is now significantly associated with the availability of accessible information and user-friendly RAS. This study discusses three remote access services Knimbus, MYLOFT and RemoteXs.

The characteristics of certain remote access services are described below:

i) Knimbus is a collaborative knowledge platform that connects users to communities and relevant resources (K= Knowledge + Nimbus = Cloud) (Indraji & Dominic, 2024). It provides a collaborative workspace and a

federated search engine for users, making it a valuable tool for scholars to explore and retrieve millions of articles and e-books subscribed to by libraries. It is a cloud-based platform that facilitates the discovery and sharing of scholarly content from any location at any time. It has become popular and is now used by more than 1000 institutions (Gulati et al., 2025; Knimbus, 2026). It is a cloud-based platform that allows library users to access and preserve their subscribed content using login credentials. The Knimbus mLibrary is a mobile application that provides access to e-resources through smartphones; it is a cloud-based application that works on iOS and Android operating systems, facilitating the comprehensive digitization of institutional libraries (Sangeetha & Vasantha, 2024).

ii) MyLOFT (My Library on Fingertips) application was officially introduced by Eclat Engineering Pvt. Ltd, based in Ahmedabad, at the IFLA conference (Oyelude, 2019). It is specifically developed for Smartphone utilization. MyLOFT is designed to synchronize with users' workflows, enabling them to effortlessly discover library-subscribed resources (Unik, 2021). This platform allows users to access the library's e-resources remotely at any time, providing greater flexibility in accessing the library's resource base with login capability from three devices simultaneously (Yuvashree et al., 2025).

iii) RemoteXs is a cloud-based platform that integrates an institution's e-resources, such as e-journals and e-books, into a single accessible location (Shakya & Nyaichyai, 2022). It predominantly facilitates remote access for its user community and allows users to access resources at anytime from anywhere. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, RemoteXs has become an essential for academic libraries by supporting ongoing off-campus academic activities (Ansari & Ali, 2023; Sumi & Kumar, 2020). Additionally, it is a cost-effective service that provides secure access to scattered institutional e-resources, bringing them under one umbrella (Kurapati, 2025).

Review of Literature

The literature review focuses on the role of academic library services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic enhanced the importance of RAS, prompting libraries to swiftly adapt to meet users' changing needs. Verma et al. (2022) suggested that central university libraries in India enhance their websites to enable remote access to institutional resources and implement plagiarism detection tools. The libraries of Central University of Orissa, Aligarh Muslim University, and the University of Delhi offered premium library services through their websites during COVID-19. Most of the libraries that were chosen had OPACs, gave information about plagiarism detection tools, and showed UGC activities during COVID-19 for online learning, remote access to e-resources, etc. Similarly, Begum and Elahi (2022) demonstrated the shift of East-West University in Bangladesh from physical to digital services through the implementation of advanced remote access

technologies and online information literacy training during the COVID period and offered remote access facilities, federated search solutions, web-based catalogues, etc. Ansari and Ali (2023) indicated that Indian Institutes of Management implemented various remote access systems like RemoteXs, EZProxy, Open Athens and VPN to keep access available, with each institute customizing authentication protocols for security purposes. Dube and Jacobs (2023) emphasized that leading Indian technological universities embraced digital platforms, using AI and other innovations to enhance accessibility and user engagement. These studies emphasise that libraries' rapid digital services highlight the enduring need for comprehensive web-based services, the necessity to prepare users for remote learning, and the anticipation that many digital advances will remain vital post-pandemic. The research mentioned above indicates that, to improve access to library materials during the shutdown, academic libraries initiated remote access services for their users. It has enabled users to use subscribed electronic resources for study and research while maintaining social boundaries. Since that time, remote access has evolved into a comprehensive interface for accessing all subscription electronic resources. This study examines the comparative usage of the remote access services offered by the A.C. Joshi Library at Panjab University.

Objectives of the study

The study aimed to evaluate the perceptions and expectations of A.C. Joshi Library users concerning the remote access services. The main objectives of the study included:

- a) To analyse the current usage of services provided by the A. C Joshi library.
- b) To examine the state of awareness about RAS among users of the library.
- c) To examine the state of perceptions about RAS among users of the library.
- d) To examine the state of expectations about RAS among users of the library.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the extent of awareness of RAS among PhD scholars based on their year of study.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the extent of perceptions of RAS among PhD scholars based on their year of study.
- H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the extent of expectations of RAS among PhD scholars based on their year of study.

Methodology

The research was empirical, and a survey method was used to achieve the study's aims. The data were collected from library users (research scholars) at A.C. Joshi Library, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. Random sampling was employed, and 100 users were selected. The data was gathered through the Questionnaire method, which was distributed personally.

A total of 72 responses were received, comprising 40 males (55%) and 32 females (45%). The majority of respondents were aged 26–30 years, followed by 36% in the 21–25 age group and 8% in the 31–35 age group. In terms of academic discipline, 61% belonged to Arts and Humanities, 28% to Sciences, and the remaining 11% to Commerce.

Most respondents (38%) had been engaged as research scholars for three or more years, while 31% were in their second year of research. The remaining 31% were in their first year as research scholars.

Findings

The findings of the study on the perceptions and expectations of remote access services users of A.C. Joshi Library (P.U.) are given below:

Frequency of visit A. C. Joshi Library

Table 1 depicts the frequency of library visits by respondents from A.C. Joshi. It is observed that 50% of the students visit the library every day, and the remaining 50% have no fixed time for visiting the library.

Table 1: Frequency of library visits

Frequency	N	Percentage
Everyday	36	50%
Once a Week	0	0%
No Fixed Frequency	36	50%

Awareness about Services offered by the A.C. Joshi Library

As evident from Table 2, more than 90% reported the availability of access to e-journals, e-periodicals and newspaper service, followed by a high level of response for access to online databases (85%), OPAC/Web OPAC (83%) and Internet/Wi-Fi (83%). Similarly, the library website (67%) and the notice board (62%) were known to a large proportion of respondents. 51% of respondents used overnight reading room service. 21% of respondents were aware of photocopying and printing facilities, a news clipping service, writing support tools, and reference management tools and services provided by their library.

Table 2: Awareness about Library Service

Awareness about Library Service	N
Access to e-journals & e-periodicals	94%
News Clipping Service	94%
Newspaper Service	85%
Internet/Wi-Fi	83%
OPAC/WebOPAC	83%
Library Website	67%
Notice Board	62%
Writing Support Tools	62%
Overnight Reading Room Service	51%
Plagiarism Detection Tools	24%
Reference Management Tools	23%
Photocopying and Printing Facilities	21%

Level of Awareness about RAS

Table 3 presents the level of awareness of RAS among the respondents. The data reveal that a majority of the respondents, 36 (50%), were moderately aware, followed by 14 (19%) who were not aware of the service. Additionally, 11 (15%) respondents were slightly aware, while only 4 (6%) were somewhat aware of the RAS.

Table 3: Level of Awareness

Level of Awareness about RAS	N	%
Not at All	14	19%
Slightly Aware	11	15%
Somewhat Aware	4	6%
Moderately Aware	36	50%
Extremely Aware	7	10%

Familiarity with RAS

Table 4 reflects the percentage of respondents' familiarity with various RAS. Although 47 (70%) respondents were familiar with remote access services (i.e., Knimbus) being provided by their library, followed by 24 (41%) respondents who were familiar with RemoteXs, and 12 (21%) were familiar with MyLOFT.

Table 4: Familiarity with RAS

Remote Access Services	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Knimbus	47	81%	11	19%
MyLOFT	12	21%	46	79%
RemotXs	24	41%	34	59%

Perceptions regarding efficacy of remote access services

Table 5 presents respondents' perceptions of the efficacy of RAS. Most participants (44, 61% agree; 17, 24% strongly agree) believe RAS allows access anytime, anywhere. Similarly, a substantial proportion of users perceived it is effective for library space optimisation (42, 58% agree; 12, 17% Strongly Agree). When asked about bringing resources together in one place, 41 (57%) agreed and 17 (24%) strongly agreed, while 13 (18%) were neutral and only 1 (1%) strongly disagreed. For usability, 32 (44%) agreed, and 26 (36%) strongly agreed that the RAS interface is easy to use, indicating high satisfaction; 13 (18%) were neutral, and 1 (1%) strongly disagreed. Additionally, 17 (24%) respondents were neutral, while 1 (1%) strongly disagreed. Overall, the findings indicate that a majority of research scholars perceive RAS as effective, especially for accessibility, resource integration, ease of use, and space optimisation.

Table 5: Efficacy of RAS

Perceptions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Accessibility anytime, anywhere	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	10 (14%)	44 (61%)	17 (24%)
Bringing resources under one umbrella	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	13 (18%)	41 (57%)	17 (24%)
Interface is easy to use	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	13 (18%)	32 (44%)	26 (36%)
Library space optimization	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	17 (24%)	42 (58%)	12 (17%)

**The respondents could indicate multiple issues*

Future expectations of users from remote access services

Table 6 presents respondents' expectations regarding remote access services. Most respondents indicate "Likely" or "Very Likely" across all variables. Alerts and notifications are significant for 76% of respondents. Citation downloading for research papers is also valued, with 68% expressing favourable expectations. A notable 35% remain neutral, which may reflect dependence on external citation tools. The highest level of consensus concerns the need for a secure, dependable library connection from off-campus, with 92% anticipating this feature. Security and continuous access are key concerns. Similarly, 82% of participants expect robust user support services, emphasising the need for assistance with digital platforms. The findings show strong demand for secure, accessible library service systems in digital academia.

Table 6: Expectations towards RAS

Expectations	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely
Alerts and notifications	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	16 (22%)	46 (64%)	9 (12%)
Citation downloading provision for research paper	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	25 (35%)	34 (47%)	13 (18%)
Easy remote access to all tools on the web & mobile through a single sign-on	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (21%)	32 (44%)	25 (35%)
Provide a secure and reliable connection to library resources from off-campus locations	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	8 (11%)	30 (42%)	30 (42%)
Provide support Services (help desk, technical support, FAQ)	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	11 (15%)	34 (47%)	23 (32%)

**The respondents could indicate multiple issues*

Testing of Hypotheses:

Awareness towards remote access services

Table 7 presents the calculated values of Mean, Standard Deviation, f-value and p-value for the extent of awareness of library users towards remote access services.

The calculated value in Table 6 also indicates that the difference between the 1st year (Mean=39.82, SD=7.38), 2nd year (Mean=41.45, SD=5.65) and 3rd year and above (Mean=42.89, SD=3.46) research scholars regarding their awareness towards RAS is not statistically significant, as the calculated f-value = 1.883, $p = 0.16$. There is no significant difference in the awareness of RAS between 1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year research scholars.

Hence, it is concluded that the null hypothesis H01: There is no significant difference in the awareness of RAS among PhD scholars based on their year of study is accepted.

Table 7: Statistical validity of awareness of remote access services

Year of Research	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	f-value	p-value
1st Year	22	39.82	7.38	1.57	1.883	0.16
2nd Year	22	41.45	5.65	1.20		
3rd Year & Above	28	42.89	3.46	0.65		

SD = Standard Deviation

Perception towards remote access services

Table 8 presents the calculated values of Mean, Standard Deviation, f-value and p-value for the extent of perception of library users towards remote

access services.

The calculated value in Table 8 also indicates that the difference between the 1st year (Mean=15.55, SD=3.143), 2nd year (Mean=15.73, SD=2.394) and 3rd year and above (Mean=16.82, SD=1.541) research scholars regarding their perceptions towards RAS is not statistically significant, as the calculated f -value = 2.147, p = 0.125. There is no significant difference in the efficacy of RAS between 1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year research scholars.

Hence, it is concluded that the null hypothesis H02: There is no significant difference in perceptions of RAS among PhD scholars based on their year of study is accepted.

Table 8: Statistical validity of the perception of remote access services

Year of Research	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	f -value	p -value
1st Year	22	19.73	3.383	.670	2.147	0.125
2nd Year	22	20.23	2.287	.510		
3rd Year & Above	28	20.29	1.997	.291		

SD = Standard Deviation

Expectations towards remote access services

Table 9 presents the calculated values of Mean, Standard Deviation, f -value and p -value for the extent of expectations of library users towards remote access services.

The calculated value in Table 9 also indicates that the difference between the 1st year (Mean=19.73, SD=3.383), 2nd year (Mean=20.23, SD=2.287) and 3rd year and above (Mean=20.29, SD=1.997) research scholars regarding their expectations towards RAS is not statistically significant, as the calculated f -value = 0.33, p = 0.72. There is no significant difference in the expectations of RAS between 1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year research scholars. Hence, it is concluded that the null hypothesis H03: There is no significant difference in expectations of RAS among PhD scholars based on their year of study is accepted.

Table 9: Statistical validity of expectations towards remote access services

Year of Research	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	f -value	p -value
1st Year	22	19.73	3.383	.721	0.33	0.72
2nd Year	22	20.23	2.287	.488		
3rd Year & Above	28	20.29	1.997	.377		

SD = Standard Deviation

Conclusion

The libraries faced the challenge of survival during the Covid-19 lockdown, and to adhere to social distancing norms, almost all the academic libraries started offering remote access services, which allowed their users to access their subscribed e-resources for education and research without the

limitation of time and boundary through their user-friendly web portal/interface. Such services have become 'new normal' services post-pandemic. The study highlights the awareness, perceptions and future expectations of the library users regarding the remote access services being provided by their library, which have become increasingly vital in the current ICT scenario, particularly post-pandemic. The results of the study indicate that the services offered by A.C. Joshi Library do provide a user-friendly interface, enabling their users to access a diverse range of e-resources from any location, thus enhancing their overall experience. To maximise the benefits, it is essential for academic libraries to actively engage users through awareness programs and orientation sessions, ensuring that all potential users are well-informed about the system's functionalities and advantages. Such programmes will be beneficial to academic users in the long run as they will enhance user engagement and satisfaction. The libraries should educate their users about the technical aspects, services, and different types of e-resources available. Moreover, the libraries should remain committed to improving their networks and address any challenges their users encounter while utilizing remote access services, especially the network and other related technical issues. Such efforts will ensure that all users utilize the remote access services provided by their libraries judiciously, as huge amount is spent on their acquisition.

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