

The Efforts of University Libraries in Mitigating the Impact of Crises and Facilitating Open Access to Information: The Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat as a Case Study

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of Algerian university libraries in promoting and supporting open access to information during crises. It also assesses the extent to which librarians at the Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat are oriented towards this emerging mode of information provision. Furthermore, the study investigates the role of open access to information in mitigating the effects of crises on university libraries by examining the services provided to meet users' information needs. To achieve the study objectives, a descriptive approach was adopted, and a printed questionnaire was used to collect and analyse the data. The study yielded several findings, the most significant of which indicate that the staff of the Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat are familiar with the concept of open access to information and are willing to keep pace with technological developments in library services. The library also encourages users to benefit from the university's digital repositories and seeks to raise awareness of this new mode of access. However, the findings reveal the absence of a clear strategy for managing crises and strengthening open access to information, along with insufficient financial resources to develop the library's technological infrastructure.

Keywords: University libraries; open access; crises; library services.

Introduction:

Open access is an issue that requires considerable attention, particularly in the current era, which is characterised by an unprecedented abundance of information. Rapid developments in

information and communication technologies have compelled organisations of various types to keep pace with and adapt to these changes. As one of these organisations and a major source of knowledge and scientific research, university libraries continuously seek to meet the needs of their user communities in a manner consistent with ongoing developments.

However, university libraries encounter numerous obstacles and difficulties in delivering their services and performing their functions. When these difficulties intensify and develop into crises, they may hinder the growth and development of library services and capabilities. University libraries therefore seek to overcome such crises to prevent them from adversely affecting their activities and performance.

Accordingly, university libraries have increasingly adopted a new system of scholarly communication known as open access to information as an innovative approach to addressing the crises affecting them. Open access is considered one of the most important concepts associated with information and communication technologies. University libraries seek to benefit from its various forms to facilitate access to electronic information and enable users to retrieve and use it regardless of their location or the time at which access is required.

1. Methodological Framework:

1.1. Research Problem:

Open access to information has become an issue of considerable importance in the contemporary context, as it represents one of the most significant means of supporting the educational process within the academic community. It is also one of the principal mechanisms contributing to the advancement and stimulation of scientific research.

Like other information institutions, university libraries seek to support the educational process by providing researchers, whether students or academic staff, with access to a wide range of information resources. Nevertheless, university libraries, like other institutions, may face various crises that can limit their effectiveness in delivering information services to their user communities.

Within this context, the role of open access to information becomes particularly evident, as it can contribute to reducing the impact of crises on libraries. Even when a library is affected by a crisis, it may continue providing its services by using the tools and facilities offered by modern technologies, thereby enabling users to derive the greatest possible benefit from the information resources available in university libraries.

Based on the foregoing, the principal research question of the present study is formulated as follows: To what extent does open access to information contribute to mitigating the impact of crises on Algerian university libraries?

1.2 Research Questions:

- _ What is meant by open access to information?
- _ Are Algerian library specialists familiar with the concept of open access?
- _ Do Algerian university libraries possess the required technological infrastructure?
- _ Do university libraries have a clear strategy for mitigating the effects of crises?

- _ What difficulties may hinder the contribution of university libraries to open access?
- _ Do libraries have a clear strategy for managing and addressing crises?

1.3 Study Significance:

The significance of this study lies in the importance of open access within university libraries, the methods used to manage crises affecting Algerian university libraries, and the extent to which open access contributes to mitigating the effects of crises on library performance and enables libraries to provide high-quality services. The study is also significant because it examines the technical preparedness of university libraries to implement open access to information and identifies the skills required of personnel working in the library sector. This is achieved by identifying the strengths of Algerian university libraries in addressing various crises and determining areas of weakness that require improvement. Accordingly, the present study examines the strategies adopted by Algerian university libraries to provide services during crises and evaluates the extent of their contribution to the open access movement.

1.4 Study Objectives:

This study seeks to highlight the concept of open access in Algerian university libraries and its contribution to sustaining the performance of university libraries in conducting their various activities and providing services during crises. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- _ To clarify the concept of open access among Algerian librarians.
- _ To identify the material, human, and technological resources available to Algerian university libraries.
- _ To identify the crises encountered by libraries.
- _ To determine the extent to which crises affect university libraries.
- _ To assess the preparedness of Algerian university libraries to address crises.
- _ To highlight the services provided by university libraries during crises.
- _ To examine the contribution of Algerian university libraries to implementing open access in support of the educational process during crises.

1.5 Definition of the Study Concepts:

- **University libraries:** A university library is considered one of the university's most essential facilities, as it plays a prominent role in advancing scientific research and improving the university's academic standards. It is a library administered and funded by the university to meet the information needs of its user community, including students and faculty members (Dai, 2021, p. 1261).
- **Open access to information:** It is a contemporary approach and system of scholarly communication based on the principle of making research and scientific reports available online without financial or legal restrictions and without requiring prior authorisation (Al-Shawabkeh, 2009, p. 156).
- **Crises:** A crisis refers to situations faced by decision-makers within an organisation in which events unfold rapidly and causes become intertwined with consequences. The

situation becomes more severe when decision-makers lose, or experience a decline in, their ability to control the situation and its future development (Al-Sakarneh, 2010, p. 19).

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study:

2.1 University Libraries:

University libraries are among the most important academic and cultural facilities supporting the educational process and scientific research within universities. They play a significant role in improving academic standards and advancing scientific research.

University libraries are defined as libraries established, administered, and funded by universities to meet the information needs of students and faculty members in colleges and academic departments, as well as to fulfil the requirements of curricula and scientific research (Dai, 2021, p. 1261).

University libraries are also defined as higher education institutions that provide services to faculty members, students, and the various administrative departments within universities (Ghada, p. 160). Based on the foregoing, university libraries may be described as information institutions administered and funded by universities for the purpose of organising and providing access to information resources and conducting various scientific activities in response to the needs of their user communities, including students and faculty members.

2.1.1 Types of University Libraries:

University libraries vary according to the user communities they are intended to serve. The most prominent types are as follows:

- Central Library:

The central library is the university's principal library. It primarily serves postgraduate students, faculty members, and researchers, with particular emphasis on acquiring important and specialised reference materials. It coordinates and integrates its activities with those of faculty libraries and may contain library resources that cannot be provided in individual faculty libraries (Al-Saeed, 2012, p. 42).

-Faculty Libraries:

These libraries are established within university faculties and provide services to a user community comprising students, faculty members, and faculty employees. They also supervise departmental libraries where such libraries exist (Al-Saeed, 2012, p. 43).

- Departmental Libraries:

These libraries serve students and teaching staff within a specific department. They develop their collections and provide services that support the academic specialisation of the department to which they belong. They emerged as a result of the expansion of scientific disciplines and the growing number of students enrolled in different fields of specialisation.

These are the most prominent types of university libraries. However, other types also exist, including research laboratory libraries, specialised institute libraries, and others.

2.1.2. Objectives of University Libraries:

The objectives of university libraries are closely aligned with those of the university itself and may be summarised as follows:

- Supporting and developing academic curricula by providing information resources relevant to those curricula.
- Facilitating research and study by providing, preserving, and organising various information resources and ensuring that users can benefit from them.
- Organising exhibitions and activities that contribute to supporting the educational process.
- Contributing to the promotion of cultural awareness within the academic community.

2.2. Open Access to Information:

2.2.1 The Nature of Open Access to Information:

Open access to information emerged from the desire of scholars and researchers to disseminate the outcomes of their work and research, as well as their findings, freely and without restriction, with the aim of advancing science and knowledge. Open access is a term that became widely used among researchers during the last century to describe a new approach and system of scholarly communication based on making research studies and scientific reports freely available online, without financial or legal restrictions and without the need to obtain prior authorisation (Al-Shawabkeh, 2009, p. 156).

The Berlin Open Access Initiative states that establishing open access as a meaningful practice requires the active commitment of every individual producer of scientific knowledge. Open-access contributions include the results of original scientific research, raw data, metadata, source materials, digital representations of pictorial materials, and scientific multimedia materials (Dai, 2021, p. 1261).

Based on the foregoing, open access to information may be understood as access to various forms of scientific and technical information available online without legal or financial restrictions. In other words, users can access the full texts of articles, search within them, and cite them without encountering barriers.

Based on the preceding definitions, the characteristics of open access to information may be identified as follows:

- _ Digital information resources are available online.
- _ They are freely accessible to all users.
- _ Information is made available to everyone without legal or financial restrictions.
- _ Individuals can access the information they require easily and rapidly.
- _ Open access is limited to academic intellectual output (Rehab, 2016, p. 203).

2.2.2. Mechanisms and Methods of Open Access to Information:

The widespread adoption and substantial development of modern technologies have helped eliminate the obstacles researchers encounter when publishing their work and searching for the information they require. These technologies provide numerous options that facilitate information availability and enable open access to information, as follows:

A. Open-Access Journals:

These are peer-reviewed journals published regularly and periodically that anyone can access without restrictions or barriers. They follow two principal open-access approaches:

- **The Gold Road:** This approach involves publishing peer-reviewed scientific journals that are not intended to generate profit and allow users to access their articles free of charge and without restrictions.
- **The Green Road:** This approach involves profit-oriented journals permitting their peer-reviewed and published articles to be deposited in repositories that are freely accessible online to the public (Rehab, 2016, p. 205).

B. Digital Archives:

Digital archiving refers to depositing scientific research in digital form on a website accessible through the Internet. It is also known as self-archiving, open archives, or open-access repositories. The contents of these archives can be retrieved through search engines. This practice represents a shift in responsibility for preserving scientific works from the individual to the institutional level. Digital archives are divided into two principal types: institutional repositories and subject-based repositories (Rehab, 2016, p. 205).

3. Crises in University Libraries:

3.1 The Concept of Crisis:

Definitions of crisis are diverse and numerous. Nevertheless, a crisis may be defined as a serious threat capable of undermining the objectives, values, beliefs, and property of individuals, organisations, and states, whether the threat is anticipated or unexpected. It represents a critical and decisive moment affecting the fate of the administrative entity concerned (Ithar Abdel Hadi, 2011, p. 49).

A crisis is therefore a sudden emergency that causes disruption and instability within the system adopted by an organisation and, in most cases, results in negative consequences.

3.2 Crisis Management in Libraries:

Crisis management is defined as a dynamic field that enhances organisational efficiency and effectiveness in addressing the numerous incidents to which organisations may be exposed. It is also a form of management concerned with the future while safeguarding present aspirations. It involves applying the functions of the administrative process by investigating the causes of a crisis and identifying appropriate solutions to address it (Amrouche Karima and Mohamed Abdel Hadi, 2022, p. 87).

Based on the foregoing, crisis management in libraries should adopt a scientific approach based on the effective use of all available capabilities, data, and information, whether material or human. This approach enables university libraries to achieve their objectives during crises and meet users' needs, beginning with crisis detection and the identification of its indicators, followed by preparedness, containment, and mitigation of its impact.

3.3 The Impact of the Open Access Movement on Library Performance During Crises:

Like other organisations, university libraries are affected by exceptional circumstances and crises that may prevent them from performing their functions and delivering services in the usual manner, thereby adversely affecting the academic community. University libraries therefore adopt various methods and mechanisms to reduce the impact of crises on their ability to meet users' needs. The most significant approaches include the use of modern technologies, active engagement with the electronic environment, and the implementation of open access to information, which substantially enhances the use of information resources during crises.

Based on the foregoing, the roles of university libraries in strengthening open access to information during crises may be summarised as follows:

- Assisting in the development of policies aimed at expanding available electronic collections.
- Ensuring that access and use are not restricted by passwords, website addresses, or working hours (Belhouchat and Rhaili, 2023, p. 371).
- Using information and communication technologies to deliver information to learners.
- Using catalogues and systems available online.
- Training users to access and use electronic resources and systems (Manhal Abdel Majeed et al., 2020, p. 313).
- Providing reference and information literacy services.
- Collecting and organising intellectual output through the university's digital repository and making it available to the academic community.
- Providing access to appropriate information resources, including electronic periodicals and journals.
- Using social media networks to provide services to users (Ahmed Mohamed Othman, 2022, p. 183).

3. Field Framework:

3.1 Boundaries and Scope of the Study:

3.1.1 Thematic Boundaries:

The present study assesses the readiness of Algerian university libraries to confront the various crises to which they may be exposed or have previously experienced. It examines the human and technological preparedness of the Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat and the extent to which the open access to information movement contributes to mitigating the impact of crises on the library.

3.1.2 Geographical Boundaries:

As indicated in the subtitle of the article, the geographical scope of the study was limited to the Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat.

A. Description of the Study Setting:

The Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat was established in 2005. It has a capacity of 500 seats and consists of three floors, as follows:

Ground Floor: The ground floor includes a reception and guidance desk, lending counters, and a reading room with 190 seats. It also contains a room dedicated to searching the library's databases, equipped with 19 computers, and an Internet room containing 52 computers. The library administration and its offices are also located on this floor.

First Floor: This floor contains an Internet room designated for academic staff and doctoral students, equipped with 15 computers, as well as a reading room with 190 seats. It also houses the technical processing office.

Second Floor: This floor contains a reading room and a theses and dissertations office holding doctoral theses, Magister dissertations, and graduation dissertations. It also includes the periodicals and journals office, which contains 103 titles.

The library also holds a diverse documentary collection comprising traditional and electronic resources accessible through its databases, through which it seeks to meet users' needs and expectations.

3.1.3. Temporal Boundaries:

The temporal boundaries refer to the period required to complete the study, from topic selection to data collection and analysis. The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year, from January to April 2025.

3.2 Study Population and Sample:

The study sample consisted of professional staff and employees of the Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat specialising in library and information science. A total of 24 printed questionnaires were distributed, of which 18 were returned and subsequently analysed.

3.3 Research Method:

The research method adopted in a study varies according to the nature of the subject under investigation and the research problem addressed. In the present study, the descriptive method was selected because of its suitability to the topic. It enabled the assessment and analysis of the readiness of the Central Library of Amar Telidji University to confront crises and the extent of its contribution to the open access movement. Moreover, the descriptive method is among the most widely applied research methods in the humanities and social sciences.

3.4 Data Collection Tools:

In accordance with the nature of the study, a questionnaire was used as the principal data collection tool. It was structured into three main sections. The first section addressed the personal characteristics of the study sample. The second examined the participants' knowledge of open access to information and the library's motivations for adopting this policy. The third focused on open access and crises in university libraries to determine the extent to which the library meets users' information needs during crises.

3.5 Analysis of the Study Results:

Table 1. Qualifications Obtained

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Doctorate	00	00%

Magister	00	00%
Master's degree	08	44.44%
Bachelor's degree	03	16.66%
Library technician	07	38.88%
Total	18	100%

Table 1 presents the qualifications held by the library staff. The data indicate that none of the staff members holds a doctoral or Magister degree in library science. The largest proportion consists of employees holding a Master's degree in library science, representing 44.44% of the total staff. Library technicians account for 38.88%, which is relatively high compared with employees holding a Bachelor's degree in library science, who represent 16.66%. This proportion appears low, given that the library requires a greater number of staff with this qualification to perform its various functions properly and effectively.

Table 2. Professional Grades

Response	Frequency	Percentage
University library conservator	01	5.5%
First-level university library assistant librarian	06	33.33%
Second-level university library assistant librarian	04	22.22%
University library assistant	06	33.33%
University library technical officer	01	5.55%
Total	18	100%

The table above shows that the highest proportion corresponds to first-level university library assistant librarians, at 33.33%. This may be attributed to the significant role of this category in supervising and performing the various operations conducted within the library. The same proportion, 33.33%, was recorded for university library assistants, which may be associated with the library's recruitment policy. Employees holding the grade of second-level university library assistant librarian represent 22.22% and are entrusted with essential duties across the library's various departments. University library technical officers account for 5.5%; this category is responsible for routine and relatively simple tasks, such as lending services. The library is also managed by an official holding the grade of university library conservator.

Table 3. Level of Awareness of Open Access Among the Study Population

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	13	72.22%
No	05	27.77%
Total	18	100%

The table above illustrates the extent to which library staff are familiar with open access to information. A total of 72.22% of employees confirmed their familiarity with this concept. This

high percentage reflects librarians' interest in this emerging form of information access. By contrast, 27.77% indicated that they were unfamiliar with the concept of open access to information. Given the importance of this mode of access, this proportion remains relatively high and should be addressed by library management.

If the Answer Was “Yes,” What Is the Concept of Open Access?

The responses provided by the study sample varied because this was an open-ended question that allowed participants to formulate their own answers. Nevertheless, most responses centred on the following ideas:

- Open access refers to free access to information.
- It refers to benefiting from information available online free of charge and without legal or technical restrictions.
- It refers to websites that provide information and make it freely accessible.
- It refers to information published in journals that make their issues freely available online.

These responses indicate that most members of the study sample possess a clear and relatively accurate understanding of the concept of open access. This is an important finding, as it reflects interest in this mode of access, which enables users to derive maximum benefit from available information.

Table 4. The Importance of Open Access in Libraries

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	11	61.11%
Somewhat important	05	27.77%
Not important	02	11.11%
Total	18	100%

The table above shows that 61.11% of respondents consider open access to information highly important for libraries. This confirms their understanding of the subject and awareness of this mode of access. This category represents the majority of the study population. Meanwhile, 27.77% believe that open access is only somewhat important, whereas 11.11% consider it unimportant.

This may be attributed to their limited understanding of the concept of open access and the benefits it provides to libraries and users. Based on the foregoing, open access is of considerable importance to university libraries, as confirmed by the results presented above. This importance stems from the need to keep pace with developments in information technology and maximise the benefits users derive from library services.

Table 5. Motivations of the University Library for Adopting the Concept of Open Access

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Desire for development	09	34.61%

Responding to users' needs	08	30.76%
Competing with other libraries	03	11.53%
Keeping pace with scientific and technological developments	06	23.07%
Total	26	100%

The results presented in the table above show that the primary motivation for adopting open access to information varied among the members of the study sample. A total of 34.61% identified the desire for development as the principal motivation, whereas 30.76% considered the main motivation to be responding to users' changing and evolving needs. This reflects the fundamental purpose for which the library was established, namely, to meet users' needs through the simplest methods and the most current means and approaches available.

Furthermore, 23.07% of respondents believed that the motivation was to keep pace with scientific and technological developments. This may be attributed to the fact that the library both influences and is influenced by its surrounding environment and does not operate in isolation. By contrast, 11.53% identified competition with other libraries as the principal motivation. However, this proportion is relatively low compared with the other motivations presented above.

Table 6. Receiving Enquiries About Open Access

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	66.66%
No	06	33.38%
Total	18	100%

The table above indicates that the majority of the study population receive enquiries concerning open access to information, representing 66.66% of respondents. This finding demonstrates users' growing interest in benefiting from this mode of access to meet their information needs. By contrast, 33.33% of respondents reported receiving no enquiries concerning open access.

Table 7. Subjects of Library Users' Enquiries

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Methods and mechanisms for rapidly searching for information	02	16.66%
How to obtain information from open-access sources	04	33.33%
How to search for open-access websites	06	50%
Total	12	100%

The table above shows that users' enquiries primarily concerned open-access websites, accounting for 50% of responses. Such websites constitute a principal means of accessing information available online. Familiarity with these websites enables users to obtain the information they require.

Meanwhile, 33.33% of the enquiries concerned how to obtain information from open-access sources. This may be attributed to the fact that this mode of access requires specific research

skills that differ from those needed in the traditional information environment. Furthermore, 16.66% of respondents reported receiving enquiries about methods and mechanisms for locating information rapidly. This reflects one of the essential characteristics of open access, which maximises the benefits derived from information and enables its rapid retrieval.

Table 8. Advantages Provided by Open Access

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Currency of information	06	27.27%
Speed of obtaining information	10	45.45%
Flexibility in the times and places of use	06	27.27%
Total	22	100%

The table above presents the advantages provided by open access. A total of 45.45% of the study population believe that open access enables information to be obtained rapidly. This is one of the most important advantages of open access to information, as access is not restricted by time or place because the information is available online.

In addition, 27.27% of respondents believe that open access provides users with up-to-date information. This percentage is equal to that of respondents who believe that open access ensures flexibility regarding the times and places of use. This differs from the traditional information environment, in which users must travel to the library to obtain the information they require. Open-access websites, by contrast, make various information resources directly available to users.

Table 9. The Contribution of Open Access to the Library

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Rationalising library acquisition expenditure	05	22.72%
Improving the quality of services provided	11	50%
Contributing to user satisfaction	06	27.27%
Total	22	100%

The table above shows that 50% of respondents believe that open access to information contributes to improving the quality of services provided to users. This represents the core purpose for which the library was established, as its primary objective is to serve users with the highest possible level of efficiency and quality. This is further supported by the 27.27% of respondents who believe that open access contributes to achieving user satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the results presented in Table 5, which examined the motivations for adopting open access to information and identified responsiveness to users' needs as one of the principal motivations, with a relatively high percentage.

Meanwhile, 22.72% of respondents believe that open access contributes to rationalising library acquisition expenditure. Acquisition costs represent a major obstacle for libraries, as their budgets are often limited and insufficient to meet the continuously increasing and changing needs of their user communities. Open access helps address this difficulty by contributing to the reduction of library expenditure.

Table 10. Difficulties Encountered by the Library in Implementing the Principles of Open Access

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Legal difficulties	03	12.5%
Technical difficulties	15	62.5%
Financial difficulties	06	25%
Total	24	100%

The table above presents the principal difficulties encountered by the library in implementing the principles of open access to information. The results show that 62.5% of respondents consider technical difficulties among the most significant obstacles preventing the library from applying these principles. This may be attributed to the library's limited ability to keep pace with rapid technological developments. This issue was previously addressed in Table 5, which presented the motivations for adopting open access to information, including the need to keep pace with technological advances. It may also be associated with the high cost of technological equipment. Meanwhile, 25.5% of respondents attribute these difficulties to financial constraints, which may result from the limited budgets allocated to libraries. These obstacles should therefore be addressed to facilitate the implementation of open access within libraries. By contrast, 12.5% of respondents believe that the library faces legal difficulties. This proportion is relatively low compared with those associated with the preceding difficulties.

Table 11. The Concept of Crisis According to Library Staff

Response	Frequency	Percentage
A critical period and an unstable situation	06	28.57%
A crisis is a transitional situation that occurs suddenly and leads to imbalance	10	47.61%
A crisis is a difficult situation that leads to negative consequences	05	23.80%
Total	21	100%

The table above shows that 47.61% of respondents define a crisis as a transitional situation that occurs suddenly and causes imbalance. This definition is broadly consistent with the findings of numerous studies that have presented a similar understanding of the concept of crisis.

Meanwhile, 28.57% define a crisis as a critical period and an unstable situation. This definition reflects the nature of crises, during which most organisations lose their equilibrium and

experience fluctuations in performance. In addition, 23.80% define a crisis as a difficult situation that produces negative consequences. Based on the foregoing, most members of the study sample appear to have an adequate understanding of the concept of crisis, despite variations in their responses.

Table 12. The Library Has a Strategy for Confronting Crises

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	05	27.77%
No	13	72.22%
Total	18	100%

Table 12 indicates whether the library has a strategy for confronting crises. The results show that 72.22% of the study sample believe that no clear strategy exists for managing crises. This may be attributed to the absence of effective leadership capable of developing the plans and strategies required in the event of an emergency.

By contrast, 27.77% answered “Yes,” indicating that the library has a clear strategy for confronting crises. However, this percentage is too low to provide reliable evidence that such a strategy is effectively implemented. During crises, clear plans and strategies should be established and followed by all staff responsible for operating and managing the library.

Table 13. The Library Develops New Means and Tools to Perform Its Functions During Crises

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	07	38.88%
No	11	61.11%
Total	18	100%

Table 13 shows that 61.11% of respondents believe that the library does not develop new means and tools to perform its functions during crises. This high percentage supports the results presented in Table 12, which indicated the absence of clear plans and strategies for confronting crises. Meanwhile, 38.88% of respondents believe that the library develops new means and tools. Nevertheless, this percentage remains low in relation to the library’s operational requirements and responsibilities.

If the Answer Was “Yes,” What Do These Means and Tools Consist Of?

Most members of the study sample who believed that the library develops new means and tools to perform its functions during crises stated that these initiatives involved making various information resources available online, digitising the library’s collections and making them accessible to users, managing digital repositories, and encouraging researchers to deposit their research findings in these repositories.

This indicates that modern information technology, particularly digitisation, is the most important resource on which the library can rely during crises. When appropriately adopted and made accessible to users, digitisation can contribute to reducing the severity and impact of crises. Nevertheless, other means may also be used, although they were not mentioned by the study sample.

Table 14. Library Initiatives to Achieve Open Access During Crises

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	11	61.11%
No	07	38.88%
Total	18	100%

The table above shows that the library has undertaken initiatives that may contribute to implementing the principles of open access to information during crises, as reported by 61.11% of respondents. By contrast, 38.88% stated that the library had not undertaken any initiatives that could support the establishment of an open-access model during crises. Such a model could enhance the library's visibility and enable users to derive greater benefit from its services.

Respondents who answered "Yes" indicated that these initiatives included promoting the use of the university's digital repositories, which are administered and managed by the library, and encouraging researchers to use them. This represents a significant step towards integrating the library into the open access to information movement, particularly during crises.

The initiatives also included relying on open-access journals, subscribing to them, and making them available to library users. This practice can substantially reduce the impact of crises on overall library performance. Nevertheless, some respondents answered "No" and believed that the library had not undertaken any initiatives to promote open access during crises. This may be attributed to their limited awareness of the importance of open access and the emerging roles it performs.

Table 15. Availability of the Necessary Technological Infrastructure in the Library

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	04	22.22%
No	14	77.77%
Total	18	100%

Table 15 illustrates the extent to which the library under study possesses the technological infrastructure required to reduce or mitigate the impact of various types of crises. The results show that 77.77% of respondents answered "No," indicating that the library lacks the necessary technological resources. This is a very high percentage, particularly given the considerable importance of modern technologies, which consistently contribute to reducing the severity and impact of crises on various organisations, including libraries.

By contrast, 22.22% of respondents answered “Yes.” However, this percentage is extremely low and does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the library possesses the necessary technological infrastructure.

If the Answer Was “No,” What Are the Reasons?

The responses of the study sample show that the majority answered “No” (77.77%), indicating that the library lacks the technological infrastructure required to confront crises. This reflects the considerable weakness affecting the library’s technological capabilities.

Respondents attributed the absence of adequate technological infrastructure to insufficient financial resources. This finding is consistent with the results presented in Table 10, in which financial difficulties accounted for 25% of the obstacles encountered by the library. This challenge affects most university libraries because they lack financial autonomy and operate within the constraints of limited allocated budgets.

Table 15. The Library’s Exposure to a Crisis

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	11	61.11%
No	07	38.88%
Total	18	100%

The table above shows that 61.11% of respondents answered “Yes,” indicating that the library had experienced a crisis that disrupted its ability to perform its various functions and activities in the usual manner. By contrast, 38.88% stated that the library had not experienced a crisis. This considerable difference may be attributed to the possibility that those who answered “No” were absent when the crisis occurred or were not employed at the library at that time.

If the Answer Was “Yes,” What Form Did the Crisis Take?

According to respondents who stated that the library had experienced a crisis that disrupted its internal performance, most responses identified financial difficulties as the principal crisis affecting the library. This may explain why some respondents stated that the library had not experienced a crisis, as employees responsible for routine tasks may not directly perceive the effects of a financial crisis, whereas staff holding specialised or senior positions are more likely to experience its consequences.

This finding further confirms the absence of the technological infrastructure required to confront crises, as demonstrated by the results presented in Table 14. Some respondents also referred to the library’s exposure to natural and health-related crises. Nevertheless, their responses primarily focused on financial crises and the inadequacy of the library’s budget.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, open access to information represents an important step towards making scientific knowledge available to all, thereby contributing to the advancement of scientific research and the reduction of knowledge gaps. Open access has a substantial impact on the ability of university libraries to conduct their various activities and provide services during crises. University libraries

have therefore become increasingly required to engage with this new mode of scholarly communication and benefit from it in serving their user communities.

The present study examined the extent to which the staff of the Central Library of Amar Telidji University–Laghouat recognise the importance of open access to information, as well as the role of the library in implementing its principles to meet the information needs of its user community. The analysis of the study results shows that the employees of the library under investigation are familiar with the concept of open access to information and recognise its considerable importance. Open access provides several advantages, most notably the rapid retrieval and currency of information, particularly during different types of crises. The library also encourages users to benefit from the university's digital repositories, recognising their importance as a key means of integrating the library into the open access to information movement.

Nevertheless, the findings revealed that the library under investigation lacks a clear strategy for implementing the principles of open access to information. This is attributable to the absence of the necessary technological infrastructure, which in turn results from the limited financial resources allocated to the library. Thus, although crises present significant challenges to libraries, they also provide opportunities to develop these institutions and enhance their flexibility in delivering services and conducting activities in ways that effectively serve their user communities.

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