

**Library Director Report
April 30, 2020**

1. **Stay at Home Order Extended.** On Thursday April 23, 2020 Governor Pritzker extended the stay at home order through May 30, 2020. This means that the library facilities will also be closed to the public through that date. We have draft plans to offer drop off and pick up services, but these will not be enacted until we can ensure the health and safety of our staff and patrons. This topic will be discussed further in the meeting.

COVID-19 Emergency Plan Update

2. **Virtual Public Services.** Staff continue to provide virtual services remotely, new statistics will be available at the next Regular Board Meeting on Thursday May 21, 2020. These services include:
 - a. Virtual pre-recorded and live programs
 - b. Phone, online chat/text support, online library cards
 - c. Collection development for electronic collections
 - i. At the meeting John McInnes will share the initial results of the increased budget for Overdrive, and the impact on wait times (decreased by 10 days)
 - d. Promoting virtual services on the library's website and social media channels
 - e. Developing new services to meet the community needs, such as expanded job search support and an online summer reading program
3. **Back Office Operations.** Staff continue to provide back office support to keep the library maintained and operational.
 - f. 3D Face Shields printed from our 3D printers
 - g. Mail sorting and distribution
 - h. Business Operations, including payroll, accounts payable, audit
 - i. Building cleaning and maintenance, and preparing for physical distancing
 - j. Staff working from home
 - i. We implemented a temporary work-from-home agreement that lays out responsibilities and expectations now that we know the facilities will be closed for an extended period of time, and includes information on the reimbursement stipend for the use of their personal equipment
 - k. Monitoring availability of federal and state grants

COVID-19 Re-Opening Plan

4. **Phased Re-Opening Plan.** Staff have created a draft re-opening plan that includes stages to slowly ramp up on-site services. The full draft plan is included in your documents; below is a summary:
 - a. **Stage 1** – Closed to public (we are in this phase)
 - b. **Stage 2** – Closed to public; staff working on-site (est. 1 week)
 - c. **Stage 3** – Closed to public; Parking Lot Pickup and Home Delivery (est. 2-4 weeks)
 - d. **Stage 4** – Open to public with significant restrictions (est. 2-4 weeks)
 - e. **Stage 5** – Open to public with moderate restrictions (to be determined)
 - f. **Stage 6** – Transition to our new normal; modify as needed (to be determined)

5. **Safe path to services.** The goal when reopening is to find a safe path to services, both for our patrons and our staff. Decisions should be guided by the available public health information.

The question for tonight is “When can we start Parking Lot Pickup and Home Delivery?” (Stage 3)

- **Option 1:** No staff in the building until June 1 (Most conservative option)

- **Option 2:** Staff only in the building in May, with the intent to provide pickup and delivery services no later than June 1. But reserve the right to change the plan if new information becomes available.
STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- **Option 3:** Deem our on-site services “essential” and begin May 1 (Not recommended)

There is a significant amount of discussion and opinions on this question in the library profession, especially in Illinois since the latest stay-at-home order extension included a modification that allow non-essential retail stores to provide delivery and pick up services.

The tenor of the conversations with local library directors has been divided. A portion of libraries feel strongly that “stay at home” means exactly that; we should not provide any reasons for staff or patrons to leave their homes until the order is lifted. The other side feels that we need to get back to providing on-site services as soon as possible, and if other non-essential organizations can do it safely (retail stores) why can’t libraries? However, we all agree on two things: 1) the safety and health of our patrons and staff is paramount and 2) we all want to get back to providing materials to our patrons as soon as possible.

From a legal perspective, we don’t know if the modifications the Governor put in place beginning May 1 (retail delivery and pick up) applies to libraries. There are two legal opinions that have been distributed to library directors, and they are not in agreement with each other. Additionally, as of the time of those opinions as well as the writing of this report, the official order has not yet been released, so additional details are not available. There may be more information and a new legal opinion by our meeting.

One of the biggest issues is the availability of protective supplies. We have face coverings, desk shields, sanitizer, wipes, and portable hand washing stations on order, but we do not have them yet and don’t know when they will arrive (we have some limited supplies from pre-pandemic). No matter how much we would like to open, we must be able to ensure that we can provide protection to our staff and patrons.

There are many opinions on how to clean returned library materials, and right now the recommendation is to quarantine them for 72 hours before anyone touches them. There is a formal study being conducted by IMLS that may provide different recommendations, see more information here: <https://www.imls.gov/news/covid-19-research-partnership-inform-safe-handling-collections-reopening-practices-libraries>

Resources

- A Phased Reopening Plan for Libraries as COVID 19 Restrictions Are Lifted
 - <https://medium.com/@john.alan.thill/a-phased-reopening-plan-for-libraries-as-covid-19-restrictions-are-lifted-2d96885c0c1d>
- Johns Hopkins Changed Its Guidance on Re-Opening the Economy After Pushback from Librarians
 - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/leahrosenbaum/2020/04/23/johns-hopkins-changed-its-guidance-on-re-opening-the-economy-after-pushback-from-librarians/#5b767f7f71a2>
- Why You Shouldn't Do Curbside During COVID-19
 - <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=Why-You-Shouldnt-Do-Curbside-During-COVID-19-Backtalk>
- ALA Coronavirus Pandemic Implications
 - <http://www.ala.org/tools/future/trends/coronavirus>
- RAILS Guidelines for Libraries Considering Curbside Service and/or Phased Reopening
 - https://www.railslibraries.info/sites/default/files/Curbside%20Delivery%20and%20%20Reopening%20Considerations_1.pdf

Should the library begin to provide on-site services prior to the stay at home order being lifted?	
Pros/Reasons	Cons/Reasons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrons are asking for pick up services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library materials circulate, which makes us different from retail or other delivery services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-contact delivery and pick up is possible (although staff will have contact with each other) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stay at home order is in place for a reason
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have another 4 weeks of quarantine; new materials could ease stress and boredom and provide educational opportunities for patrons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability of PPE. There is still a shortage (gloves, masks, cleaning supplies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other libraries are doing it (Wisconsin specifically allows this in their newest order). Local libraries are discussing this like we are, and there is no consolidated data available yet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential risk of infection. 60056 has 198 confirmed cases as of 4/26. Increasing cases and deaths in Illinois.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can begin to un-furlough staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No final report on how to safely handle library materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential liability of staff or public outbreak. Expanded Workers Comp coverage. Potential non-coverage from liability insurance.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear legal guidance

6. Removing Barriers to Patron Service – Initial Thoughts

We have removed many barriers to patron service during the pandemic (removed fines, extended due dates, extended expiration dates, offered online library card signup, etc.). We expect to maintain most of these during the transition period to our “new normal,” (Stage 6) but we should begin thinking about which, if any, of these should be maintained permanently.

We’ll start with some “fine free” information. The goal of fines is to encourage people to return library materials on time. If we can get our materials back and not have to charge fines, we should consider it. Instead of charging fines, if materials are not returned, we would block the card until they are returned.

Why go fines free?

- It removes barriers and provides more equitable service for all people in the community.
- The financial penalties are counter to the goal of welcoming all into the library.
- It will improve the checkout process by allowing staff to focus on positive interactions with patrons. We want to be welcoming, and for people to be excited about visiting the library, not worried about punishment or judgment.
- Fines can discourage the use of library material. We want to encourage more use, not discourage it for fear of punishment if materials are returned late.
- There will be a reduction in the handling of physical money, good in these times of disease.
- Many of our neighboring libraries have already done this, as far back as Algonquin in 2014, and Schaumburg has plans for May 2020.

Why not go fines free?

- What if people don’t return items in a timely manner? The wait time for materials could increase if we do not purchase additional titles.
- Loss of fee income. We have been seeing fee income decrease over the past several years, and expect to see a significant drop this year due to auto-renewals. It’s hard to estimate the financial impact because fines (for lost items) and fees (for late items) are coded to the same line and cannot be broken out.

7. Staff Updates

- MPPL is one of six libraries in Illinois that have furloughed or laid off employees. Nationwide, there are approximately 120 libraries across 31 states have taken this measure.
- The FOIA request mentioned at the last meeting has been responded to in full.
- We are encouraging staff to use the library’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which is available to all staff 24/7 (full, part, furloughed, active). The emotional stress of the pandemic and quarantine is affecting everyone, and this free, professional benefit that the library provides can hopefully help.
- As of last week, the library has received and responded to 55 unemployment claims.
- Nine furloughed staff chose to use some paid time off during their furlough.
- As discussed at the 4/16 Board meeting, the library will be paying 100% of the BCBS medical insurance premiums for furloughed staff during their time off. May premiums have already been paid, so the library will pay for June coverage for the 27 eligible individuals at a total cost of \$31,672.
- Upon returning to on-site work, we are investigating if we should have staff sign waivers understanding the implications of the pandemic and will follow all safety procedures in place. Library legal counsel will provide advice on this topic.
- We have made our staff timeclock virtually accessible, so staff are clocking in and out for their shifts and breaks. Managers are assigning and tracking staff work on projects.