PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESPOND TO COVID-19
National Survey Results

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Agenda

• National Survey Results
• Taking Action
  o Advocacy
  o Analysis
  o Communication
• Next Steps
• From the Field: Communicating During Crisis
• Tips and Resources
• Discussion
National Survey Results: Purpose

• Capture point-in-time response at a national level

• Develop an understanding of key actions
  • Understand the field
  • Share results back to staff
  • Use results to advocate for more funding at all levels
  • Communicate information to communities
National Survey Results

The results in this report represent aggregate responses from a convenience survey.

**Respondents**
2,545 public libraries

**Response Rate**
28% of US public library systems

**States**
- 50 US states + Washington, DC with at least 1 response
- 43 states with more than 10% of public libraries responding

**Legal Service Area Population**
- 44% serve <10k
- 23% serve 10k-24,999
- 23% serve 25k-99,999
- 10% serve >100k

*Unless otherwise noted, n=2,545 when calculating responses.
**Public library system is equivalent to a public library jurisdiction.
***Legal Service Area Population for all US public libraries: 57% serve <10k; 19% serve 10k-24,999; 17% serve 25k-99,999; and 7% serve >100k.
(From the FY2017 Public Libraries Survey, Institute of Museum and Library Services)
National Survey Results

Insights:

• Libraries aligned most with State directives on closures
• On average, 2 factors reported for decision making
• Closure statuses a moving target

PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING STATUS

CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC: 98%

Closures: 1% of respondents reported that their library is still open to the public, and less than 1% reported that their library is mostly closed to the public with some exceptions.

EXPECTED LENGTH OF TIME FOR CLOSURE:

- Indefinite: 35%
- 1 mo–2 mos: 15%
- 2 wks–1 mo: 32%
- Other: 18%

“Status of closures continues to change based on state and local shelter-in-place orders. Because data are rounded and the lowest response categories are removed, data may not sum to 100%.”
National Survey Results

Insights:

• Libraries most commonly reported engaging in 2 of these activities
• Libraries quickly changed policies and adapted services to respond to the pandemic
• The most common activities didn’t require in-person contact with the public
National Survey Results

Insights:

• Libraries supported their communities through activities ranging from expanding access to services to creating and distributing emergency supplies

PUBLIC LIBRARY ACTIVITIES
OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES*

21% • Providing non-COVID online resources (activities to do at home, unemployment resources)
21% • Expanding access to services (e-cards, deaf/blind/disabled expanded options, fine forgiveness, upping checkout limits, providing online assistance, setting up a helpline)
17% • Distributing library materials (free craft supplies, kits for various activities such as games and STEM, mailing items)
17% • Providing resources related to COVID (online and physically posted)
13% • Providing technology (laptop and hotspot checkout, expanding wifi, print/scan/copy/fax services)
12% • Using makerspace equipment to create medical supplies
10% • Creating virtual exhibits/programs
10% • Reallocating staff/resources (staff to other government entities for support, allowing other entities to use library meeting space)
7% • Supporting distance learning (materials, internet access, resources)
7% • Coordinating distribution of emergency supplies (distribution of masks for hospitals, first aid supplies for community, meals)

“We have a large 3D print lab, and our lead volunteer is working with the El Dorado Community Foundation to use our printers to print face shields for our local regional hospitals and county facilities.”
- El Dorado County Library (El Dorado Hills, CA)

*%n=763

Percentages sum to more than 100% because responses may address multiple topics.
National Survey Results

Insights:

- Libraries are key communicators
  - Virtual programming
  - Information about other community activities, education & services
  - Promoting other resources

- Leveraging other communication channels
National Survey Results

Insights:

• “Other” expanded services:
  • Laptop/hotspot check outs
  • Removing PW from wifi
  • Curbside (may be outdated)

• Wifi suspension per social distancing guidelines
National Survey Results

Insights:

• Primary duties:
  - Admin/financial
  - Social media communication
  - Planning for the future
  - Collection development/management
  - Virtual programming

• Data about pay will likely change dramatically

• Status of staff in buildings greatest unknown

PUBLIC LIBRARY STAFF

- Full Time MLIS 17%
- Part Time 42%
- Full Time Non-MLIS 32%
- Temp/Other 9%

WORK FROM HOME POLICY

- Yes 70%
- Undecided 18%
- No 10%

THE MAJORITY OF STAFF REPORTED TO BE NOT WORKING ARE STILL BEING PAID A SALARY OR HOURLY WAGE

Depending on staff type, between 1% and 5% were taking vacation or sick leave. Respondents were more likely to report that part-time and temporary staff were not being paid as compared with the other staff types (10% and 7% respectively, vs. 1% each for full time MLIS and non-MLIS staff).
# PLANNING FOR RECOVERY: TOP ACTIVITIES

**OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW &amp; EXPANDED SERVICES</th>
<th>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</th>
<th>PHASED REOPENING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing to offer new virtual programs and outreach/remote services developed in response to COVID-19</td>
<td>Implementing library policies and practices for social distancing and materials sanitation</td>
<td>Prioritizing staff return, materials, and programs and services to open in phases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> We are introducing many services which will likely become permanent when we are open again. We have really been heartened by the response to virtual storytimes, read-alouds and cooking demos.  
- McArthur Public Library (Biddeford, ME)

> We developed a very detailed procedure for handling books, materials and money to keep both staff and public safe.  
- Bertha Bartlett Public Library, (Story City, IA)

> We are hoping for a soft opening, allowing full staff to return to work before we are open to the public. This will allow staff space to emotionally process what we have just experienced and begin to get caught up on tasks before we jump back into face-to-face services.  
- Carnegie Public Library (Washington Court House, OH)
### Libraries' Greatest Needs

**Open-Ended Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Health &amp; Safety</th>
<th>Online Access</th>
<th>Patron Services</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Secure funding for pre-crisis budgets, including staff salaries and new funding for response work</td>
<td>Obtain cleaning supplies and protective wear for staff, and rebuild trust in the community that the library is safe</td>
<td>Expand e-services to patrons, especially those with limited internet access</td>
<td>Meet anticipated higher demand for services for those most impacted by the crisis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Funding will drop because of decreased tax revenue. I think funding will be the most important need."
- Wilkinsburg (PA) Public Library

"We need to know when to reopen, how to safely reopen, and how to clean our collections."
- Bedford (TX) Public Library

"We are trying to get hotspots available for our community but they are at a premium at the moment. Helping our patrons stay informed and providing access to the internet are key in rural areas."
- William B. Harlen Memorial Library (Tompkinsville, KY)

"I foresee libraries needing professionals that can help with filing paperwork necessary for resident recompense, job searching/application, unemployment, benefits/401k, and other issues that arise."
- Carroll County Library (Huntingdon, TN)

**Open-Ended Responses**

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<th>Communicating Value</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Continued/increased advocacy about the value of libraries during the crisis and the essential roles they will play in recovery</td>
<td>Active efforts to protect, restore or expand library funding during the recovery process, as well as support for paying staff during building closures</td>
<td>Clear guidance and training for developing or expanding pandemic, emergency and sanitation policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Get the word out that libraries are still here and virtually open...We need to toot our own horns!*
- Grimes (IA) Public Library

*We will need state and federal financial support since local governments will have very strapped budgets due to a huge decrease in tax revenue.*
- Central Rappahannock Regional Library (Fredericksburg, VA)

*Keep sending out information, access to webinars on a variety of topics, and best practices you are seeing.*
- Laramie County Library System (Cheyenne, WY)

*\(^*\text{\#1,181}\)
Taking Action: Advocacy & Partnerships

Advocacy:
- Legislators
- IMLS
- Executive Branch Agencies
- Media

Collaborations:
- IMLS/Library Research Service, Colorado State Library
- Other ALA offices
- Library Support Organizations
- COSLA/Chapters/State Data Coordinators
- Public Library Data Alliance

Photo credit: pixabay
Taking Action: Communication

Libraries joining fight against COVID-19 virus with 3-D printers


Libraries face more demand than during Great Recession: report


Area libraries see growing audience for online programming

https://www.sunjournal.com/2020/04/14/area-libraries-see-growing-audience-for-online-programming/#
Next Steps

• Continued analysis

• Training/content development

• National advocacy

• Media outreach

• Follow-up survey
Discussion

What do you want to know more about?

What other questions should we consider asking?

How have or might you use the data?

Photo credit: pixabay
From the Field: Bertha Bartlett Public Library

Story City, Iowa – Pop. 3,410
Gilbert Branch Library – Pop. 1126
Total Staff - 8 PT, 1 FT
Communicating to the Public

Activities: Weekly Newspaper Column, Website, Facebook, Instagram, Chamber of Commerce, City, Signage

- Changes were happening quickly
  - No time to plan
  - Board was unable to react/respond quickly

- Entire community needed informed at once
  - Schools were out for Spring Break
  - Regulars in weekly – average about 100 people per day
  - Homeschooled families relying on our materials
  - Tax season and Market fluctuations impacted those who used us for financial work

- City Mandates from Mayors/City Administrators, CDC, Governors
Communicating to the Public

Planning to re-opening during close-down

- Envisioned materials returning, and safety of handling for staff and public
- Conditions and Trust – Utilizing staff time best with focus shifting to digital resources
- Summer Reading Program unknowns
- Not much for sources to rely on, started our own Pandemic files, kept up with State & National updates
Communicating to Board/Leadership

Following the lead: city management provided direction

- Began emailing/texting/calling my board members & eventually Mayor
- Talked with State Law Librarian to assure proper procedures, scheduled ZOOM Board meeting
- Implemented changes were sent to All: City Manager, Mayor, Trustees, Foundation and Staff
- Forwarded materials sent to us by the State Library as we received it and all other communication pertinent
Communicating to Board/Leadership

Planning To Close and Reopen had to be worked out simultaneously

- Amount of work and tools needed to be sorted out
- Staff roles needed to change, hours adjusted, priorities changed
- Created written procedures to keep staff and public safe and shared with all
- City set requirements for staying home and being paid, employees had to consider their own health, their circumstances and abilities
- Shared created tools with other organizations, talked with other library directors

https://coronavirus.iowa.gov/
Communicating to Staff

Communicating early and often

- Changes were occurring every few days
- Scheduling had to be modified multiple times and recommmunicated
- Normal discussions to work through changes weren’t happening fast enough
- Daily updates with Assistant Director to reassess plans
- As changes hit, then staff had to communicate with others that were impacted
- All advised to prepare to work from home, get organized.
Communicating to Staff

Pandemic Files have been created for future use

- Reverse safety measures implemented at closing
- Invaluable for staff to have a paper trail
- Statistics from the PLA survey provide an argument for timing of closings, reopening, services that are provided by other communities and are a blueprint for future use.
Resources for the Field

www.projectoutcome.org

Creating a Message Framework

What? So What? Now What?

When you start to craft your own message, the process should always start with your audience in mind. In short, it’s about them (not you). Even though you may have all kinds of information to share about your library, successful messages have more to do with the audience’s experience and needs than yours. This is true for both internal audiences, like library staff, board, and friends of the library, and more external audiences like your city council, partners, funders, and members of the community.

Whatever story you want to tell with your data, the person on the other end will have existing perceptions and expectations that may affect how they will understand the information you share. Here are some questions to ask yourself about your audience:

- How much do they already know?
- What perceptions (true or false) might they already have?
- What economic or social context might they still need?
- What do you want them to do with this information?

What’s in a Message?
Resources for the Field

http://www.ala.org/tools/atoz/pandemic-preparedness

http://www.ala.org/pla/issues/covid-19
Resources for the Field


What kinds of communications have you developed for your community?

How are you communicating with staff/colleagues?

Where are you at on your re-opening plan?
Thank You!