



March 13, 2020

With the rapidly evolving news surrounding the transmission of the novel Coronavirus/COVID-19, the member libraries of LMxAC take this opportunity to assure all library patrons that we are doing all we can to maintain safe and healthy environments for all library patrons and for the people that work in our libraries. Each LMxAC member will make decisions locally about any services that might have to be curtailed at this time and whether or not a library must close for an extended period of time. Understand that each and every member of our library staff and Boards consider closing a library to be our last alternative.

We think it is important for the public and our municipalities to understand what we are considering when we evaluate whether or not to stay open. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advises against large numbers of people being within close proximity. Our libraries are of all different sizes, from very small to very large, but one thing we have in common is that until now we have always tried to accommodate as many people as possible. Now, to address CDC recommendations including social distancing, our libraries are removing chairs, increasing our cleaning protocols, removing toys and other often touched objects from availability to the public, and encouraging library workers and patrons to stay home if they are sick. But we ask every day – is it enough?

When schools close a common expectation may be to use the local public library as a place to connect to each other and to use our online resources including Internet connectivity and WiFi. Increased numbers of patrons in our public buildings is counter to the CDC recommendations and we are concerned that remaining open increases the possibility of further spread of the virus within our communities.

Lastly, our library workers are as susceptible to the virus as anyone else. As employers we care deeply about the health and welfare of the people who work in our libraries. We must also weigh the relative risk to them of remaining open to the public when other community resources have been closed.

We are working together to assure that if libraries must close we make it as easy as possible for our patrons to access us from home and to be free of any worries about the return of library materials. To that end we have agreed to automatically renew any library cards that have recently expired and to extend due dates for all materials currently checked out.

To find out the current status of all LMxAC libraries please consult this page:

<https://www.lmxac.org/info/library-status/>