At the end of April, it was announced that public libraries will be considered as part of stage two in Alberta's relaunch strategy.

KEY MESSAGES

- Roadmaps for reopening public library buildings have been in development by other jurisdictions since early April. YRL has compiled the following information as posted by the Government of Alberta, International Federation of Library Associations, Montana State Library, New Jersey State Library, Ohio Library Council, West Virginia Library Commission, and the REALM Project as information becomes available.
- There cannot be a 'one size fits all' process – libraries are different sizes with different services, programs, staffing levels and community needs. All communities are experiencing different things. Your guiding principles should be to ensure that your library is a safe environment for staff and for patrons. We do not want a hotspot or outbreak connected to public library use.
- Just because we have been told that we CAN open doesn't mean we MUST open. This is NOT an order to reopen, it is only the earliest date that you COULD reopen. And the language is 'reopen, with restrictions.' How to reopen is a decision that needs to be made by the Board.
- Reopening your library and moving to 'a new normal' will not be a clear and linear process. You may need to adapt and change your approach depending on the situation in your community or when instructed to by Alberta Health Services (AHS) or your municipality through states of emergency.
- At the time of writing, this document is consistent with provincial and federal guidelines. As information is shared, this document will be updated.

BEFORE YOU REOPEN

You SHOULD NOT open until you have:

- A plan.
- Shared your plan with YRL so that we can support you.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitation supplies (three weeks recommended) for staff.
- Clear communication to staff and to your patrons on what to expect – which means updating policies.
- Run a critical incident debrief with returning staff and Board members. Contact YRL staff at askyrl@yrl.ab.ca and we can help you with this.

SCENARIO 1: STAFF ON SITE; LIBRARY CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

Library Best Practices

- Staff should do a daily symptom assessment and stay home if feeling unwell – or if anyone in their household is unwell.

- Ensure social distancing between staff who need to be on site.
- Proper hand hygiene must be followed.
- Stagger start/end times for staff.
- Post health and safety information from [AHS](#) and [Occupational Health and Safety](#) in common areas (including in digital files accessible to staff).
- Frequent disinfection of high touch and shared surfaces.
- Staff should not share keyboards, phones, office supplies, etc.
- No common food/shared food. Use disposable plates and cutlery or encourage staff to bring their own from home and take it home for cleaning.
- Determine the maximum number of staff you can have in the building at any one time, and still ensure social distancing.
- Bringing all staff back into the building will be a gradual process.
  - Divide staff into 'teams' and establish rotating shifts of the same 'team' members so there is limited crossover or mixing.
  - Limit staff congregation in office or confined spaces.
  - Start cycling staff into the building in advance of re-opening or establishing any additional services.
- Isolate and seek medical advice for any staff person who develops symptoms while at work.
  - Impacted staff must contact AHS for guidance; AHS will inform the library if quarantine, shutdown or testing is required.
  - Shut down the building and conduct a deep sanitation if possible.
- Redesign/rework staff spaces to ensure a seating and working distance of 2m or more.
- Increase airflow through your space:
  - Keep interior doors open.
  - If you can, open windows and exterior doors.
- Try to maintain approximately three weeks of cleaning supplies on hand.
- If you have not had the volume of activity in your building that you normally have, run the taps in the common areas to flush out stagnant water.

Director/Board Best Practices
- Review time off/sick time policies.
  - Do you have a section in your time off/human resources manual/sick time policy that covers pandemic situations?
  - Reconsider requirement for staff to provide sick note(s).
  - Reconsider requirement for staff to report to work after 3/5/7 sick days during a pandemic – consider extending to 10 days (AHS recommendation for quarantine timeframe).
  - Communicate sick time policy/time off policy to staff and check for understanding.
- Review staff code of conduct policy including your expectations for staff actions under pandemic situations.
  - Communicate changes to staff and check for understanding.

- Review staff employment contracts, collective agreements, etc.
  - Employer rights often include the right to shift work, start/end times to meet operational needs – what do your contracts/agreements state?
- Consider a working from home policy.
  - Use of library-owned IT equipment at home and expectations for use.
- You cannot communicate too much or too often.

SCENARIO 2: STAFF RETURN TO WORK; LIBRARY STILL CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

Library Best Practices

- All of the above plus:
- Staff at work prepare the library to provide the limited/restricted service you will be offering to the public. This could include:
  - Preparing desk and work areas to ensure social distancing.
  - Preparing public areas to ensure social distancing.
  - Stocking PPE and sanitation supplies in areas where they are easily accessible.
  - Catching up on mail, communications, etc.
  - If you will be offering limited access into the building, look at floorplans and remove excess furniture/computers.
- Increase communication and check-ins with staff.

SCENARIO 3: LIBRARY OPEN TO STAFF; LIMITED SERVICE ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC

Things to Consider

To be determined: If libraries will be considered similar to retail OR a gathering space. If libraries are considered to be gathering spaces, then the 15 people maximum limit will need to be managed – and this would include staff.

- Are you able to meet the restrictions?
- Do you have a steady supply of PPE and sanitation supplies (minimum of three weeks) if you were to allow the public into the building?
- How many staff do you have who would be able to return to work?
- How many would fall into a high-risk category, or have someone in the household who would be considered high-risk?

Operational Hours

- Do you want to limit your open hours?
- Do you want to restrict certain hours when only seniors/at-risk populations can come in?
- Do you want to have people book appointment times?

Limited Services (reopening with maximum number of people set to provincial guidelines)

- Curbside delivery (see YRL document) and/or holds pickup.
- Could consider allowing patrons access to computers for a limited amount of time and by appointment.

- Consider reserving specific times for access by at-risk populations.
- Continue to offer readers advisory, chat, reference, general information services.
- Continue to provide virtual/online programming and services.
- Consider reducing the number of open hours to allow for virtual programming, cleaning public areas and quarantining materials.
- Holds pickup.

Library Best Practices
- Limit the reasons for people to be in the library.
- Limit the amount of time people may stay in the library.
- Set up additional precautions for staff at public service desks. This may include:
    - Masks, gloves additional hand sanitizer.
    - Installation of Plexiglas barrier (or a transparent shower curtain).
    - Posting additional signage.
- Close program and meeting rooms.
- Remove furniture from the public floor except in areas where it may be required (i.e. computers, if you have determined you need to offer computer access).
    - Remove children's furniture, games, puzzles, toys, stuffed animals, puppets.
- Ensure 2m between workstations or people. If you cannot manage this, then you will need to restrict the number of people in the space to below 15.
- Ensure all high touch surfaces are cleaned after each use.
- Clean all computer surfaces after each use (keyboard, mouse, monitor, table, chair).
    - Ensure that you are using the right cleaning supplies for your monitor.
    - Contact YRL if you are interested in medical-grade keyboards or mice (these can be more easily disinfected and washed).
- Staff need to perform daily symptom assessments.
    - Staff do not come to work if symptomatic, or if anyone in the household is symptomatic.
    - If staff become symptomatic when at work, they need to be isolated and AHS contacted for instructions.
- Staff and patrons must follow hand hygiene protocols.
    - Access to running water, soap and paper towel.
    - Access to hand sanitizer.
- Place hand sanitizers in high-contact locations (doors, return chutes, self checkouts, customer service desks, staff desks, computers).
- Clean high touch items after each use (carts, baskets, computers, chairs, tables, doors).
    - Assign staff to do this.
- Clean and disinfect high contact areas hourly.
    - Assign staff to do this.
    - Clean and stock public washroom more frequently than would typically be done.
- Close the library once per week to do a deeper clean.
- Inform customers that they cannot enter if they are symptomatic.

- If you are allowing customers into the space to pick up items:
  - Encourage use of self checkout as much as possible.
  - Do not handle a patron's library card if they have held it in their mouth.
- Post signage about social distancing; enforce as needed but do not put staff at risk.
- Do NOT provide food or beverages to customers – even wrapped candy.
- Consider not accepting returns at this time. If customers do return items:
  - Set up a quarantine area.
  - Handle materials only with PPE.
  - Testing is being done to determine the longevity of the virus on commonly held public library material through a partnership with OCLC, Battelle, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
  - On June 22, the round one test results showed that the virus was not detected on unstacked hardback book cover (buckram cloth), paperback book cover, plain paper pages inside a book, plastic protective book covering or DVD case, after three days of quarantine.
  - On July 20, the round two test results showed that the virus was not detected on stacked archival folders after two days of quarantine; not on shelved/stacked paper, including braille and board books, after four days of quarantine; and not on shelved/stacked magazines after five days of quarantine.
  - On August 18, round three test results showed that the virus was not detected on unstacked flexible plastic storage bag or DVD case after five days of quarantine; unstacked rigid plastic storage container, plexiglass and USB cassette all showed detectable virus at five days, the final timepoint tested. Based on these results, a slightly longer quarantine time may be required for plastic-based materials to render the virus undetectable. Alternatively, as the material is nonporous, suitable liquid disinfection methods may promote a more rapid decontamination than the quarantine method.
    - AT THIS TIME, ALL MATERIALS SHOULD BE QUARANTINED FOR A MINIMUM OF 4-5 DAYS.
    - Hard plastic materials (i.e. audio-visual cases) can easily and rapidly be decontaminated by liquid disinfection methods (i.e. disinfectant wipes).
  - Create a system to identify return dates so items can be backdated.
  - YRL will be sending out information on how to handle deliveries from HQ.
- Explain your plans for service and behaviour clearly and on your website/social media so patrons know what to expect.

Limited Service (maximum number of people permitted – half capacity)
To be determined: How to calculate a reasonable number of people who can be in the building and maintain 2m distance. This number usually refers to the building capacity as issued by the fire department. Using this metric may give you an unreasonably high number.

- Don't forget to include staff in this calculation.
- You could take your public floor space and divide by 2m (or 6ft).

- You may need to limit the number of patrons in the building – and/or in certain parts of the building – based on layout and the free-flow/traffic patterns of patrons through the space.

Library Best Practices
- All of the above, plus:
- Assign staff to monitor the door and 'count' patrons coming into the space; lock the door when your number has been reached, or book appointments for people to come into the library.
- Include your expectations and the steps you will be taking on your website/social media.

Director/Board Best Practices
- Create processes and procedures for curbside pickup (YRL sent out best practices).
- Review your customer code of conduct/behaviour policy and include expected behaviours for pandemic situations and administrative responses. Communicate changes with staff and check for understanding.
- Review your return/circulation policies.
    - Consider including a statement that under pandemic conditions, normal processes for circulation may be suspended at discretion of the director.
- Director should be running regular check-ins with staff to address concerns.
    - Recognize that everyone – all staff, the Board – have experienced higher than normal stress and anxiety.
- Director and Board to agree on what services will be offered – communicate to staff and post on website/social media.

SCENARIO 4: ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS LIFTED

To be determined: If buildings are open to the public and there's a decrease in the social distancing requirements, this may look like:

- Additional patrons in the building.
- Expanding/restoring some library hours, if you had restricted hours.
- Providing a limited amount of seating in public areas.
- Providing more access to physical computers.

Library Best Practices
- Pay attention to the outbreak levels in your community and be prepared to scale down service.
- Social distancing still required.
- Computer areas more accessible, but with time restrictions; ask customers to book appointments.
- Cleaning of public areas may be relaxed.
- Virtual programming continues.
- Limited in-person programming can begin; encourage people to register for programs in order to control social distancing. NO SINGING.

- Meeting rooms open for limited activities; by appointment only.
- Staff clean public areas as the public leave the building.
- Accept returns, but items need to be quarantined.

Director/Board Best Practices
- Determine the hours the library will be open to the public.
- Determine the services you want to expand, keep the same, or introduce.
- Publicize limited-service restoration (and define what that is).

SCENARIO 5: FULL PUBLIC SERVICE RESTORED

To be determined: What this looks like; however, in this phase all staff and volunteers can work in the library.
- The library is entirely open to the public, with restored services and programs.
- You must be prepared to scale back to one of the other scenarios, depending on direction from your municipality, health authority or the province.

Library Best Practices
- Library materials no longer quarantined.
- Meeting rooms accessible.
- No restrictions on computer use.
- Social distancing restrictions lifted.
- All in-person programming resumes.
- Volunteers can return.

Director/Board Best Practices
- Evaluates which virtual programs to continue based on plan of service, customer feedback.
- Reviews current plan of service and includes any new/ongoing activities.
- Leads a debrief conversation – both Board and staff should participate in one.
  - Review actions taken and responses; use structured debriefing questions. Contact YRL if you need assistance with the questions, or if you would like YRL staff to facilitate these sessions.
  - Record learnings and identify any further actions that need to be taken.

Sources
- Alberta's relaunch strategy (PDF)
- Alberta's Guidance for Libraries (PDF)
- Workplace guidance for business owners (PDF)
- https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries#reopening
- https://desk.zoho.com/portal/montanastatelibrary/kb/articles/covid-19-reopening-and-reentry-for-libraries
- https://www.njstatelib.org/news/covid-19-pandemic-resources-and-plans-for-library-reopening/
- http://olc.org/reopening-oh-libraries/
- https://librarycommission.wv.gov/Librarian/Pages/Resources.aspx
- https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/test2-results.html