April 24, 2020

This has been quite a time for libraries and I am very proud of the work that the Hillside Public Library has been doing to not interrupt library service using our expanded digital content. The Governor is not going to sign the modified Stay at Home Order until next week. It is not clear whether the Order will be released prior to signing. At these time Illinois library leaders are waiting to review the Governor’s modified Stay at Home Order and will be making a recommendation to libraries as to how the latest stay at home order defines service for libraries.

There is much to do on the libraries end to prepare for a return to service. It will take the library staff time to get “our house in order”. When we closed the doors we simply closed the doors and had staff go home for safety. We need to reshelf all the books that were left behind, we need to work on staff social distance spaces and we need to provide staff training on our procedures on safety issues.

We cannot take in any materials until the material safety quarantine studies are released. Currently, the IMLS (The Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC, a global library technology and research organization, and Battelle, a not-for-profit global research and development organization, have come together to help identify and respond to the need of collecting institutions. Other federal contributors include the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives and Records Administration. inconclusive information on how the virus survives on surfaces and how—or if—different types of materials can be handled to mitigate exposure.

As library systems, museums, and similar institutions across the United States plan for their reopening, an enhanced understanding of how to apply best essential in mitigating risk to employees in handling collections and engaging with the public. Their goal is to provide authoritative, fact based science for libraries and museums so that library and museum staff and patrons will feel safe and comfortable when reopening happens. Until we get those guidelines in place we are asking library users to keep their materials in their homes.

We also need to be able to access the necessary PPE for the safety of the staff. There are still many, many unanswered questions and work that needs to be done before we can safely think about physical library material service just yet.

We have a reopen plan set to go when the minute arrives for us to open again. My staff and I are very eager to get back into the building. This has been a difficult time for us and we miss doing what we do best and that is the mission of sharing materials. The community has been wonderful during the shutdown and I am thrilled that we registered many temporary on-line library cards in the last few weeks. We truly were able to be a lifeline to the residents, schools and businesses with virtual services.
With fingers crossed we will make an announcement to the community on how and when the library will begin the reopen after the current stay at home order is lifted or expires.