

COVID-19 SCHOOL LIBRARY BRIEF FOR SCHOOL BOARDS IN ONTARIO Ontario School Library Association, November 2020

Guidance for Circulating School Library Materials:

During the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, school library professionals and administrators at school districts and schools will need to establish and implement safe library borrowing procedures for all students attending school and also for those enrolled in online learning so students can continue reading.

Guidance for circulating school library materials should be reviewed in the context of public health and safety protocols for schools and workplaces. Refer to **Appendix A** for a list of public health recommendations pertaining to library materials.

Format of library materials:

Physical library materials such as books and DVDs can be circulated to students in adherence of public health and safety protocols.

Quarantine and Mitigation of Library Materials¹:

“For paper-based products, leave books untouched in a dedicated quarantine area for a period prior to handling and recirculating. Sanitizing books with liquid disinfectants can damage books and is not recommended.” - **Public Services Health and Safety Association**

- Time in quarantine is the best method for disinfecting all types of library materials. Quarantine limits the amount of contact staff has with the materials and ensures the entire object has been treated. Disinfecting library materials can result in damage to the materials such as books and magazines.
- The most commonly used quarantine period for library materials (books, DVDs, etc.) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 virus spread is **72 hours**. For this period, the materials should be placed in boxes or containers, or set aside on designated tables, date marked and where possible, stored in a separate area.
- For DVDs or other materials with plastic covers, wipe them down with alcohol wipes if not quarantined for 72 hours.
- School libraries should provide readily available and labelled quarantine bins in a designated area for users to deposit materials they have touched.
- Collections shipped from vendors should be quarantined if it cannot be confirmed how long they have been in transit.

¹ Checklist adapted from the [Canadian Urban Library Council \(CULC\): Toolkit on the Recovery & Reimagined Public Library Services Post COVID-19](#)



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- Libraries should consult their integrated library system vendor (and user groups) to learn about automated options to manage the quarantine of collections. Examples: rolling returns/checkout dates to prevent an overflow of holding spaces.
- School libraries can consider floating/rotating collections to reduce material handling.
- Rotating collections can be distributed in bins to the classroom, or for pre-arranged curbside pick-up for remote learning students.

Additional Considerations:

- Ensure the designated school library professional leads the materials circulation plan to effectively manage the preservation and sustainability of the library collection.
- Promote the use of the online catalogue to students for placing holds on materials.
- Increase access to e-books and e-resources to support both students attending in-class and at home.
- Provide additional supports for users with print disabilities to ensure they have continued access to collections in their alternative formats of choice.

About the Ontario School Library Association:

OSLA is a subject association recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Teachers Federation. OSLA provides professional development opportunities for qualified school library staff, promotes and conducts research related to effective school libraries, and advocates for the significant role of school libraries in contributing to student achievement and well-being. More than 1,000 school library professionals from across Ontario belong to OSLA.

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Appendix A: Public Health Recommendations for Libraries:

Public Health Ontario

[COVID-19 Routes of Transmission – What We Know So Far](#)

- Refer to page 6: Surface Stability of Virus.

Public Services Health and Safety Association:

- [Covid-19: Precautions when working as a library Worker](#)
- [Guidance During Covid-19 for Library Employers](#)

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