



March 19, 2020

*Office of the Governor
Massachusetts State House
Beacon St #280
Boston, MA 02133*

The Massachusetts Library Association, in our role as a leader of, and advocate for all types of libraries in Massachusetts, is expanding on the statement we made on March 16, 2020 and recommending that public, academic, and school libraries in Massachusetts stay fully closed through at least Sunday, April 5th and possibly longer if Governor Baker's office or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provide guidance recommending public spaces remain closed for a longer period.

As this is a truly unprecedented time impacting the lives of every Massachusetts resident, we also want to recommend that all governing bodies and institutions with libraries that are closed to the public continue to pay all members of the library staff their regular wages for the duration of the closure period. MLA recommends that staff members should not be docked for sick, vacation, or personal days for staying at home to protect themselves and the people they serve. MLA reminds employers that staff members who are using benefited hours due to concerns about their health cannot be expected to perform any duties remotely or otherwise on the days in which they are using their benefit time. MLA reminds employees that any unfair and/or illegal labor practice should be reported to their respective Union representative(s) and/or Human Resources representative(s), and if necessary, escalated to the Attorney General.

In addition, we would encourage all libraries that are closed to the public but attempting to provide curbside pickup, delivery, or other services that involve exchanging physical materials with members of the public to cease these services immediately. It is impossible for libraries to sanitize these materials before their staff handle them or they lend them back out to other patrons; this creates an undue risk for whole communities. Governor Baker has asked that all people engage in unprecedented levels of social distancing and self-isolation. Offering limited services that encourage people to leave their homes, no matter how heavily mitigated those interactions might be, are counter to Governor Baker's directives and go against the advice of public health officials on how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

March 16, 2020

The Massachusetts Library Association wants to commend the libraries and local officials who have made the very hard decision to close their doors to the public and at the same time, encourage others to take action.

MLA is using our role as a leader and advocate of Massachusetts libraries to call on all public libraries in Massachusetts to close their doors until Sunday, April 5th.

This is staying in line with Governor Baker's [Executive Order](#) to close all MA K-12 public schools from Monday, March 16 through Sunday, April 5. In addition, Governor Baker also issued an emergency order limiting gatherings to 25 individuals. We are living in an unprecedented time of uncertainty as we face this worldwide pandemic, and public libraries must do their part to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and protect our citizens from exposure.

We believe that school closures put an increased burden on public libraries as children and families turn to us for social, educational and even childcare needs. **Our commitment to serving the public puts us in a situation where to provide the best service, we need to stop our in-person services.** Increased dependence on our spaces and resources for children and families displaced by school closures will in all likelihood contribute to the continued spread of the coronavirus.

This is a challenging time for us, the nation and the world as we respond to novel coronavirus and the uncertainty surrounding it. MLA will do our best to stay on top of this quickly evolving and fluid situation and to communicate with you regularly and fully as conditions change.

Resources from our partners, the MA Board of Library Commissioners and the MA Library System

[Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and Massachusetts Libraries: News](#)

[Online Access from the MA Board of Library Commissioners](#)

Be safe, stay well.

MLA Executive Board