Dear colleagues,

Though the State Library does not have the authority to direct public libraries to close during this health crisis, the State Library of Ohio supports a library's decision to close physical library buildings and to shift staff focus for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak.  We acknowledge that COVID-19 is a public health crisis and libraries should do their part to reduce the potential for spread.  That said, this health crisis affects more than just the physical health of those who are sickened; it is affecting the social, emotional, educational, and economic health of all of us.  These concerns are ones in which libraries, too, must do their part to mitigate. Rather than halt services, the State Library encourages library staff to continue to provide library services to the extent possible through:

\* Online and telephone reference services

\* Online programming, especially in support of students and families impacted by school closures and homeschoolers.  
\* Increased provision of E-content services  
\* Social media outreach and community engagement

\* Other services identified as essential to your communities

Any decision to close physical buildings should be informed by current information from local officials and in consideration of the impacts to staff and patrons.  While it may be necessary to limit physical access to our buildings, library staff still have an obligation to do what we can to ensure the well-being of our patrons and communities.

For current information on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, I encourage you to visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.  I would also encourage you to tune into Governor DeWine's daily 2:00 pm press conferences, which are livestreamed on the Ohio Channel, the Ohio Channel's Facebook page, and also broadcast on some local television stations around the state.  The State Library is tracking library closures and as of 6:00 pm on March 17, 220 public libraries were closed to the public.  The State Library is also working with Priority Dispatch to make decisions regarding Statewide Delivery and where/how to store items that cannot be delivered to libraries that are closed.

Although the State Library is closed to the public, staff are working from home and are available to answer your questions. The best way to reach us right now is via email but telephone works too.  Just know that when you call, you will probably have to leave a message and wait for a return call.

Beverly

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Beverly L. Cain

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