Dear Colleagues,

Over the past couple of days, library staff across Ohio have expressed concerns about handling library materials being returned by patrons who might possibly have been exposed to the coronavirus.  Late this afternoon, John Stewart, Director of Operations and Technology at the SEO Service Center, contacted the Ohio Department of Health for guidance.  He almost immediately received the following response from the Deputy Director at ODH:

A study was released yesterday by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reporting that this novel coronavirus is detectable in aerosols for up to three hours, up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to two to three days on plastic and stainless steel. An Ohio Department of Health epidemiologist I consulted with said ​that the highest risk would be close proximity to a contagious individual as well as exposure to shared surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, ​touchscreens and faucets/sinks. ​The risk of contracting the virus from books is likely low. However, it might be worth considering a recommendation to patrons and staff to wipe off a book before handling it.

CDC offers general recommendations for routine cleaning and disinfection of households, which would be applicable to libraries, too: Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks) with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following label instructions. CDC also offers environmental cleaning and disinfection recommendations for community facilities with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html#Cleaning>.

You can go to the Ohio Department of Health's [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov/) website for more information and resources.

I hope this information is helpful to you as you continue to make difficult decisions in regard to protecting the staff of your library as well as your patrons.

Thank you,
Beverly

 

Beverly L. Cain

State Librarian

274 E. 1st Avenue

Columbus, OH 43201

[library.ohio.gov](http://library.ohio.gov)