

## OLC COVID-19 Statement and Information

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

---

The Ohio Library Council understands that choosing to close libraries to the public is an extremely difficult decision to make, but one that must be made if we are to take the health, safety and well-being of all Ohioans seriously. As of this morning, more than 165 of Ohio's 251 public library systems have announced some form of closure to the public.

With the highest library use per capita in the nation, Ohio's public libraries are cherished community gathering places. The recent closures and cancellations around our state are intended to help stop the community spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The mandatory closure of universities, K-12 schools, gyms, and rec centers has increased demand on public library services and as a result could contribute to the spread of the virus.

Yesterday, Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) updated their Order on "mass gatherings" based on new guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Mass gatherings of 50 people or more will not be permitted in Ohio. Given the volume of people who pass through our libraries at any given time, now is the time to consider a plan for closure if your library has not already done so. Also, determine if you can provide remote or virtual services during this time.

This situation is challenging. We are proud of the steps Ohio has taken to keep us safe. The OLC truly appreciates the daily briefings provided by Gov. DeWine and ODH Director Dr. Amy Acton with the latest facts based on scientific information. As information professionals, we aim to make the best decisions with the information we have.

As OLC has indicated in our messages over the past week, the decision to close should be made at the local level. We are encouraging each library to follow guidance issued from your local health districts, public officials, as well as the ODH and CDC.

Today's public libraries are so much more than brick-and-mortar buildings. Ohioans can access many materials online through their local library's website, including eBooks, audiobooks, movies, music and even online classes. Our libraries have digital resources to keep the public informed and entertained through this unprecedented time.