

Covid-19 Pandemic Library Recovery Report



Prepared by the

- Pandemic Library Recovery Committee
- Eric Stackhouse, Chief Librarian

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Background

In April 2020 the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board established Terms of Reference creating a Pandemic Library Recovery Committee. The Committee is composed of Occupational Health and Safety Committee members, Branch Assistants-in-Charge of the 7 library locations, and the Books by Mail clerk. The Committee works under the guidance of the Chief Librarian. The Committee was tasked to prepare a report for the Chief Librarian to be forwarded to the Board for approval.

The report puts forth a plan to reopen locations and services as the State of Emergency is lifted. Outlined below, the plan envisions several stages, responding to potential relaxation and tightening of public health measures. As these guidelines are still in development by Nova Scotia Public Health, only the first two stages have been outlined.

Protocols

The plan is based on well understood Province of Nova Scotia and Government of Canada public health protocols to ensure the safety of workers and the public.

- **All staff must self monitor for any signs of illness:** If feeling ill, they must not come to work. They should follow health advice, then contact your supervisor by telephone. If a staff member has a positive test for Covid-19 the supervisor or Chief Librarian must be informed by telephone as soon as practical. We will then follow direction from Public Health regarding the physical workplace and staff. The Board's *Special sick leave and Covid-19/Coronavirus* policy of March 13, 2020 applies in such circumstances.
- **Social distancing for public and staff members:** Limiting contact and staying 2 metres (6 feet apart) from each other. Where social distancing is impossible due to the activity, safeguards must be in place, such as Plexiglas shields and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- **Keeping your hands clean:** Washing or sanitizing of hands regularly according to Nova Scotia Public Health guidelines.
- **Cough and sneeze etiquette:** Using a tissue, coughing or sneezing into your elbow. Dispose of tissue properly. Wash or sanitize your hands immediately.
- **Cleaning:** Clean all areas regularly and high touch surfaces often and if possible between uses. The use of appropriate and approved cleaners and disinfectants is required.

Source: *Covid-19 Staying Healthy* (Accessed May 8, 2020) Province of Nova Scotia
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/staying-healthy/>

Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces (Accessed May 10, 2020)
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces-eng.pdf>

Staff members are the most important asset of the Library Board

The plan takes into account protection of staff members following the protocols noted above.

The Board recognizes there are those who are more vulnerable due to pre-existing health conditions. In these cases, the Chief Librarian and supervisors will work with the staff member to address the risk of exposure and how to control it, including reviewing tasks and jobs to determine when and where the exposure is most likely to happen.

The following controls, however, will apply to all staff members and locations:

- physical barriers to isolate staff from public such as installing Plexiglas or other form of enclosure
- personal protective equipment (PPE)
- facility, room, and workstation design, focusing on increased spatial separation
- human traffic patterns (limiting areas where people gather or frequent)
- positioning of alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers
- positioning of dedicated hand washing sinks
- process automation to reduce contact with surfaces (like automated hand-washing dispensers, automated hand drying, automatic doors, etc.)
- ventilation maintenance.

Counter measures may include reassignment of job duties.

Staff are encouraged to speak with their supervisor or the Chief Librarian. They may also wish to contact their workplace Health and Safety Committee representative.

Source: *Covid-19: Working* (Accessed May 8, 2020) Province of Nova Scotia
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/working-during-covid-19/>

Covid-19 Occupational Health and Safety (Accessed May 8, 2020) Province of Nova Scotia
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/occupational-health-and-safety/>

Commitment to the public

The plan and the resulting measures must build and strengthen community during this period. To do so it must be:

- respectful of all members of the public
- be inclusive
- compassionate
- decrease barriers as much as safely possible
- continue a commitment to safety in library facilities, services, and programs

All staff members are expected to project this commitment. If for some reason this cannot be done, the staff member must inform their supervisor or the Chief Librarian, to determine a resolution.

The plan

The plan envisions a staged approach to reopening. Only the first two stages are included at the present time as provincial health department guidelines are not fully developed.

Each location will have a separate detailed plan outlining site specific needs.

The plan anticipates online and virtual services will continue to grow throughout all stages.

Stage 1

The goal of Stage 1 is a safe return to the workplace of staff members, reopening of library headquarters, the preparation of the workplace for safe conditions moving forward, and to prepare and train for the safe re-opening of key public libraries services as described in Stage 2.

Late in Stage 1, a basic form of “Outside Pickup” will be offered to clear existing holds for materials. Also, book drops will open to begin receiving and quarantining materials. Branch deliveries will also resume.

- All physical locations of the regional library, including branch libraries, headquarters, and vehicles, will be assessed for immediate needs and in preparation for Stage 2. These include protective devices such as barriers, crowd control and signage (interior and exterior), cleaning and sanitizing supplies, identification of high touch areas, availability of hand washing locations, and areas in need of reorganization for distancing, storage of excess items, decluttering of spaces for cleaning plus line of vision control, and identification of book quarantine storage locations. Each location will be assessed by the Chief Librarian as to the safe number of staff and public who can enter the facility during Stage 2. Management staff will work with municipal officials as appropriate, including the cleaning or exchange of air filters in any ventilation equipment. Install or modify any safety equipment necessary.
- Determine which staff members may be at high risk due to the nature of Covid-19. The Chief Librarian and supervisors will ask staff to self-identify as especially vulnerable to Covid-19. The Chief Librarian and supervisors will work with the staff person to review job duties, introduce controls to mitigate vulnerabilities, and if necessary change job duties.
- The Chief Librarian, with managers, will determine a work schedule for employees to ensure social distancing protocols can be met including break and lunch times.
- Obtain required supplies and products, including:
 - Minimum 60% alcohol sanitizer products for hands, high touch surfaces, and library materials. In both pump and spray form.
 - Approved cleaners or solution of 5ml of bleach in 250ml of water for low touch and work surfaces, including lunch and break areas.

- Washable cloth masks for some tasks and where social distancing cannot be maintained. Whether a staff member decides to wear a mask will be up to the individual. The current advice from the Federal and Provincial government is they should be worn when there cannot be 6 feet of separation. Disposable masks will also be available should staff not have a washable mask readily available. This includes face shields if necessary.
- Disposable gloves for some tasks and when transferring materials to the public. Gloves should not be a substitute for proper handwashing routines or disinfecting of high touch surfaces.
- Other supplies as shall be deemed necessary by management staff or the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- De-clutter library and headquarters to ensure all areas can be easily cleaned and there is good line of sight for control of the space.
- Store non-required furnishings to ensure social distancing can be accommodated.
- Ensure each location has appropriate documentation of health and safety measures including a copy of this plan for both staff and public. The plan shall also be posted on the library website.
- Provide training (online and in print from government sources) for staff regarding protocols, handling of books and materials (both in branch and returned), adapted services, public interaction, and the use of PPE.
- Prepare public communications, including public information scripts for staff use.

Returns and Outside Pickup in Stage 1

Branch deliveries via the courier will resume. Boxes for inter-branch delivery will be replaced by hard plastic containers capable of being cleaned on a regular basis.

The Chief Librarian will meet with the appropriate manager and the Branch Assistant in Charge to approve the branch as ready to have materials returned and holds to be picked up outside.

Return of materials: Materials will only be allowed to be returned to book drops (not including Books by Mail). Staff will empty book drops with masks and gloves before and after public hours (unless book drop is full). Books will be “quarantined” for an amount of time, by placing them in designated areas of the library, before being used for holds or placed back on the shelf. Quarantined items will be dated by day received. Shelving of books will be completed with gloves and masks. Before a holds item is provided to a member of the public the cover must be wiped down with spray alcohol disinfectant. When in doubt, spray and wipe the cover!

Outside Pickup: This service is offered for existing holds during Stage 1. Staff members will contact the public in the usual manner for on hold items. They can make arrangements to pick up the materials at a specific time or call the branch library upon arrival (telephone number to be displayed outside the branch). The wiped down materials will then be relayed to the user outside using social distancing protocols. The location and specifics of outside pickup will vary branch by branch.

Stage 2:

The goal of Stage 2 is to reintroduce key public library services to the public.

1. Limited opening of branch libraries.

The objective is to provide a positive, inclusive, and welcoming experience for members of the public, given the public health restrictions. At times this will not be easily accomplished and will require creative and common sense thinking. We must maintain basic social distancing rules but must do so in a helpful, kind manner. First and foremost, please treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.

This will allow the public to visit the library to browse for books and other materials, request help finding materials, reference, check materials out, return materials, use a public computer, and take advantage of outside pickup of materials on hold.

- **Limited public hours (tentative):**
 - Antigonish / New Glasgow: Monday 10-4, Tuesday 10-7, Wednesday through Saturday, 10-4;
 - Pictou: Tuesday 10-7, Wednesday through Friday 10-4 and Saturday 10-3;
 - River John / Stellarton / Westville: Tuesday through Friday 10-4 and Saturday, 10 - 2;
 - Trenton: Tuesday to Friday 10-12 / 1-4 and Saturday, 10 – 2.
- **Staff:** number of staff and hours of work will depend on square footage and ease of movement in each branch for social distancing purposes.

Staff will have the power to close the branch immediately, asking the public to leave, if protocols cannot be maintained. Any member of the public who refuses to follow the rules can be asked to immediately leave and police can be called under the Protection of Property Act. The Chief Librarian or appropriate manager must be immediately notified.

Return of materials: As in Stage 1, materials will only be allowed to be returned to book drops (not including Books by Mail). Staff will empty book drops with PPE of their choosing before and after public hours (unless book drop is full). Books will be “quarantined” for an amount of time, by placing them in designated areas of the library, before being used for holds or placed back on the shelf. Quarantined items will be dated by day received. Shelving of books will be completed with appropriate PPE. Before a holds item is provided to a member of the public the cover must be wiped down with spray alcohol disinfectant. When in doubt, spray and wipe the cover!

Entry to branch libraries: Each library branch will be slightly different. In general, however, each branch should have a “navigator” for the first few months until members of the public understand the routines and procedures. It is the responsibility of the navigator to ensure entry and exit is done in an efficient and safe manner. Each day the navigator should use sidewalk chalk to mark 6 foot distances away from the entrances, taking care to keep the book drop clear. The navigator will also put an A-Frame sign outside indicating the measures in place. A table with pump hand sanitizer will be placed in the entry along with a banner explaining particular library safety measures. The navigator can triage needs of the public (holds pickup, browsing, computer use, etc.) and ensure social distancing is maintained. The navigator can also encourage book browsers to be considerate of others waiting to enter and restrict their time in the facility.

Outside Pickup: This service is offered for holds pickup but can also be requested if a member of the public wishes books of a certain type for themselves, family, or friends (they do not wish to browse). Staff members will contact the public in the usual manner for on hold items but also accept requests over the phone or through email. They can then either call the branch library ahead or upon arrival (telephone number to be displayed outside the branch) or notify the navigator (during open hours only). The wiped down materials will then be relayed to the user outside using social distancing protocols. The location of outside pickup will vary branch by branch.

Users in the branch library: While numbers of the public allowed in the library at any given time will vary over time, depending upon direction from Public Health, we anticipate the following for Stage 2. This is based upon square footage of the library branch, social distancing requirements, and other factors such as width of aisles. This may be increased or decreased should public health guidelines change.

Antigonish/New Glasgow – 10; Pictou, River John, Stellarton, Westville – 5; Trenton – 2.

As mentioned above, the navigator will hold persons outside at designated areas, with social distancing measures, ensuring numbers are not exceeded. These numbers include all public in the physical branch (with the exception of the Heritage Room in the New Glasgow Library, the Antigonish Library partnership organizations, and River John CAP Society, which will be dealt with separately).

Branch libraries will not use floor directional arrows, rather concentrate on social distancing reminders such as posters, etc. However, in areas that are constricted, standing signs will be used to warn of only one person in the area at a time.

Staff members located at the circulation desk or in the branch will ask members of the public if assistance or direction is required. Materials not for loan will be put out of bounds to the public and be for staff use only. Staff members will have both sanitizing and washing supplies available to frequently clean both high touch items and surfaces likely to have had contact with the public.

Seating will be limited for those who require a rest while browsing. All other seating will be removed and stored or otherwise put out of reach. The availability of washrooms for the public will be determined for each branch. Washrooms that are available for the public must have washing soap and disinfectant supplies available.

Public computer use: Internet and technology access at the public library is a critical need for many people. This is not easily accomplished due to the high touch nature of keyboards, mice, and desk surfaces. However, with the right precautions it can be done safely. In the beginning we will limit the time for use of a computer to 30 minutes to allow for as many people to access the technology as possible. Computers will be removed and separated to ensure a 6-foot minimum distance between workstations. Only one person at a workstation. Existing keyboards and mice will be removed and new “WetKeys” equipment installed. WetKeys are silicon, waterproof keyboards and mice used in medical environments that can withstand repeated use of alcohol sanitizers and can also be fully submerged in soapy water for cleaning and scrubbing. Only half of the available workstations will be used at a given time. The other half will be sanitized thoroughly with 65% ethyl alcohol spray sanitizer, including all surfaces and screens, and left to dry. At the end of the day, all keyboard and mice will be washed thoroughly in warm soapy water and left to dry overnight.

Checkout: Staff checkout workstations will be designated and schedules will be created to ensure one person uses the same terminal for their shift as much as possible (to avoid cross contamination). Social distancing protocols must be maintained between staff. All checkout workstations will be outfitted with Lexan acrylic barriers suspended from the drop ceiling. They will provide a width of 4 feet in protection. They will be suspended approximately 6-8 inches above the desk. Additional retractable, free-standing crowd controllers will be used to keep patrons 6 feet away from staff in between the barriers. The desk and area is the staff member's safe area.

Members of the public will be asked to show their library card for scanning (or they will be searched in the database), then asked to place the material's barcode on the desk under the shield for scanning, one at a time. They can then rotate the book for date stamping or the staff can explain the due date. For holds the staff should use a paper towel to handle the book and sanitize the cover if required.

Payment for copies, lost items, etc.: Fines for overdue materials have been eliminated as part of the One Library Card project. All current amounts owed for lost items, fines, etc. have been forgiven. We are currently examining options to avoid contact with bills or coins and will have a routine in place by opening.

The patron can then exit the branch library.

2. Reopening of the Books by Mail Service.

Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library has operated an extensive Books by Mail service for almost 30 years. It is a much appreciated service for rural users and a lifeline for education, recreation, and well-being. A highly personalized service, our staff members know their users and they know them. This can now continue, but with some materials handling procedures in place.

All staff members must follow the health and safety protocols for Covid-19. Work areas must remain clear, uncluttered, and clean.

Materials being mailed out come from many different locations. How long before materials are mailed out will depend upon on the length of time for the quarantine, taking into account the materials will be in transit in the postal system. But they must be in quarantine before shipped out.

"Wheeler bags" will be used for Books by Mail going forward unless there is no other possibility. These will be wiped clean inside and out between uses using sanitizer or disinfectant. Materials will be wiped clean with sanitizer before being placed in the bag. A pre-made bookmark will be placed in with the materials explaining the protocols in place for safety, the low likelihood of transmission, and indicating the user should wash their hands after handling shipped materials.

Returned Wheeler bags and materials should be handled with disposable gloves or hands should be washed immediately after handling. Books will be “quarantined” for an amount of time, by placing them in designated areas of the headquarters upon return, before being used for holds or placed back on the shelf. All mail areas and Wheeler bags must be wiped with disinfectant after use.

Books by Mail and other HQ staff work with people with special needs such as vision loss. All equipment must be thoroughly sanitized upon arrival and before return. Items such as USB sticks, memory cards, and DVD sleeves should be wiped down with sanitizer before sending or delivery to the user.

3. Regional Headquarters and vehicles

Access to the headquarters by the public and service persons will be open. However, a retractable crowd control barrier will prevent movement into the staff areas unless necessary.

All staff areas must remain clear for unimpeded cleaning and to ensure aisles can maintain social distancing. All staff workstations must be a minimum of 6 feet unless a barrier is installed. Staff will be provided with sanitizer and disinfectant and will be expected to keep their area clean and tidy including high touch surfaces.

Vehicles will be supplied with sanitizer, disinfectant, paper towel, and a small amount of disposable masks and gloves. Any person using a library vehicle must wipe down all high touch surfaces upon first and final use. All paper towels, used gloves, masks, and garbage must be disposed at the time of the final exit of the vehicle for the day. As per public health guidelines two persons can travel in vehicles for work purposes if both staff members agree.

Staff members are expected to carry out meetings by phone or virtually during Stage One and Two. However, where there is the space to carry out a meeting with social distancing, a meeting up to 5 staff members can be held. This number may change as public health advises. Out of region travel must be approved by the Chief Librarian.

4. Evaluation, adjustment, and creativity

During Stage 1 and Stage 2, regular review and adjustment will be critical. Despite social distancing measures teamwork is important. Each morning, members of a location should review the previous day/week and adjust as necessary. Branch managers are encouraged to join in-person every so often but regularly by phone. Major changes to routines should be communicated to the appropriate manager.

Please be creative, in a safe context. If outdoor chairs are needed for people standing in line, request them. If there are small measures that can help create a better experience for the public, make them happen, but please share it with others. Be compassionate and helpful. If anyone is unsure of how to assist a person access library services, contact your manager or the Chief Librarian. We will find a solution.