



Report to: Stratford City Council
Meeting Date: March 29, 2020
From: Stratford Public Library Board & Julia Merritt, CEO
Subject: COVID-19 Update

Short-Term Impact

In the interest of the efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19, the SPL Board unanimously agreed to close the physical Library location to the general public and staff as of 6pm on Friday March 13th. Ordinarily the site has 500 in-person visits per day, and during March Break over 700 people per day were expected.

On Tuesday, March 17th, the Provincial State of Emergency declaration mandated the closure of all public libraries. The Library will therefore remain closed until further notice. With the exception of senior administrative staff performing security checks, SPL staff are not permitted within the library building.

Per the information submitted to the Director of Corporate Services, the current operational impact to the Library is minimal. No additional expenses have been incurred and staff output has been optimized to continue serving the community while working remotely from home in order to observe social distancing protocols.

Continuation/Expansion of Digital Services

Given previous investments in digital technologies, the Library is well-positioned to continue providing comprehensive services to the public. SPL also continues to assist the other Perth County libraries in maintaining digital services through providing technological and operational support.

Staff have been redeployed to expand digital services in the following ways, and continues to explore opportunities and collaborations to do more.

1. Partnering with United Way to Provide Information Services

Information service staff are moderating the Huron-Perth Covid-19 Resource Group on Facebook, to provide reliable information and facilitate community connections. 3FTE have been reassigned to this project.



2. Digital Collections

Pre-existing collections include: Books/Audiobooks, Videos, Magazines, Research Databases, and Educational Courses. Additional resources can be added as funds permit.

3. Online Card Registration & Staff Assistance

In order to be inclusive to the entire community while practicing physical distancing, an online portal has been set up to allow library cards to be registered and processed remotely, and reference staff are providing information services by email. 50 new library cards were requested on the first day this service was available (March 26th).

4. 3D Printing Medical PPE

Working with InkSmith in Kitchener, the Library has repurposed its 3D printer to create medical Personal Protective Equipment supplies that are currently facing shortages by front line health and safety workers in the region. Funds to support this project are being donated by the community.

5. Educational and Leisure Content

Using SPL social media channels, staff are engaging the community daily with new video content, activity challenges, and promotion of free library online resources for all ages.

Medium-Term Impact

In the event of an extended physical closure, the Library can and will continue to provide a comprehensive service to the public through its digital platforms. A full statistical update on the increased use of the online services will be available after April 1st.

Attached are the two SPL COVID-19 press releases to date. SPL will distribute a new press release biweekly to keep the community and stakeholders informed as to updated Library activities and services during the physical location closure.