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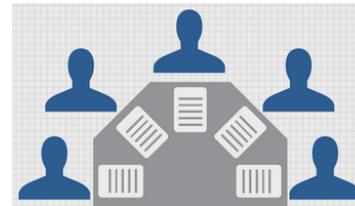
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While Libraries Are Closed, Staff Carry On

Boards Should Ensure That Staff Continue To Be Paid

Because of the Coronavirus crisis, hundreds of Iowa libraries have closed to the public, although staff are still working behind the scenes. Today's edition of ***Monday Morning Eye-Opener*** looked at just a few of many things that library staff can be doing in the interim; that article is reprinted below.



In this anxious and difficult time, the State Library urges all Iowa public library boards to ensure that their staff continue to be paid. Remember that your library staff wages have been budgeted for this current fiscal year 2020. In fact, staff wages have been budgeted for FY2021, the new fiscal year which begins July 1st. No doubt, your board developed and presented its operating budget to the city council this past fall, including funding for salaries and all other line item expenses. Please do not consider curtailing library staff salaries as a cost-saving measure; this money has already been allocated to the library budget.

If your staff continues working in the building, make sure that the director is enforcing precautionary measures surrounding the Coronavirus: social distancing, hand washing, disinfecting common surfaces, etc.

Review your city-library ordinance for board authority in matters of personnel. The vast majority of Iowa library boards (with only a few exceptions) have within their **POWERS & DUTIES "to employ a librarian, and authorize the librarian to employ such assistants and employees as may be necessary for the proper management of the library, and fix their compensation; provided that prior to such employment, the**

compensation of the librarian, assistants, and employees shall have been fixed and approved by the majority of the members of the board voting in favor thereof..."

If the proposal to diminish or discontinue library staff wages is coming from the city clerk's office or the mayor's office, then library trustees must make the above point understood. The decision to continue to pay library staff, even though the building is closed to normal foot traffic, is within the rightful and legal authority of the library board.

There is ample work that can be done by library directors and staff (see second article below) However, staff should not be coerced or required to work in light of the current COVID19 situation. Trustees should have such conversations with the library director, who is responsible for staff supervision and scheduling.

We look to the public library boards in Iowa for a great many things, not the least of which is to be citizen advocates. Library trustees must ensure a sustained budget, defend intellectual freedom, advocate for advancements, and above all--support the library staff who make great customer service and programming happen every day.

Mike Wight, Director of the Dubuque County Library System, recently shared his library board's position with us and it's worth sharing here: *"they supported closing the main library and branches. They remain committed to paying staff for their scheduled hours, full-time or part-time, whether there is work to do or if we run out of work and send them home. The library will continue to pay insurance and other benefits, etc. There was never any question about doing the right thing..."*

**Please contact consulting staff at the
[State Library of Iowa](#) with questions.
Thanks for all you do!**

Plenty To Do Behind The Scenes

One of many helpful threads on [LibraryTalk](#) in recent days has centered on various tasks that library staff are doing during "in-person patron downtime." Combining their ideas and a few of our own, here's a look at just some of the many things that library staff can be working on:

- Look ahead to your next accreditation cycle—is it February 2021? If so, then this is an ideal time to review your strategic plan and start working on a revision sooner rather than later. District consultants can help.



- Look ahead to your next re-certification cycle—is it December 2020? If so, then this is an ideal time to set up “webinar watch parties” with all staff who need to accumulate renewal credits before the end of the year
- Weed the collection and take inventory
- Complete the Edge Assessment and corresponding Edge Action Plan
- Update your library’s website, taking time to add authoritative links to important Coronavirus information for your community. Refer to last week’s **MMEO** for

vetted resources

- Be active with your library social media, remembering to promote your library’s online resources—especially important now!
- Review job descriptions and job evaluation forms; update as needed
- Research grant sources; begin by browsing your [Foundation Directory Online](#)
- Read the next **Big Ideas Book Discussion** title==**Upstream** by Dan Heath (online discussion scheduled for May 29)
- Catch up reading professional journals, available through your library’s GALE subscription
- Research and share on your website great resources available for kids and families to do while school closings continue
- Tackle that stack of to-be-mended books
- Develop an effective way to maintain monthly statistics if you’ve previously struggled with gathering them for the annual survey (due in October)
- Clean and clean some more: file cabinets, closets, storage areas

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