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Resuming On-site Services: Final Report and Recommendations of the CUNY Libraries COVID-19 Task Force (April 2021)

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RESUMING ON-SITE SERVICES

Final Report and Recommendations of the
CUNY Libraries COVID-19 Task Force

June 30, 2020

(Executive Summary updated April 2021)



About

This report was prepared by the CUNY Libraries COVID-19 Task Force, which formed in May 2020 with the following charge:

Authorized by the CUNY Office of Library Services and the Council of Chief Librarians, the task force is charged to survey best practices shared by libraries world-wide and to develop guidelines for CUNY Libraries site management, staff and user safety, circulation and resource sharing, and materials handling as pandemic conditions evolve.

A summary of the draft report was submitted by Interim Dean for Library Services Polly Thistlethwaite to CUNY's Academic & Student Support Task Force on June 23, 2020. The final version was prepared on June 30, 2020 for wider distribution.

In February 2021, the Council of Chief Librarians charged the task force with updating the report to reflect changes that had happened in the past year. The task force decided to update the Executive Summary only. In April 2021, the task force submitted the final draft of the updated Executive Summary to the Council of Chief Librarians for distribution to the CUNY Libraries community.

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Executive Summary

Updated April 2021

Executive Summary

The committee created this document in June 2020 and is updating it in April 2021 as CUNY campuses, following the Chancellor's directive to return to mostly in-person classes for Fall 2021, are making preparations. This Executive Summary reframes new issues since the previous version of this document, as well as reopening challenges still remaining for CUNY libraries.

While many members of our campus communities are anxious for the library to reopen, CUNY Libraries must take a measured and evidence-based approach toward reopening that adheres to best practices that prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of our personnel and our patrons. **We strongly urge a CUNY-wide approach to a gradual and controlled reopening of the libraries to establish consistent expectations for access to on-site library services across campuses.** The new Dean of Libraries should work with campus Chief Librarians to coordinate re-openings.

The purpose of this report is to provide a uniform set of recommendations to guide implementation of campus safety plans in the libraries. Individual colleges will be tasked with making local decisions that comply with industry guidelines issued in the [New York Forward](#) plan. In addition to the [state guidance for higher education](#), libraries are also subject to industry guidelines developed for [retail businesses](#) and [office-based work](#), with additional measures to account for the proper care of the library's physical collections.

We recommend a phased resumption of on-site services to allow operational issues to be resolved before moving to increased levels of activity. This strategy follows the Chancellor's January 2021 [message announcing a](#) "gradual return to mostly in-person instruction and support services in time for the start of classes in Fall 2021." **A phased reopening allows for a modular and flexible provision of remote services at varying levels as conditions evolve, and provides a contingency plan for decreasing on-site operations as needed.** CUNY should gather and use empirical information, including data on COVID transmission, infection rates, the availability and accuracy of testing, the availability and effectiveness of contact tracing, and the existing impact of the crisis on CUNY faculty, students, and staff, before making decisions about each successive phase of re-opening.

Pre-COVID libraries were high-occupancy, high-touch, high-traffic spaces with frequent face-to-face interaction between personnel and patrons. Patrons would frequently spend many hours in libraries, and we now understand the risk of individuals spending prolonged periods of time in closed spaces, regarding the cumulative viral load they may experience. Even with improved HVAC filtration and increasing rates of vaccination, libraries will continue to be possible sites of transmission within our communities. **Levels of community spread must be monitored through a coordinated testing and tracing program if we are to reopen our library spaces.**

Since the initial closure of our library spaces in March 2020, [scientists](#) and public health organizations have acknowledged airborne transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (see [WHO](#) and [CDC](#)). ASHRAE's Epidemic Task Force has issued [supplemental guidance on adapting HVAC and indoor ventilation](#)

[systems](#), with updated specifications focused on removing airborne viral particles from shared indoor spaces. Campus reopening committees should work closely with their libraries to assess the particulars of air flow and exchange in all library spaces before determining key policies regarding both maximum occupancy and permitted duration of stay in those spaces. **Library staff and faculty must have access to documentation about the occupancy limits, ventilation upgrades, and facilities modifications made to library spaces, as well as schedules and procedures for cleaning and for ongoing monitoring of HVAC performance.** Reopening committees and libraries should continue to assess and update their determinations as scientific understanding evolves.

Library organizations worldwide have closely monitored the latest research on the persistence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus on physical materials and the risk of indirect contact contamination. Libraries around the world have recognized the need to quarantine returned materials in order to reduce the likelihood of indirect transmission, typically between one to three days, depending on the kind of physical material (for examples, please see: [New York Public Library; research conducted by Battelle and OCLC on reopening libraries](#); and the [Northeast Document Conservation Center](#)).

In response to the pandemic, libraries have created innovative methods of resource sharing such as expanding ILL, engaging in reciprocal access arrangements, partnering with the Internet Archive's [Open Library](#), and working with faculty to facilitate student access to required texts digitally. Libraries will continue to develop best practices that could benefit our students and faculty.

The Office of Library Services (OLS) proceeded with the long planned implementation of a new integrated library system (ILS) in August 2020. Since the libraries have been closed since March 2020, the system has not been tested or configured for a fully functioning library system. Time and staff resources will be needed to fully implement the system. OLS is severely short staffed and will need additional personnel to make sure that all campus libraries are able to loan and return materials.

We also urge that CUNY colleges remain cognizant that CUNY employees and students still face risks while traveling on public transportation to campus. These dangers include the ongoing transmission of COVID-19, including its new variants, and, in the current climate, the risk of racial violence against Asian Americans. Some faculty and staff also need to continue to work remotely because of health concerns and/or caretaking responsibilities. Given these realities, we urge every campus to be flexible and broad in their granting of accommodations to continue to work remotely.

“Grab-and-go” Services: Campus Considerations

Individual campuses that seek to provide **"grab and go" book services**, which allow patrons to reserve physical materials online and pick them up on-campus, with minimal contact, should ensure the following conditions are met:

- Colleges should confirm that library spaces adhere to [PSC health & safety guidelines](#) regarding ventilation and safety measures to ensure safe working conditions for faculty and staff who are on campus to process the materials.
- Colleges should make provisions that enable the library to follow the industry recommendations for quarantining items.
- Colleges should examine all available entrance and exit patterns in the library to avoid congestion at library service points, especially if library spaces are open for patron study use. Consider providing a dedicated space outside the library for staging hold materials with clear signage and one-way traffic flows for directing patrons to pickup locations.

Reopening library spaces: Campus Considerations

We recommend that campuses that seek to **reopen physical library spaces for patrons** ensure the additional following conditions are met:

1. In tandem with considering reopening spaces in the library, **colleges should consider repurposing other open spaces on campus** that allow for greater social distancing.
2. Before opening library spaces, campuses must pass a [ventilation audit](#) in all library spaces, including offices. The audit should be conducted on a regular basis, especially as seasonal conditions change.
3. Libraries **should use a limited-time reservation system** to control the length of time that users stay in library study spaces. Campuses are encouraged to use LibCal, licensed by CUNY for all campuses, in an effort to create uniformity. Limiting the length of stay in library spaces is crucial for reducing COVID transmission risk. [Numerous studies](#) (as well as the analysis of [mechanical engineers](#)) show the risk of infection increases with the length of time exposed to a COVID-positive person (including those who show no symptoms).
4. **Colleges should keep supplying semester-long laptops and other equipment to students to reduce their need to use such equipment on campus.** The college should also use such a reservation system to follow up by contacting students who have visited the library to be able to discover the development of subsequent cases of COVID and alert others who were in the library at the same time.
5. **Responsibility for monitoring and enforcing maximum occupancy, physical distancing, and mask-wearing should be clearly agreed upon through discussion between the library and the campus reopening committee.** Colleges should, on a regular basis, provide clear communication to the campus community about safety protocols required to use the library, emphasizing student and faculty cooperation with library policies and acknowledging consequences for non-compliance. Responsibility for monitoring and enforcing safety protocols must be clearly outlined between library and public safety personnel, with agreed upon de-escalation and conflict resolution techniques established prior to reopening.
6. The reopening committee and library should work in close collaboration with other key units on each campus such as Facilities, Public Safety, and IT.

Resuming On-site Library Services: CUNY-wide Considerations

1. Institute consistent, CUNY-wide access and safety policies across campuses through close collaboration with the Dean of Libraries and the Office of Library Services (OLS).
2. Levels of community spread should be tracked through tracing and testing protocols created and managed by CUNY. Campuses shall test, on at least a weekly basis, 100 percent of all students, faculty, and staff who plan to be on campus regularly (including instruction, co-curricular activities, and meetings). Testing should be provided by CUNY to all students, faculty, and staff.
3. Encourage on-site vaccinations through campus health offices for anyone coming to campus, and provide two extra sick days for those who do not have any sick days available.
4. CUNY Human Resources should provide a policy on tele-commuting that enables the level of on-campus library faculty and staff presence to reflect the proportion of on-campus classes.
5. Resume contract for intercampus delivery services to re-establish consortial collections access across CUNY (CLICS) and allow students to pick up materials from any campus.
6. Work closely with representatives from the multiple unions that represent faculty, professional and clerical staff, and building staff.

Phased levels of on-site library operations:

- Physical Access Level 0: Online-only services, with no personnel onsite; all classes online
- Physical Access Level 1: Online-only services, with minimal personnel onsite; most classes online
- Physical Access Level 2: Online services and limited patron access to physical library; combination of in-person and virtual classes
- Physical Access Level 3: Online services and expanded patron access to physical library; combination of in-person and virtual classes
- Physical Access Level 4: Online services and full patron access to physical library; most classes in-person

Table 1

Levels of Physical Access to CUNY Library Spaces During the COVID-19 Pandemic (see also [Table A1](#))

	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Online reference services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Library instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Research consultations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collection development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
E-reserves	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Interlibrary loan electronic delivery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
On-site personnel		✓	✓	✓	✓
Returned materials processing		✓	✓	✓	✓
Document Delivery (library employees scan)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Contactless pickup and delivery (includes interlibrary loan books)			✓	✓	✓
Inter-CUNY Delivery (CLICS)			✓	✓	✓
Interlibrary loan book lending and scanning			✓	✓	✓
Patron access to spaces (includes special collections)				✓	✓
Library Computer Use				✓	✓
Library Printing				✓	✓
Library Study Spaces				✓	✓
Equipment Loans					✓
Open Stacks					✓
Print Reserves					✓

Note: This table is not an exhaustive list of library services.

Table 2
Best practices for safely adapting on-site library services

On-site Service/Activity	Best Practice
Limiting number of personnel onsite (all physical access levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stagger shifts to limit personnel presence ● Rotate on-site work shifts equitably among all personnel ● Use A/B scheduling to limit employee interactions ● Batch activities by employee to limit number of hands touching materials
Limiting number of patrons (Levels 0-2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schedule pickups if doing click-and-collect (curbside/contactless)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use a timed ticketing system or require appointments in advance when picking up books
Checkout/Pickup (Levels 0-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use separate areas for pickup and return to avoid congestion ● Prepare to queue patrons outside the library ● Install remote lockers for contactless pickup ● Schedule pickup windows to reduce patron flow ● Install plastic barriers for all service points ● Require orders be placed before arrival or without entering the building (no on-site requests processed in Phase 0-2) ● Add at least one self-service checkout machine to each campus library
Returned materials: intake (all levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accept returns by mail; consider providing prepaid mailers to students ● Install indoor and outdoor return bins ● Use separate areas for pickup and return to avoid congestion
Returned materials: processing (all levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use a separate plastic bin (or closed-off table) for each day of the week ● Use physical barriers and signage to isolate designated bins/tables from personnel and patron areas ● Re-shelve items on a rolling basis
Computer workstations (Levels 3-4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Require peripherals (keyboards and mice) be checked out and returned after use and isolate returned items for after-hours cleaning; or ● Use single-use anti-dust plastic covers for peripherals; or ● Provide/require single-use gloves for patrons using computer workstations ● Provide antibacterial wipes for use on shared equipment ● Eliminate sharing of headsets and other objects used near the eyes, nose, mouth ● Use reservation/appointment system for computer use

Procurement and Funding Considerations

In order to meet these requirements for reopening CUNY Library spaces safely, we have identified areas where additional funding to the campuses is necessary.

- Collections
 - Increased electronic resources, particularly for e-books

- Equipment and supplies
 - Self-checkout machines, remote lockers, book kiosks
 - Delivery and pickup supplies (bags, mailers, packing materials, postage)
 - Physical barriers and installation
 - PPE / one-time use covers for peripherals
 - Signage and markers to promote social distancing
- Personnel
 - Additional part-time staffing
 - Additional campus custodial staff
 - Reimbursement for employee transportation costs

Full Report and Recommendations

Introduction

After a spring semester like none other in recent memory, we now must consider what the “new normal” will be for CUNY, New York City, and the world. As faculty and staff at the CUNY Libraries, we are best positioned to understand the challenges and issues related to re-opening the CUNY Libraries. As such it is essential that there is representation from the libraries on all task forces across CUNY that are studying the re-opening of CUNY campuses.

We acknowledge that this type of report would be more useful with specific data. For instance, prior to the March shutdown, how many CUNY employees and students were infected? On which campuses did they work? On which parts of the campuses? Where were the outbreaks? What did the patterns show CUNY? And what did CUNY’s internal contact tracing reveal? Information like this makes it easier to make actionable recommendations, but absent that data, we will rely on best practices from across libraries and other industries. CUNY Libraries will also require data updates to inform how we proceed with subsequent phases.

A measured approach to reopening

Throughout the "NY on Pause" period, CUNY libraries have been actively supporting students and faculty through chat, email, and telephone. We have enabled students to access electronic resources, worked with vendors to expand our online resources, and collaborated with faculty outside the library to support student research. While the lack of a physical space is felt by many, core library services have continued uninterrupted in these challenging times.

As recommended by the NYS [higher education reopening guidelines](#), this report provides a gradual and controlled approach to resuming on-site activities and reopening library spaces across CUNY. While individual campuses may have autonomy to make local decisions best for the campus, we strongly advocate a CUNY-wide approach to a phased reopening of the libraries. A unified approach will provide some much-needed consistency for our students, faculty, and staff, and ensure that the same safety procedures are being used at each campus library. A phased approach allows for operational issues to be resolved before returning to regular levels and avoids disrupting the work of faculty, students, and staff. Additionally, an even, coordinated reopening will avoid creating a situation in which an early-opening library is overburdened by patrons seeking services.

Keeping the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty as our highest priority, we urge CUNY to work in consultation with the CUNY Professional Staff Congress (PSC-CUNY) and District Council 37 (DC 37) unions to ensure everyone’s health and safety interests are factored into what will be a complex and fraught reopening process. A phased schedule, made in regular consultation with library faculty and staff, will ensure time for thorough assessment of internal and external factors as conditions evolve, and will allow for thoughtful decision-making and solid preparation before taking each new step to greater risk, while maintaining continuity of services and minimizing risk to the financial investment in our physical collections.

Our context within the city and state

Libraries include public spaces and employee work areas. Return to CUNY campuses for library personnel will be guided by campus safety plans and collective bargaining agreements, as well as applicable state and federal requirements.¹ Any re-opening of CUNY libraries must also take into consideration factors that are external to CUNY, such as the trends of COVID-19 infection and hospitalization in NYC, the availability and accuracy of testing, the safety of public transportation, the status of the public schools and childcare facilities, and the eventual development and availability of a vaccine.

It is crucial to remember that most of CUNY's faculty, staff, and students depend upon public transportation to reach our campuses. Even if library spaces remain closed to patrons, if our staff and faculty must travel to campus, they will face risks to their health from using public transit. No matter how clean libraries are, any person can become infected on their way to or from the libraries. Such risks are why even massive institutions such as the [National Hockey League](#) and the [New York Stock Exchange](#) have discouraged or banned their employees from travel on public transportation.

To the question of timing: the education sector is included in the fourth and final phase of New York State's reopening and is anticipated to begin in late summer; New York City entered Phase 1 on June 8, 2020 followed by Phase 2 on June 22, 2020. CUNY Libraries are in year two of a planned system migration that severely restricts access to essential functions (item checkout/return, acquisitions and cataloging) prior to August 3. Preliminary results of library materials testing conducted by the REALM project (see below) were released in late-June, with full recommendations not expected until October 2020. In order to make evidence-based decisions about our operations, policies, and workflows, and to avoid disruption to students, faculty, and staff, campuses must avoid prematurely reopening. We recommend reopening physical library spaces for patron use in Spring 2021 to allow libraries time to implement safety measures and reconfigure spaces appropriately while continuing to serve our communities remotely in the Fall 2020 semester. Throughout the pandemic, CUNY Libraries have never "paused" in providing support to students and faculty; without increased staffing to implement the large-scale transition necessary to resume on-site activities safely, we anticipate that campuses will be better served by continuing to support distance learning remotely in the Fall, with limited library personnel facilitating access to our print collections where necessary.

Innovative approaches

We strongly recommend that colleges develop innovative uses of campus facilities to address current public health concerns. While once libraries were thought to be the only quiet place on campus for study, in a mostly online semester the entire campus is quiet and appropriate for study space. Colleges that currently rely on libraries to house computer workstations in tight quarters may find ways to move

¹ These requirements include standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

computers to more open spaces on campus that would allow for greater social distancing with reduced staffing requirements.

Many campuses use scheduling software, like R25, to book events. Campuses should leverage existing infrastructure (scheduling software and empty rooms) to create a study space and/or computer booking systems for students. Such solutions would provide vital services, minimize in-person queues to enter occupancy-limited spaces, and lower or eliminate the need for personnel onsite.

If faculty and staff are required to come to campus to provide services, they should be formally declared essential personnel until the COVID-19 crisis is institutionally recognized to be officially concluded. This designation for library faculty and staff would be rare and only provided so that faculty and staff have extra protections. Only essential personnel should report to campus. Lists of essential personnel should be publicly available, as should aggregate race, ethnicity, and job title data to make sure no one group is bearing the brunt of keeping campus libraries operational.

Library-specific challenges to reopening after New York State on PAUSE

Libraries present a unique challenge to reopening because of their role in circulating physical materials and providing a space for study. Unlike retail stores or restaurants, which can safely offer curbside pickup, libraries loan materials that will circulate *back to the library* and upon return must be properly isolated and decontaminated. Without precautionary measures in place, libraries risk becoming vectors of infection for our communities. In study areas, patrons spend many hours in enclosed spaces in close proximity to each other.

Library organizations worldwide have closely monitored the latest research on the persistence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus on physical materials and the risk of indirect contact contamination; some have collaborated with researchers on laboratory studies, conducted extensive scientific literature reviews, and consulted with experts to develop best practices for the industry.² CUNY libraries do not operate in a vacuum; our patrons and personnel interact with materials from across New York City and potentially around the country and world through interlibrary loan services and reciprocal access arrangements, and we are part of a professional community that is seeking a coordinated response to the current crisis.

Any measures implemented at CUNY libraries must comply with detailed guidelines set by New York State's [New York Forward plan for a phased reopening](#), with additional measures to account for the proper care of the library's physical collections. Our considerations for opening library spaces will require close collaboration with other key departments on each campus such as Facilities, Public Safety,

² The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) [has partnered with OCLC, Inc. \(a global non-profit library collective\) and Battelle Labs](#) to conduct research into how long the virus survives on materials commonly found in libraries. This work, known as the [REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums \(REALM\) Project](#), includes representation from the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO), Columbia University, the American Museum of Natural History, and library organizations that represent the interests of New York City's library systems.

and IT/computer labs about reopening plans, procedures, protocols, access to university ID and credentials, Wi-Fi, computing, and printing and necessary supplies and services.

CUNY's uncertain and opaque budget situation presents additional challenges. Implementing and maintaining safe library operations requires adequate staffing levels and supplies. As of June 2020, there are libraries that do not know if they will have NTAs and CAs this summer and fall. If we plan to provide contactless pick up services and scanning, libraries need clarity on our staffing situation. Prior to the pandemic, several libraries lacked basic supplies such as soap in bathrooms and hand sanitizers. Library restrooms were not regularly cleaned. Libraries must have adequate cleaning supplies and cleaning services to reopen.

We have identified the following areas as primary challenges to the resumption of on-site library operations at CUNY, grouped into the broad categories used by the New York Forward plan:

Physical Distancing

- Occupancy limits, social distancing, and [length of time in area](#): unlike classrooms and other spaces on campus, libraries are places where students are accustomed to sitting for hours, raising concern about cumulative viral load. We cannot open our public spaces without a thoughtful plan for monitoring and enforcing occupancy limits and duration.
- Direct service: In our libraries, faculty and staff provide one-on-one assistance to thousands of students every week, to check out books, help guide students with their research process, and assist with technology. We must reconfigure our services to minimize the risk of viral transmission in these encounters, including the provision of floor markers to space users waiting in line and physical barriers to create appropriate distance between patron and personnel.

Protective Equipment

- Personnel *and* patrons (students/faculty, staff, visitors) must be supplied with PPE such as face coverings, disposable gloves, and hand sanitizer to reduce the spread of infection, requiring substantial levels of procurement by the campuses.
- Libraries are a service industry and face the prospect of patrons who refuse to adhere to social distancing measures and PPE requirements. A consistent policy requiring use of face coverings by both patrons and personnel must be developed in accordance with state and federal guidelines and communicated across campuses. CUNY Libraries host visitors from all campuses and the potential for conflict can be reduced with CUNY-wide coordination.
- Personnel must be trained in proper use and disposal of PPE prior to returning to on-site work, and patrons must be guided by clear signage throughout the facility. Extensive preparation of the physical plant is necessary prior to any reopening.

Hygiene and Cleaning

- Libraries require cleaning/disinfecting of public spaces and furniture: our many desks, chairs, couches, and workstations, in addition to carpets, service counters, bathrooms, and water fountains, experience constant use throughout the day. Before we consider opening our physical facilities, we must have a thorough plan for rigorous and regular cleaning of all high-touch surfaces.
- The college must address labor-related questions regarding who will be responsible for which kind of cleaning, including any questions related to the respective unions of library and facilities employees.
- Restrooms are subject to additional cleaning measures and must be equipped with hot water, soap, and paper towels. Patron access to restrooms should be limited. Touchless faucets and dispensers are preferred; single-use stalls with floor-to-ceiling walls and exterior sinks are considered the gold standard in terms of preventing disease transmission. Recent studies indicate that toilets without lids may also spread the coronavirus particles when flushed. Portable handwashing stations around college campuses might help reduce bathroom traffic.
- Because most viral particles, when exhaled, will fall on the floor, and it is more difficult to disinfect soft, porous surfaces, the CDC [recommends](#) that institutions consider removing carpets from high-traffic areas.
- The [role of HVAC systems](#) in the viral transmission of the novel coronavirus must be addressed; if air circulation issues are not resolved, then social distancing and plexiglass shields will make little difference to the public health risk. Of additional concern specific to libraries, our need to conserve materials in our collections by maintaining 40-60% relative humidity requires skilled optimization of existing ventilation and filtration systems in accordance with [ASHRAE recommendations](#).
- **Books from stacks, journals, and media**
 - CUNY's 5.9 million physical volume holdings³ and extensive journal and media collections, located across 21 campuses, require proper handling to reduce the risk of spreading the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In 2017, the CUNY Libraries circulated materials 770,000 times⁴. The constant movement of materials in and out of library spaces require a coordinated CUNY response to disinfecting and quarantine library materials. Library materials need to be quarantined for a minimum of 72 hours after they are returned.⁵ In order to quarantine the large number of books that the libraries will have to handle after reopening, space will need to be allocated in each library, and perhaps, within each college, to hold books and other materials during the quarantine period.
 - In order to control the handling of library materials, stacks must be closed so that library materials are not handled without proper quarantine period afterwards. *If* staffing is

³ Association of College and Research Libraries, [2018 Annual Survey](#). All volume counts for each library are for 2017. Hostos College Library data are for 2016 as 2017 was not available.

⁴ Association of College and Research Libraries, [2018 Annual Survey](#).

⁵ [Northeast Document Conservation Society](#) recommends a 72-hour quarantine of collection materials as the safest and most effective way to disinfect books after handling.

provided, library materials could be paged and delivered to the patron, or sections could be scanned and delivered via email or other online platforms.

- **Books and other materials in reserves collections**
 - Ideally, physical reserves books will be avoided through the use of digital alternatives, including Open Educational Resources (OERs). Library faculty will continue to work with disciplinary faculty to find alternatives to physical textbooks.⁶
 - In those cases where physical textbooks are necessary, they will need special handling, as they are normally touched by many students, circulating in and out of reserves desks all day. Libraries may need to adjust procedures to reduce risk by only allowing personnel to scan or photocopy materials, and/or emailing materials based on remote request.
- **Shared equipment:**
 - Libraries must coordinate with Facilities and other campus units to ensure adequate levels of cleaning supplies for frequent cleaning of high-touch equipment (keyboards, mice, staplers, photocopiers, scanners, etc.) are procured and made available in the library. CUNY Libraries rely on other campus units to service our facilities; library personnel do not maintain the physical plant, so coordination and communication is essential.
 - Some equipment may not be available to users as we assess risks and the availability of PPE and cleaning supplies.
 - Libraries may also need to change our processes so that some equipment is no longer high touch (e.g., relegating printer/scanner/copier use to personnel instead of student use, and/or receiving from our colleges adequate protective gear, gloves and masks so that users may use equipment without direct touch).

Communication

- Libraries are shared spaces used by students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors. Coordination between CUNY Libraries and Facilities, Public Safety, and IT are essential in developing campus reopening plans. At the very least, colleges must provide libraries a copy of their approved campus safety plans before reopening these spaces to on-site work. Plans should be distributed electronically and made available online for the entire campus community to review.
- Library employees must have access to cleaning schedules and also need to know what supplies they will receive (when and how much).
- Library employees will require detailed instructions on re-opening from Public Safety and Facilities on their campuses. This should also include training on usage and disposal of PPE. Facilities should assist in the creation of signs and distance markers for social distancing.

⁶ CUNY librarians have been at the forefront of Open Education Resources (OER), which are designed to be both cost-free and electronic, and which New York State has spent \$16 million supporting over the past two years. We are working with disciplinary faculty to identify alternatives to costly physical textbooks.

Screening

- Employees who return to on-site work must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and possible exposure daily.
- Patrons entering the library may be subject to screening requirements elsewhere on campus; screening at points of entrance to the library may be unnecessary if mandatory screening is in place to gain initial access to the campus. In the absence of such measures, libraries will need to establish a system to screen entrants and to contain/isolate sick individuals as necessary.

Physical Access Levels for Resuming On-site Activities

The following service levels for reopening CUNY libraries are associated with CUNY's decisions on course modality. However, each phase can only be implemented if the associated safety supplies and procedures are in place and adequate staffing (CAs and NTAs) is provided.

Level Zero: Lockdown (No on-site operations)

Courses are fully online and transmission rates of the virus are high. Core library services have continued despite the closure of our physical spaces. Reference and instruction services have moved entirely online. Circulation personnel have extended loans and remotely activated cards so all CUNY users can have access to the electronic resources at their campus. Library faculty have worked with vendors to provide additional online content. Interlibrary loan services are delivering electronic content. Librarians continue their vital work behind the scenes creating digital objects, evaluating and acquiring content, upgrading and updating websites, and migrating to a new library system.

CUNY Libraries continue to provide online services and resources during summer 2020 and beyond for students and faculty:

Teaching support

- Provide **information literacy instruction** remotely either synchronously via video conferencing platforms or asynchronously by librarians who are creating or directing teaching faculty to online resources, videos, etc.
- Maintain “e-Reserve” platforms which provide **readings for classes**. Instructors links to open texts or post digitized course materials in accordance with Fair Use guidelines.
- Some libraries may have an **embedded librarian** program where a librarian is assigned to be part of a course. For example, in Blackboard a librarian interacts with students by creating discussions, posting links and answering queries.
- Continue to **acquire and catalog e-books** and other electronic resources for students and faculty.
- **Open Educational Resources (OER)** and instructional librarians support instructors to link OER and library licensed course content to support online courses and to find alternatives to print textbooks Reduce student requirements to scan physical materials.

- Maintain **24/7 access to e-books** and electronic resources.
- Update and maintain **research guides and FAQs**.
- Provide guidance on **fair use and copyright** for remote learning.

Research Support

- Provide research support via **virtual reference services** delivered via email, chat, telephone, and/or text directing researchers to available resources, repositories, archives, etc.
- **Deliver electronic resources**, such as journal articles and e-book chapters, through interlibrary loan.
- Depending on the library, maintain **digital collections**.

Level One: Minimal On-site Operations

Building from Physical Access Level Zero, in Physical Access Level One, classes would be mostly online, and a few campus services might be open with limited hours. Libraries would continue to offer its core reference and instruction services remotely to students, faculty and staff. All CUNY affiliates would continue to have remote access to CUNY’s collection of online resources. Libraries would be closed to all patrons, but a very small number of personnel, who could be safely brought to campus by non-public transportation means, would start to provide minimal on-site services, and prepare for the next phase. Faculty and most staff would continue to work remotely.

In order to provide these additional services to the CUNY community, libraries must have adequate PPE for staff and faculty, thorough cleaning of library spaces, sufficient cleaning supplies, such as disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer, provided to each library, staffing provided by college assistants, staggered and short shifts, and additional funding to expand collection of e-resources. These precautions, along with close monitoring of the health and safety conditions onsite are necessary for this phase to proceed.

Circulation

Libraries would remain closed, with existing loans extended and overdue fines waived. Based on best practices and the latest science, faculty and staff will develop local procedures for quarantining returned material. The [preliminary findings of the REALM project](#) mentioned above indicate that the SARS-CoV-2 virus was not detectable after three days on book covers, paper pages, plastic coverings, or DVD cases held at room temperature at a standard level of humidity, indicating a three-day quarantine window. The library may need to use campus spaces outside the library for quarantining returned items if internal spaces are insufficient. Faculty and staff will begin to develop safe methods for loaning out and receiving books, which may necessitate the acquisition and installation of protective shielding at all service points.

Reserve materials

Reserves will still be restricted to online materials. Depending on the library, some scanning of materials adhering to accessibility guidelines to place on e-reserves can happen but will be limited by personnel and their on-site work hours. Priority scanning will go to the classes serving the highest numbers of

students. Interlibrary loan service to students may be expanded or strengthened. CUNY Libraries will continue to work with faculty members to locate open and library-licensed material to support course instruction.

Instruction

Instruction services will remain online. Library faculty will work with teaching faculty to deliver library instruction in the mode that best suits the course, which may include synchronous and asynchronous workshops, online guides, videos, tutorials, and other means.

Reference Services

Reference services will remain online. Email and chat references services, research consultations and other online meetings between library faculty and students and/or faculty will continue to be provided remotely.

Technical Services (acquisitions, cataloging, serials)

Behind-the-scenes work, including acquisitions, cataloging, and ongoing management of web content will continue to happen remotely. Procedures for safely receiving books will be developed, including areas where books can be quarantined. Faculty will focus on increasing access to open and licensed online material, particularly e-books.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Services

ILL will continue to deliver electronic resources, expanding to support research as possible.

Implications for educational continuity

Compared to Level Zero, Physical Access Level One would allow for limited access to reserve materials that may not be available in electronic formats. This would give faculty alternatives when preparing courses and reduce student cost for course materials. However, because this service will still be very limited, library faculty will work with faculty to find adequate alternative online material to support teaching, including OER materials. In order to better support students and faculty, CUNY Libraries should license additional online resources and expand access to digital materials for research and learning.

Level Two: Limited On-site Access

Physical Access Level Two builds on a successful experience with Physical Access Level One and should only be launched based on guidance and recommendations from public health experts. The conditions at the college during Level Two would indicate greater access to campus spaces. Classes would be taught in a mix of hybrid and online classes with more classes being held on campus than in Level One. Library faculty and staff would continue working mostly online, with some personnel providing on-site services for limited periods. An equitable distribution of on-site shifts, alternatives to public transportation, and additional compensation should be considered in consultation with union representatives.

CUNY Libraries will be physically open to patrons for a limited number of hours per day and limited days per week; depending on staffing and other concerns. Service counters for transactions of a minimal time period will be open (checking in and out of materials), and where possible employee handling of physical objects (such as ID cards) should be avoided. Study spaces and computer workstations will not be available. Entrance to the library must be monitored and occupancy enforced. Patrons and personnel must wear masks. To reduce time spent on public transportation, students should continue to be allowed to use the Wi-Fi and licensed resources onsite at whichever CUNY college is closest to them.

Libraries should participate in campus contact tracing measures, for example using reservation systems for library access, or having patrons swipe their IDs or scan a CUNY-wide electronic -ID upon entry and exit. Appropriate data retention policies must ensure patron privacy is maintained.

Coordination with Public Safety will be critical to determine and enforce a conservative occupancy and duration limit. In the enforcement of occupancy and social distancing, the priority should be on de-escalating conflict, which may require additional training. Library personnel who work with patrons should also receive training in de-escalation and conflict resolution. Consistent access policies across the CUNY campuses and clear, uniform, consistent communication about requirements for using the libraries will reduce the potential for misunderstanding and conflict.

In order to provide these additional services and open up access to computer workstations and study space to the CUNY community, libraries will need adequate PPE for personnel and patrons; thorough cleaning of library spaces; cleaning supplies, such as disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer; staffing provided by college assistants, NTAs and COAs; staggered and short shifts; support from IT and public safety; proper implementation of a reservation system, possible mailing of books or locker delivery, and expanded e-resource access. These precautions, as well as close monitoring of the health and safety conditions onsite, are necessary for this phase to proceed.

Circulation

Circulation personnel will employ procedures developed in accordance with the latest guidance from public health experts and scientific research to manage the lending, return, cleaning, and quarantine of books and technology items.

Where possible, "closed stacks" should be implemented (personnel, not patrons, retrieve books from the shelves) to limit contact with books and shelves. Procedures for the contactless delivery and return of items might include delivery via book locker or other technology. Books can be returned via book drops located outside the library. Plexiglass barriers must be installed at service desks to reduce the risk of contagion between personnel and library users when other delivery is not possible. Electronic e-IDs or patrons scanning their own barcodes will limit the need for hand-to-hand service between personnel and users.

Reserve materials

Online reserves continue to be required to reduce student need to scan physical materials. Some scanning of materials adhering to accessibility guidelines for e-reserves can happen as determined by personnel support and on-site work hours. Priority scanning will go to the classes serving high numbers of students. CUNY Libraries will continue to work with interested faculty members to locate appropriate online material if necessary.

Instruction

Instruction services will remain online only. Library faculty will work with classroom faculty to deliver library instruction in the mode that best suits the course, which may include synchronous and asynchronous workshops, online guides, videos, tutorials, and other means.

Reference Services

Reference Services will remain online only. Email and chat references services, research consultations and other online meetings between library faculty and students and/or faculty will continue to be provided remotely.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Services

ILL will continue to deliver items electronically and add contactless pick up for books and other physical library materials.

Implications for academic continuity

Compared to Physical Access Level One, Physical Access Level Two would allow increased personnel access to physical reserves to support online digitized course reserves. Library faculty will continue to work with teaching faculty to find adequate alternative online material to support their courses, including OER materials. In order to better support students and faculty, CUNY Libraries should actively procure new online resources and resource sharing.

Level Three: Some On-site Restrictions

Physical Access Level Three builds on a successful experience with Physical Access Level Two and should only be launched based on guidance and recommendations from public health experts. The conditions at the college during Level Three would indicate greater access to campus spaces, such as an increase in on-site classes.

Library faculty and staff would still be working mostly online, with some personnel providing on-site services for a limited period a day.

Hours of operation for our physical spaces and the occupancy limits will be adjusted, taking into consideration current recommendations from public health experts. Study spaces and computer workstations will now be available on a limited basis. A conservative occupancy limit for study spaces to ensure social distancing will be enforced in accordance with public health recommendations and may

require time limits for use of computers and study spaces. To reduce time spent on public transportation, students should continue to be allowed to use the Wi-Fi and licensed resources onsite at whichever CUNY college is closest to them.

Local coordination with IT departments will become especially important, to work out logistics for computer/printer use, which may necessitate moving computers to spaces outside the library, or shifting IT personnel to work within the library (if, for example, to reduce the touching of printers, one IT staff member could be charged with releasing all print jobs on a computer dedicated to one staffer's use).

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Services

ILL will continue to deliver items electronically and via contactless pick up. Patrons who need to consult in-library use items may be required to schedule an appointment for on-site use.

Implications for academic continuity

Compared to Physical Access Level Two, Physical Level Three will allow for increased patron access to physical library collections as well as limited time at computer stations and study spaces.

Library faculty will continue to work with teaching faculty to find adequate online material to support their courses, including OER materials. In order to better support students and faculty, CUNY Libraries should procure new online resources and resource sharing to build stronger inter-lending networks to support research and teaching.

Level Four: Precautionary Measures

Physical Access Level Four builds on a successful experience with Physical Access Level Three and should only be launched based on guidance and recommendations from public health experts. The conditions at the college during Level Four would indicate more classes being held on campus than in Level Three.

Library faculty and staff would still be working mostly online with some personnel providing on-site services for a limited period each day.

Hours of operation for library physical spaces, occupancy limits, access to physical reserves and open stack materials and possibly mandates for patrons to wear PPE will be adjusted, taking into consideration current recommendations from public health experts.

Appendix

Table A1
Levels for Resuming On-site Activities

	Level Zero Lockdown (No On-site Activity)	Level One Minimal On-site Operations	Level Two Contactless Access	Level Three Limited On-site Access	Level Four Precautionary Measures
EXTERNAL TO LIBRARY					
Mode of course instruction	Online only	Classes mostly online with a few campus services open with limited hours.	Mix of hybrid and completely online classes	Mix of hybrid and online classes	Mix of hybrid, fully on-campus, and online
FACILITIES AND SERVICES					
Hours of operation	Online services provided; physical library closed	Online services provided; physical library closed	Online services provided; very limited hours of operation for physical space	Online services provided; limited hours of operation for physical space	Online services provided; normal or close to normal hours of operation for physical space
Permitted entry and occupancy	No access	Only minimal personnel; no patrons	No entry into library spaces. Contactless services such as locker delivery and return of books and equipment are available outside the library.	Conservative maximum occupancy limit, based on recommendations from public health experts. Entrance to library is monitored and occupancy enforced. Patrons must wear masks. Consider limiting entry by online reservation. Contract tracing procedures for entry.	Moderate maximum occupancy limit, based on recommendations from public health experts. Entrance to library is monitored and occupancy enforced. Patrons must wear masks. Contract tracing procedures for entry.
Study spaces	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open with strict limited occupancy and	Open with moderate limited occupancy and

				<p>time limits for occupancy, measures for social distancing (e.g., removed chairs; taped-off areas; study rooms limited to one person, etc.), and mandated mask-wearing.</p> <p>Frequent cleaning that follows public health guidelines for all study area furniture, equipment, carpeting, HVAC/ventilation systems, and bathrooms.</p>	<p>time limits for occupancy, measures for social distancing.</p> <p>Frequent cleaning that follows public health guidelines for all study area furniture, equipment, carpeting, HVAC/ventilation systems, and bathrooms.</p>
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PERSONNEL

Personnel in building	No personnel in building	Minimal personnel in building; PPE and social distancing in office space; staggered/shorter shifts. Frequent cleaning per public health guidelines for employee area furniture, equipment, carpeting, HVAC/ventilation systems, and bathrooms.	Minimal personnel in building; PPE and social distancing in office space; staggered/shorter shifts. Frequent cleaning procedures as described in Level One are maintained.	Staggered/shorter shifts; PPE and social distancing in office space. Frequent cleaning procedures are maintained and as appropriate intensified because of increased traffic.	Staggered/shorter shifts; PPE and social distancing in office space. Frequent cleaning procedures are maintained and as appropriate intensified because of increased traffic.
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ACCESS TO LIBRARY RESOURCES

<p>Circulation process</p>	<p>Electronic resources available; all loans extended on books and other physical materials</p> <p>Inter-CUNY Libraries book delivery (CLICS) requests paused.</p>	<p>Electronic resources available; all loans extended on books and other physical materials; minimal personnel onsite to prepare space and procedures for quarantine of books.</p> <p>Inter-CUNY Libraries book delivery (CLICS) requests paused.</p>	<p>Returned books quarantined; laptops, calculators, etc. are thoroughly cleaned. Possible use of contactless delivery. Consider new alternatives like mailing or lockers (include in cleaning plan). Increased funding and resource sharing for additional e-resources.</p> <p>Inter-CUNY Libraries book delivery (CLICS) requests resumes.</p>	<p>Returned books are quarantined; laptops, calculators, etc. are thoroughly cleaned; check-outs allowed; possible use of contactless delivery. Consider new alternatives like mailing or lockers (include in cleaning plan).</p> <p>Increased funding and resource sharing would allow for the acquisition of more robust electronic resources.</p>	<p>Returned books are quarantined; laptops, calculators, etc. are thoroughly cleaned; check-outs allowed; possible use of contactless delivery. Consider new alternatives like mailing or lockers (include in cleaning plan).</p> <p>Increased funding and resource sharing for the acquisition of more robust electronic resources.</p>
<p>Reserve process</p>	<p>Online only; outreach to faculty about OER and faculty uploads of scanned texts to Blackboard</p>	<p>Online; OER/faculty scan outreach; minimal personnel onsite for limited hours to scan and send reserve materials</p>	<p>Online; OER/faculty scan outreach; limited personnel onsite to scan and send</p>	<p>Online; OER/faculty scan outreach; employees scan and copy; students can pick up paper copies; possible use of contactless delivery</p>	<p>Online; OER/faculty scan outreach; students can scan/copy with safeguards (e.g., the college's providing disposable gloves)</p>
<p>Stacks</p>	<p>No patron access</p>	<p>No patron access</p>	<p>Closed stacks: personnel retrieve circulating items in response to patron request</p>	<p>Closed stacks: personnel retrieve circulating items in response to patron request</p>	<p>Open stacks</p>
<p>Special Collections</p>	<p>No patron access</p>	<p>No patron access; minimal personnel onsite for digitization,</p>	<p>No Patron access; minimal personnel onsite for digitization,</p>	<p>Access by appointment only; adequate PPE and social</p>	<p>Access by appointment only; adequate PPE and social</p>

		preservation, collections care. PPE and social distancing.	preservation, collections care. PPE and social distancing.	distancing.	distancing.
EQUIPMENT USE					
Computer use	No access	No access	Computers should be moved from the library to alternate spaces to allow for social distancing.	Access to computer stations limited by social distancing and conservative time limits; employees clean keyboards and mice in between users; computers may need to be moved to alternate spaces to allow for social distancing.	Access to computer stations limited by social distancing and moderate time limits; students provided with cleaning wipes for before and after computer use; computers may need to be moved to alternate spaces to allow for social distancing.
Printers	No access	No access	IT departments should collaborate with libraries to determine appropriate spaces outside the library and procedures for print job releases.	IT departments work with libraries to determine appropriate spaces and procedures for print job releases. Possible solutions include: (1) moving printers to IT-run spaces or only using printers already in IT spaces; (2) limiting roles (only IT and/or library personnel use printers); and/or (3) providing protective measures	IT departments work with libraries to determine appropriate spaces and procedures for print job releases. Possible solutions include: (1) moving printers to IT-run spaces or only using printers already in IT spaces); (2) limiting roles (only IT and/or library personnel use printers); and/or(3) providing protective measures

				(disposable gloves, cleaning wipes).	(disposable gloves, cleaning wipes).
Copiers/ scanners	No access	No access	Library employee use only, with cleaning procedures and adequate supplies	Colleges must provide solutions that either avoid student contact with machines (employees release all print jobs) or that supply physical safeguards to reduce contact (providing disposable gloves that students must use when touching the machine), and/or cleaning wipes for before and after printer use).	Colleges must provide solutions that either avoid student contact with machines (employees release all print jobs) or that supply physical safeguards to reduce contact (providing disposable gloves that students must use when touching the machine), and/or cleaning wipes for before and after printer use).
DIRECT PATRON SUPPORT					
Reference services	Online reference (chat, virtual consultations, email)	Online reference (chat, virtual consultations, email)	Online reference (chat, virtual consultations, email)	Online reference (chat, virtual consultations, email); in-person with protective shields, PPE, and social distancing measures; frequent cleaning of service desks	Online reference (chat, virtual consultations, email); in-person with protective shields, PPE, and social distancing measures; frequent cleaning of service desks
Instruction	Online instruction (synchronous and asynchronous workshops; guides, videos, and online tutorials)	Online instruction (synchronous and asynchronous workshops; guides, videos, and online tutorials)	Online instruction (synchronous and asynchronous workshops; guides, videos, and online tutorials)	Online support (synchronous and asynchronous workshops; guides, videos, and online tutorials) In-person instruction only with adequate social distancing	Online support (synchronous and asynchronous workshops; guides, videos, and online tutorials) In-person instruction only with adequate social distancing

				measures, PPE, and frequent cleaning of classroom surfaces and equipment.	measures, PPE, and frequent cleaning of classroom surfaces and equipment.
BEHIND-THE-SCENES PROCEDURES					
Technical Services (acquisitions, cataloging, serials)	No access No purchasing of physical items.	No purchasing of physical items. Minimal personnel onsite to prepare space and procedures for quarantine of books.	Books and materials received in the mail are quarantined, cleaned and processed. Contactless delivery to Circulation. Limited purchasing of physical items.	Books and materials received in the mail are quarantined, cleaned and processed. Contactless delivery to Circulation. Limited purchasing of physical items.	Books and materials received in the mail are quarantined, cleaned and processed. Contactless delivery to Circulation. Limited purchasing of physical items.
Interlibrary loan	Electronic delivery of e-books, e-book chapters, e-journal articles and other online sources.	Electronic delivery of e-books, e-book chapters, e-journal articles and other online sources.	Continue delivering e-resources. Limited scanning of book chapters and mailing books to other libraries. Contactless delivery and return of ILL books for our patrons. Patrons must make an appointment to scan microform and other non-circulating ILL materials.	Continue delivering e-resources. Limited scanning of book chapters and mailing books to other libraries. Contactless delivery and return of ILL books for our patrons. Patrons must make an appointment to scan microform and other non-circulating ILL materials.	Continue delivering e-resources. Limited scanning of book chapters and mailing books to other libraries. Contactless delivery and return of ILL books for our patrons. Patrons must make an appointment to scan microform and other non-circulating ILL materials.

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