Library Association of Ireland

Cumann Leabharlann na hÉireann

Representing libraries and librarians in Ireland

Guidelines for re-opening Libraries in Ireland under COVID-19 restrictions

1. Introduction

Libraries in Ireland have always strived to be welcoming and inclusive spaces delivering high quality services to all of our user communities. While physical library spaces closed down during the COVID-19 crisis, our libraries remained open and continued to deliver services to our user communities throughout the crisis. When preparing to re-open our physical library spaces, we continue that commitment to our user communities and understand the importance of preventing the spread of COVID-19 in how we operate our spaces and services. The Library Association of Ireland hope to support this by collating the guidance in this document alongside current public health advice.

2. Scope

This is a non-exhaustive document that provides guidance specific to the re-opening of libraries and draws from international examples.

All libraries should keep up to date with the latest measures introduced by the Government. Implementation of information outlined in this document is supplied for the purpose of guidance only. Each library will be required to work within guidance provided by its relevant parent body such as Local Authorities, Higher Institutes of Education (HEIs), health boards etc. It is vital that all final guidance is taken from official government sources and legislation.

Information in this document has no legal standing and does not imply or incur any liability to the authors, or the Library Association of Ireland.

3. Access to Libraries and Occupancy Levels

3.1   Initial Considerations before Accessing the Library

- Are Library visitors required to wear face coverings?

- Are Library visitors required to sanitise their hands when entering the Library

3.2   Access Routes

- Identify clear, one-way routes in and out of the Library

- Provide clear signage and messaging

- Consider whether entrance and exit doors should be kept open to reduce 'touch points'

3.3   Occupancy Measures

- Measure maximum occupancy levels allowing for 1m/2m social distancing (depending on current government advise)

- Put measures in place to count numbers entering and leaving

- Consider how Library staff will measure current occupancy

Useful Links

EBLIDA Checklist for Library Associations and Libraries in the face of the COVID-19 crisis

IFLA COVID-19 – Limiting Numbers in Library

4. Social Distancing in Libraries

4.1   Reader Spaces

- Ensure there are 1m/2m between each reader space (depending on current government guidelines)

- Identify which reader spaces are not accessible while social distancing measures are in place and clear label them accordingly

- Consider rearranging furniture to facilitate greater use of study spaces while social distancing measures are in place

4.2   Routes within the Library

- Identify and signpost clear one-way routes throughout the Library
- Where it is not possible to implement one-way routes, clearly signpost how users should move through the space in order to maintain social distancing
- Decide whether Library visitors permitted to browse the shelves
    - Ensure clear signposting indicating that only one person can access each stack at a time

5. Lending Services

5.1   Initial Considerations

- Follow government guidelines regarding the quarantine of Library materials
- Decide whether to implement some of the bespoke tools available such as apps that facilitate contactless borrowing
- Decide whether self-service terminals operational
    - Identify how often they should be cleaned
    - Liaise with manufacturers/providers for guidance regarding cleaning
    - Identify how regularly they should be cleaned
    - Ensure there is clear signposting for Library visitors explaining how to use terminals in the context of COVID-19 restrictions
- Are lending services available at staffed information desks
    - Identify procedures that ensure social distancing measures are observed
    - Identify what personal protective equipment (PPE) may be required

Useful Links

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Libraries Contactless Lending app

5.2   Click & Collect Services

- Identify how users will request material. Options include via a website, email, functionality in the Library Management System and a Library app

- Identify how users will be advised that material is ready for collection. Options include via email, phone, instant messaging etc

- Organise the collection of in a way that limits contact

    Ensure clear labelling and signposting

    Place the location of the collection point in a place that limits contact point and travelling around the Library space

- Identify how items will be returned to the Library in a way that limits contact

    Ensure clear labelling and signposting

    Locate the returns point in a place that limits contact point and travelling around the Library space

Useful Links

[Maynooth University – Click & Collect Service](#)

5.3 Scan & Deliver Services

- Consider how Library users will users request material
- Consider how the Library will ensure that copyright considerations being addressed

    Consider providing clear guidance on current copyright restrictions

- Identify how clear timelines for service delivery

    What is the maximum length of time it will take from submission of request to delivery of item?

    Will each request be acknowledged before processing?

    How will Library users be informed their request has been processed/denied?

Useful Links

[UCC Library – Scan & Deliver Service](#)

5.4 Other Considerations

- Ensure there is sufficient signposting outlining general public health regarding COVID-19
- Identify what cleaning procedures are required, how often the Library should be cleaned and how they will be managed in the context of opening hours
- Ascertain whether the Library is required to collect contact details of Library visitors for contact tracing purposes

How will this be done, via access control, sign-in sheet or another tool?

Ensure the Library is fully GDPR compliant when gathering this information

- Consider whether IT facilities be available to Library visitors and how they will be used under COVID-19 restrictions
- Consider the Library's response in the event of an onsite case of COVID-19 including the identification of an isolation room/space

Useful Links

American Library Association Reopening Guidelines

Australian Library and Information Association Responding to Covid-19 guidelines.

IFLA COVID-19 – Plans for re-opening around the world

Irish Government Return to Work Safety Protocol

Maynooth University Library Resumption of On-Campus Services

Trinity College Library – resumption of Library Services

UK COVID 19 safer spaces document

UK Libraries Connected Reopening Guidance

5.5   Staff Considerations

- Ensure there is a return to work protocol in place for your library
- Ensure that the number of Library staff working on site is minimised
- Ensure Library staff workspaces are organised to support social distancing?

Useful Links

IFLA COVID-19 – Keeping Staff Safe

Irish Government Roadmap for reopening society and business

Netherlands Public Library Association (VOB): Protocol – phased opening of Library offices