



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES TO CLOSE AMID COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Orange County, VA – The Orange County Library Board of Trustees has instructed the Library Director to discontinue public access into all library buildings effective close of business Wednesday, March 18, 2020 through Saturday, April 4, 2020. All library services will be suspended during this period, except for telephone and on-line services. The Board of Trustees will convene on Wednesday, April 1, 2020, to determine future library operations.

This action was undertaken in light of the recent recommendation by Governor Northam to limit all gatherings to less than 10 persons. Immediately following the Board's action, the following official statement from the American Library Association was released and embodies the spirit in which the action was made:

"The American Library Association (ALA) Executive Board released this statement in support of libraries and library workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

To protect library workers and their communities from exposure to COVID-19 in these unprecedented times, we strongly recommend that academic, public and school library leaders and their trustees and governing bodies evaluate closing libraries to the public and only reopening when guidance from public health officials indicates the risk from COVID-19 has significantly subsided.

It is very difficult for us to put forward this recommendation. Libraries pride themselves on being there during critical times for our communities. ... The health of our library workers and the communities we serve is of utmost and equal importance. Libraries are by design unable to practice social distancing to the degree recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health authorities. Keeping libraries open at this time has the potential to harm communities more than help."

To safeguard library customers and employees, we feel this is the best course of action for our library system. In fact, 84 of the 90 public library systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia are currently closed or closing by March 18th. All library programs and use of the library meeting rooms is also suspended during this time.

Customers may still contact the libraries by phone and make use of our digital collections. All library late fines will be suspended and forgiven until we are able to fully resume normal operations.

Online services may be accessed via our webpage at <https://www.ocplva.org>. Each branch can be contacted at the following numbers:

- Main Library in Orange (540) 672-3811
- Wilderness Branch Library (540) 854-5310
- Gordonsville Branch Library (540) 832-0712



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