

TOPCATS

TASKFORCE ON POST COVID-19 ALIGNMENT, TRENDS & STRATEGIES

Reopening Needs Assessment for NJ Libraries Survey Final Report

Prepared by TOPCATS Survey WG
May 22, 2020

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Background and Objectives

On April 16, 2020, the [LibraryLinkNJ](#) (LLNJ) Executive Board established a new task force on COVID-19, and charged the task force to explore issues, strategies, and solutions, relative to the reopening of libraries post COVID-19. The Task Force works in collaboration with the [New Jersey State Library](#) (NJSL), the [New Jersey Library Association](#) (NJLA), and other pertinent efforts that benefit New Jersey libraries in the post COVID-19 environment.

TOPCATS developed the “[Best Practices for Reopening New Jersey’s Libraries](#)” document and distributed it to all NJ libraries on May 6. This document is a living document, and TOPCATS needed feedback that will help the Task Force to modify this document to better meet the needs of New Jersey’s libraries, as we move forward and prepare for reopening.

All multitype libraries were asked to participate in the survey. We asked the [voting rep](#) (or the primary contact for school libraries because there is only one voting rep for each school district) of each library to fill out a needs assessment survey, so that we have one entry from each library for more accurate data.

We expect this report to:

- Help TOPCATS in revising documents the Task Force has developed and planning for future activities
- Support our recommendations for TOPCATS’ consideration to initiate Professional Development for NJ library staff & PPE Group Purchase via LibraryLinkNJ plans to support NJ libraries post COVID-19 environment
- Provide the survey results to all NJ libraries to share the concerns, thoughts, and ideas among the NJ library community

Survey Questions & Results

Overview:

The survey with 12 questions [[Appendix 1: Survey Questions](#)] was conducted from May 6 through May 15 via SurveyMonkey, and we received a total of 367 submissions. The full survey results with visual representations of the survey data are available in Appendix 2-6 in PDFs.

- Appendix 2: [Survey Summary with All Submissions](#)
- Appendix 3: [Survey Summary for Academic Libraries](#)
- Appendix 4: [Survey Summary for Public Libraries](#)
- Appendix 5: [Survey Summary for School Libraries](#)
- Appendix 6: [Survey Summary for Special Libraries](#)
- Appendix 7: [Survey Summary for Library Agencies](#)

Representation of all libraries types & counties:

Academic	Public	School	Special	Library Agencies	Total
37	211	115	2	2	367

- 367 submissions from libraries in all 21 counties including Bergen (63), Essex (39), Morris (38), Middlesex (36)
 - Public libraries in all 21 counties have responded to the survey
 - Academic libraries in all counties, except Cumberland (there is only one university campus in the county) & Hunterdon (No Academic Library)
 - School - no submissions from Cumberland (33 school libraries)
 - Special & Library Agencies - only 2 submissions, respectively
 - It didn't give us enough samples to have significant analysis for these two library/organization types. Their submissions are shared via Appendix of the Survey Summaries and included in the overall analysis

Most Negative Impacts of Library Closure (in %):

All		Academic		Public		School	
Access to Materials	81.48	Access to Materials	70.29	Access to Materials	77.55	Access to Materials	92.11
Maintaining Library Services	72.65	Funding/Budget	59.46	Maintaining Library Services	74.49	Maintaining Library Services	78.95
Provision of Technology Access	30.48	Staffing (e.g. layoff, furloughs)	45.95	Managing Staff Remotely	38.78	Funding/Budget	20.18
Managing Staff Remotely	26.50	Maintaining Library Services	43.24	Provision of Technology Access	37.76	Provision of Technology Access	19.30
Funding/Budget	22.51	Provision of Technology Access	29.73	Funding/Budget	16.84	Other	14.04

Most Positive Impacts of Library Closure (in %):

All		Academic		Public		School	
Increase in Usage of Electronic Resources	70.59	Growth or implementation of eReference and chat services	64.86	Increase in Usage of Electronic Resources	75.13	Increase in Usage of Electronic Resources	68.18
Implementation of Innovative Programming Strategies	46.47	Increase in Usage of Electronic Resources	56.76	Implementation of Innovative Programming Strategies	59.26	Growth or implementation of outreach and collaborative opportunities	41.82
Increase in Professional Development Activities among Staff	39.71	Increase in Professional Development Activities among Staff	48.65	Increase in Professional Development Activities among Staff	45.50	Implementation of Innovative Programming Strategies	30.91
Growth or implementation of outreach and collaborative opportunities	27.94	Implementation of Innovative Programming Strategies	29.73	Increase in Number of Card-Holders	26.46	Increase in Professional Development Activities among Staff	27.27
Growth or implementation of eReference and chat services	27.94	Growth or implementation of outreach and collaborative opportunities	27.03	Growth or implementation of eReference and chat services	23.81	Growth or implementation of eReference and chat services	21.82

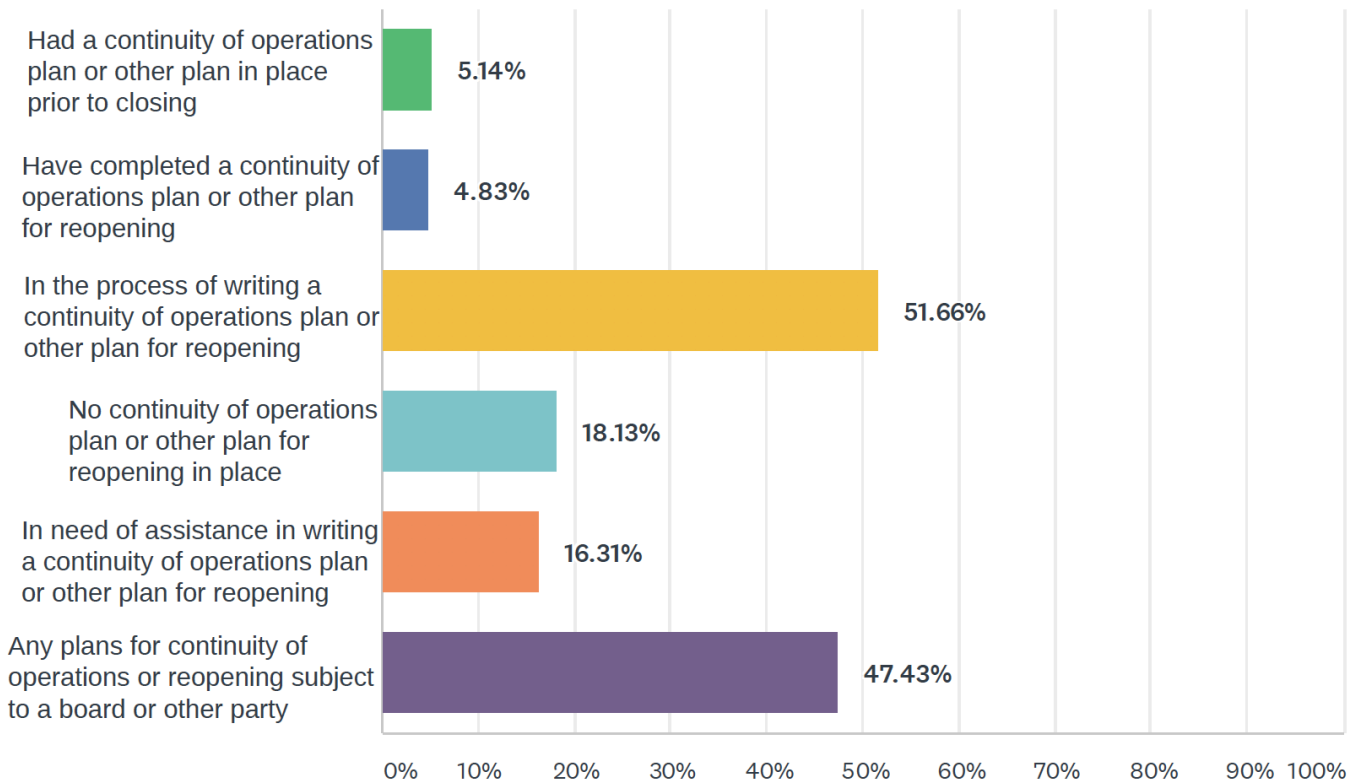
- Several other comments that there have been no positive impacts are noted

Majority of Libraries are currently:

Closed to the public, staff working remotely 87.32%	Academic	Public	School
	83.78	84.57	93.64

Where Libraries Are in the Process of Considering Reopening:

Answered: 331 Skipped: 36



More than 50% of Libraries responded that they will acquire or will consider acquiring the following items (in %):

Masks (67.98)	Gloves (57.14)	Wipes (58.58)
Work-Station Cleaning (67.75)	Hand Sanitizer (54.28)	Plexi-Glass (64.36)
Book Sanitizing Machine (40.68)		

If LibraryLinkNJ were to serve as the agent for supplies, would you be interested in purchasing via a bulk supplier?

- 248 out of 318 who answered to this question responded 'YES'

In planning to reopen, libraries are most concerned about:

- Safety & Security (81.37% rated "5" where 0 is least concerned and 5 is most concerned)

Upon reviewing the Best Practices document, we asked to rate the level of comfort in preparing for each phase, from 0 not comfortable to 5 most comfortable:

- Phase 1: Most comfortable - 58.90% rated 5
- Phase 2-3: Moderately comfortable - About 70% rated 3-4
- Phase 4-5: Not comfortable - Closed 50% rated 0-2

Reference from “[Best Practices for Reopening NJ Libraries](#)”:

- Phase 1: Libraries Closed to the Public
 - This phase will allow libraries to comply with strict public safety and health directives.
- Phase 2: Libraries Prepare for Opening
 - This phase will allow libraries to prepare for a return to work and opening to the public.
- Phase 3: Libraries Operate with Limited Services
 - This phase will allow libraries to resume some operations and services using cautionary steps.
- Phase 4: Libraries Open with Expanded Services
 - This phase will allow libraries to expand operations and increase services.
- Phase 5: Libraries Operate in a New Normal
 - This phase will prepare libraries for an extended period of public health disruption.

We have found a lot of fill-in questions and comments very helpful.

We strongly recommend see the survey results summaries for more details, in addition to the Survey Results Analyses by Library Types section below.

- Appendix 2: [Survey Summary with All Submissions](#)
- Appendix 3: [Survey Summary for Academic Libraries](#)
- Appendix 4: [Survey Summary for Public Libraries](#)
- Appendix 5: [Survey Summary for School Libraries](#)

Survey Results Analyses by Library Types

PUBLIC LIBRARIES:

Appendix 4: [Survey Summary for Public Libraries](#)

- 211 public libraries responded - About 53% of all public libraries in New Jersey
- Highest reported negative impacts of Covid-19 in areas related to “Access to materials” and maintaining Library services (both 70+%). “Managing remote staff” reported high as well near 40%
- Highest reported positive impacts of Covid-12 in areas related to “Increased use of digital resources” (75%) and “Implementation of innovative programming strategies” (60%)
- 85% report their libraries as closed to the public with staff working remotely
- 71% report being in the process of writing their continuity or other reopening plan
- Libraries are planning to or have acquired most of the PPE selections provided on the survey (tends to be an even distribution between have or will acquire for most categories) - the one exception is for portable sinks and book sanitizing machines : most report no intention to acquire
- Interestingly, unlike most PEE (excluding sanitizing machines and portable sinks), the results for acquisition of plexiglass are a bit more mixed. While highest percentages report acquiring, or planning to acquire, there is a significant number reporting “will consider acquiring”.
- Other items that came up for acquisition in the open questioning at least a few times included thermometers, signage, face shields, hand sanitizing stands/self dispensing apparatus, UV sanitation equipment, and protective sleeves for computer peripherals.
- Overwhelming # of respondents reported interest in purchasing items through LLNJ if they served as a supply agent (88%).

- Reviewing elements of reopening, the most concern reported from libraries was in regards to “safety and security”. Most other areas saw a pretty even distribution across the scale.
- Reviewing the Best Practices document in regards to phased reopening, most libraries reported being most comfortable with Phase 1 (where most libraries currently are) - and more even distribution of results related to the other phases, though there seems to be less comfort in Phase 4.
- Regarding questioning related to training or resources for lower comfort areas in relation to phased reopening, some of the repeated responses were : training/resources on best practices/preparedness, customer service training, guidance or resources on policies (changing policies or temporary policies), how to deal with limiting patron occupancy and public safety issues, access to public bathrooms)
- A majority of libraries reported relatively high comfort in preparedness for another closure in the case of a Covid-19 resurgence (68% reporting 4 or 5 on a 0-5 scale).
- Not often mentioned, but some concern about ensuring staff is properly equipped and trained for remote work in case libraries are to reclose. However, 87% of survey respondents rate their preparedness to reopen at 3 or higher.
- Concern over adequate reopening preparation would indicate that perhaps providing templates for policies (behavior, unattended minors, remote work, etc.), safety guidelines, and communication to the public would be helpful.
- Library management appeared multiple times as a response of Phase 4. Hard to identify what exactly this means, if building or staff. If staff, perhaps it's in reference to HR issues that may arise for administrators navigating how to provide adequate staffing with worker protections such as the FFCRA and OSHA.
- Much concern over managing public access into a building and resources.

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES:

Appendix 3: [Survey Summary for Academic Libraries](#)

- 27 of the survey respondents were from academic libraries. Of these, 51.35% (19) were from community colleges, 29.73% (11) were from universities, and 27.03% (10) were from private colleges.
- Among the most negative impacts from closure, 70.27% of the respondents from academic libraries selected access to materials, 59.46% selected funding/budgets, and 45.95% selected staffing (lay-offs, furloughs).
- For question #2, regarding the positive impacts from closure, one academic library respondent mentioned increased access to tutoring, which was offered previously on a limited basis. They said having additionally trained tutors for online assistance is a benefit to students at the branch campuses, where there is less availability for tutors for certain subjects.
- Of the comments listed for question #3 by the academic library respondents, several mentioned that some staff were working remotely while there were some furloughs. One respondent mentioned that staff who could not work remotely had been reassigned to support other units of the university.
- Of the academic library respondents, most mentioned that they will acquire masks, gloves, cleaning supplies, wipes, work-station cleaning, and hand-sanitizer. Most of these respondents would not be acquiring portable sinks. 57.58% of these respondents would consider acquiring plexi-glass, and there was an equal number of respondents (16, or 48.48%) who indicated that they will consider acquiring and will not be acquiring book sanitizing machines.
- Academic library respondents also indicated that they would be purchasing ultraviolet/decontamination light/scanners, dropcloths, plastic curtains, keyboard and screen covers, and tape for marking directional arrows on the floor. One respondent mentioned potentially purchasing far UVC lights or wands.
- Some of the academic library respondents indicated a need for a self check out machine.

- Of the academic respondents, 75% (27 respondents) would be interested in purchasing via a bulk supplier, if LLNJ were to serve as the agent for supplies.
- For question #7, among the academic library respondents, there is the greatest concern for safety and security (82.86% choosing 5--most concerned), followed by services (45.71% choosing 4), customer support and library operations (both having 42.86% choosing 4).
- For question #9, academic library respondents indicated the following training would make them feel more comfortable with the various phases of reopening: best practices and customer service, safety and security measures, restroom cleaning, curbside and remote services (for academic libraries), managing customer expectations, safety of staff and students, proper use of safety wear, staff risk and liability, and managing guidelines at branch libraries. Other items listed included contact tracing guidelines and guidance on the frequency of cleaning, There was an interest in knowing whether textbook publishers are offering digital copies to libraries and what academic libraries are going about their reserve collections.
- For question #10, of the academic library respondents, 41.94% (13) selected 4 and the same number of respondents selected 5 (most comfortable), regarding their level of preparedness in the event of a resurgence.
- Academic library respondents indicated a need for more staff training, guidelines, clear and tested best practices, more money, more PPE, sanitizers and cleaning supplies, more loanable laptops and/or chromebooks, more electronic resources, more lessons from other libraries, information for providing an optimally effective virtual presence, planning for deliveries and returns of materials, resources and technology for staff, training for remote services/customer service outreach.
- Other comments included how to handle patrons who are ill, testing staff (temperatures), concerns regarding ILLS and other networked services.
- One comment stated, "I think it's great that LibraryLinkNJ is taking the initiative to help libraries cope with the effects of the pandemic. We need leadership and unity, facts and guidance. If we are all on the same page, we can be much more effective."
- Another comment expressed an interest in discussion about the level of responsibility that each of us has to make sure the spaces are "safe."
- One expressed that the greatest impact to their library is financial. They stated, "As the state budget has been pushed back, we have to find a way to keep our electronic resources for students without having the money to do so. I would like more information on how to contact vendors for support."
- Concerns of funding/budget cuts weighed heavier than public librarians
- Need of self check-out machines and uv cleaning wands
- Comment of interest: As the state budget has been pushed back, we have to find a way to keep our electronic resources for students without having the money to do so. I would like more information on how to contact vendors for support.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES:

Appendix 5: [Survey Summary for School Libraries](#)

- 115 respondents is a relatively strong contribution in comparison to the other library types represented.
- By far the lack of access to materials and not being able to maintain services are the highest impacts that school libraries are facing (not unlike other groups).
- So many decisions (PPEs, reopening, safety, etc.) are out of the hands of school librarians and depend entirely on administrators and school boards.
- Largest needs represented in the comments include training, best practices, and sanitization of materials.

- Many of the comments mentioned that the survey did not address the needs of school libraries.
- For question #1, among the most negative impacts from the closure to libraries, of the school library respondents, 92.11% selected access to materials, 78.95% selected maintaining library services, and 20.18% selected funding or budgets.
- For question #2, among the positive impacts from the closure to libraries, of the school library respondents, 68.19% selected an increase in usage of electronic usage, 41.82% selected growth or implementation of outreach and collaborative opportunities. One comment for this question expressed that teachers now have a better grasp of Google Classroom and that more families, students and educators have been brought to public library services; however, most of the school library respondents expressed that this has not been positive.
- For question #4, 81.48% of school library respondents mentioned that any plans for continuity of operations or reopening were subject to a board or other party.
- For question #10, on a scale of 0 (not prepared) to 5 (most prepared), if there was a resurgence, 34.44% (31 responses) of the respondents that were from school libraries answered 4 and 32.22% (29 responses) answered 3. Meanwhile, 17.78% (16 responses) answered 5, feeling most prepared, in the event that there was a resurgence.
- For question #5, most school library respondents will acquire masks, gloves, cleaning supplies, wipes, work-station cleaning, and hand-sanitizer. Most of these respondents selected that they will not be acquiring portable sinks, plexi-glass, and book sanitizing machines. Two respondents mentioned that they would be purchasing more ebooks. Free-standing hand sanitizers and hand soap were also mentioned. One person mentioned a mask that allows a visual of the mouth, incase it is mandated to use a mask for instruction with students. Some were not sure about other items for purchasing.
- School library respondents identified that other items that may be needed are tape to identify flow of traffic, bins for book collection. Two respondents identified the need for a secure book-drop.
- From Question 9: Things that would make the respondents feel more comfortable, including training needs on the following areas:
 - Best Practices/Preparedness for School Libraries
 - Acquiring funding/Budget cuts
 - Expansion of eResources/eBooks (*one mentioned how to obtain enough ebooks with limited funds)
- From Question 11: Training suggestions included:
 - sanitizing materials (There were at least 2 that mentioned this.)
 - Boom sanitizing
 - sanitizing the library--how to and frequency (There was at least 1 other that mentioned this.)
 - ways to serve patrons while implementing social distancing
 - specific video-conferencing tools
 - specific educational suites purchased by schools
 - Using social media to engage students
 - Ways to get students and staff to check out more ebooks (There was at least 1 other that mentioned this.)
 - Ideas for home maker space activities
 - Running a coding club from home
 - Best tools for home research, including citation tools (There was at least 1 other that mentioned this.)
 - How to reach patrons/students during a closure
 - Best practices in chat services
 - Library instruction in the DL environment
 - The safe return of materials (There were at least 3 that mentioned this.)

- Educational video-streaming
- Lesson plan ideas
- Tools & resources for providing remote services
- Better training in the delivery of information--Zoom, Google Classroom
- Methods and other technologies for programming and library instruction (Ties into the previous bulleted item)
- School-related ideas for managing groups using the library within a school
- How to manage a school library in this environment but also keep it relevant
- Marketing remote services to customers
- One comment suggested a list of vendors offering free or reduced pricing on services
- Another comment suggested a list of eResources
- A comment indicated that a respondent would like access to some kind of shared service to circulate ebooks to their students. Other comments that also addressed a need for ebooks, free ebooks, or more ebooks: (7 other comments mentioned this, which is significant.) One suggested a central library that ebooks can be easily accessed for the students.
- Besides the above, two others suggested more free databases/subscription services.
- A comment mentioned access to hardware and wi-fi for all students, not just families. Another mentioned a desire for assurance that all students would have devices on which to access those resources.
- One person suggested the use of school email or ID numbers as authentication for public library digital materials.
- Someone suggested a survey of the public about what they expect as services during a period of not having physical access to a library.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Even though the survey was conducted for 10 days only, under the circumstance of urgency to provide any possible practical resources to NJ libraries, we have received a fair amount of responses from multitype libraries in the State. We hope this report will serve as the baseline of future plans not only for TOPCATS but also our libraries in New Jersey.

Based on the survey results, the Survey WG has made the following recommendations for TOPCATS's consideration in a preliminary report --- initiating Professional Development for NJ library staff & PPE Group Purchase via LibraryLinkNJ plans to support NJ libraries post COVID-19 environment.

Professional Development for NJ Library Staff

- Assign a WG or form a new WG to work with other library groups like NJLA or NJLA Professional Development Committee to manage the professional development needs from the survey.

PPE Group Purchase via LibraryLinkNJ

- 248 out of 318 responded to Question #6 --- *If LibraryLinkNJ were to serve as the agent for supplies, would you be interested in purchasing via a bulk supplier?* --- answered 'Yes'
- TOPCATS presented the [LibraryLinkNJ Executive Board](#) the idea of PPE Group Purchase via LibraryLinkNJ in collaboration with the New Jersey State Library, and it is being reviewed for feasibility by the Board.
- If the idea is approved and becomes an action plan, TOPCATS will conduct a PPE Group Purchase survey to move forward with the plan, and more details will be shared with NJ libraries.

We also recommend more proactive collaboration with the New Jersey Association of School Libraries (NJASL) to address the school libraries' specific needs.

TOPCATS will conduct more surveys and continue to seek out for more inputs and feedback from library staff at all levels working at all types of libraries and library organizations.

Appendices:

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