

COVID-19 a Year Later: Returning to Normal? or an Emerging New Normal? - Transcript

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all righty. It is 3:15 eastern, and welcome to COVID-19, a year later, returning to normal? Or an emerging new normal? After working in a library, they wanted to offer a forum to reflect what we have learned over the past year. We're going to pose several questions about changes that you made related to services, staffing, proceduring and how your library has adjusted. I would encourage everyone in the community to participate and let us hear your experiences. It is my monsieur to introduce our facilitator, I'm will stringfellow, coordinator of government documents, vannedder built university, and Rick my cull ski, government documents and social service sciences librarian, Portland state university, Cynthia etkin and Alicia Kubas, the university of Minnesota-twin cities, government publications and data librarian. Over the past year, library, in response to the pandemic, have made changes to policies impacting services and work force, and I want to start out with a cool question. What type -- poll question. And what types of policy changes has your library made in response to the pandemic? And please select all that apply. So access to physical materials, access to reference services, educational programming, outreach, processing workflows. And if you select other, please fill in the chat what those r others are. Lshtd all righty. We have about 45 seconds to run the poll.

all right. It looks like the poll results are tallied as we speak. Okay. Whew! I hear we have a lot of -- well, quite frankly, it is a lot of policy changes across the board. There are eight libraries that had at least two policy changes, but it looks like a lot dealing with physical services and reference services were kind of our key big ones and also our educational programming and outreach. So it looks like physical access is probably the biggest problem you're facing.

and if you look -- and I'm noticing -- policy changes may be temporary. There have also been -- sorry. There were also policy changes which may have relevance way beyond the situation. So please answer this in the chat. What policy changes has your library implemented as a result of the pandemic, which you think will become permanent once the pandemic is over and operations return to normal.

and I'm going to give you all a few moments to put some of that stuff in. Remote check out and more chat references. Wow! Online chat services. It looks like quite a few. Delivery toll faculty. Cleaning the reference and circulation desk throughout the day. That is true. I will say, for me, my hand awareness is something that I am always aware of wiping things down. Library take out.

so I see a lot of the access, curbside. Virtual programs and increased sanitation. That is definitely a big one. Expansion of electronic access and virtual referencing. Yes, a lot of remote access.

that is interesting. So I see Katie has talked about with the reduced hours, but the personnel reductions as well. Okay. Kathy, the hybrid working services. That is one of them. And chat for Vanderbilt. That has been a big one and very popular. And we have also -- so we do the hybrid schedule. That is something we have been working on. So I see -- so Rick says we have been ding tall version instead of print. Yes.

I like hand sanitizer everywhere! I agree. There has been a lot more hand sanitizer and I think it has made us more conscious of overall hand washing as well.

more documents circulating from Ronnie. That is something that I have noticed as well. Actually we have had an increase in our I.O. L. increase for physical documents, and we have done a lot more scanning.

we will stay in our offices. We're asked to have guests to call us. Absolutely. Yeah, the way that we are offering reference services, I think that there is something wonderful that we found. We can reach more people and on can demand reference in many ways.

so, Margaret, we moved to digital collection and reduced paper and materials. Is that just in government documents or is that all of your collections? Okay. We're seeing curbside pick-up. Reduced hours. Remote access to catalog. And that is actually something that we did here. Our government document catalog. Our other catalogs at Vanderbilt have transitioned to off site catalogs as well. Remote catalogs. Reduced paper collection. Yes. I am seeing that is definitely going forward as well. Less staff, but flexible duties. The time has forced us to reexam and re-evaluate that we do, especially with the ability to work remotely. To good to hear it wasn't just the governor dots that we being reduced. Real-time on camera reference services with the branch campus library. This is a wonderful community that works in a wonderful collaborative manner all across the country. I think it is a great fit for us especially. And Helen says for outreach. Virtual open houses to showcase the library selections that is wonderful! That is great! I would love to see that. If you have a link you can provide I would definitely like to see some of your virtual material.

so from Lonny, so you're in the process of redefining the rules of conduct. That has been a really interesting one. That is interesting like how do you enforce the policies like masks. With the loss of government documents. I love this response. I got a camera microphone for my computer. I know. It is great. It really changed the way if you have committee meetings where you might have traveled across the campus. Well, now we can -- it is more convenient for all of us . More video. Yes, there have been. And I think that is something that really -- is really helpful even beforehand. You -- we were talking about that at Vanderbilt before the pandemic, we were talking about adding a school and a couple of months after that our hands were forced and we're definitely not going back.

and moving to virtual reserves rather than physical reserves if possible. That is something we had also seen before the pandemic as well. Yeah, I think that really has -- we have seen that as well. I know our reserve staff here have really been going -- we're all electronic reserves now and their numbers are booming. Great, just wonderful seeing how much -- Kevin. You're purging the microfiche. I have mixed thoughts on that. I understand the frustrations of the microfiche and I also understand the joy of a challenging format.

so from Deborah, I think face-to-face meetings -- yes, I will say that that is the one thing that I do miss a little bit, though Rthe face-to-face meetings. I think every now and then a face-to-face would be nice. Yes.

actually there are many people I work with who are looking forward to having face-to-face meetings and in-person conferences. Right. I'm the extra vow vert guy and I love meeting with people.

so from Jane, a lot more scanning to add materials to digital reserves. Yeah, and especially we have the great fortune as not being bound as copyright as pretty much everyone on campus with the federal governments. So, yes, it is a great opportunity. Absolutely. From Jennifer, I really miss teaching in person. Online is probably 10 times more work. Yes, it is. Yes. We do see that.

and so from Kate, I noticed how we're working collaboratively. With not having the face-to-face meetings, you lose the productivity.

you're right. It has put that in our areas. So from Gage, we're getting ready for our floor to reopen, closed for renovation, the library to reopen and figure out what government services will be going forward. And you removed all of the physical documents. Oh, no! There are still ways to provide access to government information. It is wonderful. It is great that you all will still be seeking government services.

so from Karl, we reopen in July. 100%, the students want to come back. Their parents want them to come back. Absolutely. And I have the good fortune, I have two government document assistants and just having them around to work out is just wonderful. And I am just so excited as well to see the students coming back, yeah.

and so from Margaret, we will be reopening the reference desk in July. Okay. So it sounds like -- so maybe the close of the reference desk, I can see policy change.

okay. So we probably only got maybe a minute or so, maybe a minute and a half to get these in and we're going to Mo on to the next questions. And I really love your participation and fantastic. So from Kathy. Hard getting to the historic documents that people want because we're not open to the public or in construction.

yes, it has been. For us we have adopted a lot more scanning, like the IRLs or IRL scanning has been through this roof with government information requests. It is the thing that just makes me so excited. That message of do you all have this document? Let me find out. Absolutely. I love getting those requests.

and so we have been working in the office since last may and it has been great for staff. We're sometimes the only people we see each day. Yes, it is wonderful that you're able to work with the staff. I'm rather jealous. I wish I had more of an opportunity to work with my colleagues here at Vanderbilt.

from Jennifer, teaching online, I rely on the videos. I wish congress.GOV, federalregister.GOV offered more tutorials and training material.

yes. The Goff info GOV videos have been wonderful. Wonderful ways to put forth information.

okay. So keep throwing stuff in there. We're kind of at the point where I need to pass it off to our next -- our moderator which will be Rick my cull ski. Take it away. [Inaudible]

provided opportunities -- so, a, overall the pandemic has delayed or canceled projects. B., overall the pandemic has provided opportunities for projects. C., the pandemic has had little impact on our projects. D., the pandemic causes us to delay large projects, but it has enabled us to undertake others. Finally, it is not applicable, no large projects were planned during this period .

I have a supervisor years ago -- [Inaudible] We will have the poll results in a moment. [Poor audio.] So kind of a nice mixture of every option here. We move on -- [Inaudible] So the question going off of that, what are projects or long-term plans that your library was forced to postpone or cancel as a result of the pandemic? And, conversely, has the pandemic provided opportunities to undertake projects that would not have otherwise taken place? And some of the responses so far, and apparently my mic is having some issues here. The projects have been delayed in favor of library projects. That makes sense.

Margaret says summer is the time they do reading and last summer everyone was looking for help from home so reading wasn't possible. Again, issues with my mic and I apologize. It allowed for reading. A lot are saying reading the and cataloging which makes sense. Rene says they delayed projects depending on physical collection. They had opportunities to work on other projects. Again, a lot of folks are interested in reading . They have cheaping records as well. [Inaudible] Some reports the project required several people to be on site, which didn't happen so theying. Suzanne wrote you have students work on projects at home. Anything that -- anything that required in-person was delayed . It is a question of what would take place. Jennifer writes I need to -- [Inaudible]

we have a really large storage facility facility. So a couple times have noted that the lack of work study student -- that makes perfect sense . We rolled out just before COVID so it was a good time to get familiar with that process. We postponed all of our programs . Delays with respect to cat dogging. And forced to do other duties. Lack of volunteers forced us to slow down on some things. With all of the reading projects there are a couple of comments on the projects, which given the same time it makes perfect sense. My apologies if I missed a few. It is a good time for the projects, the regional since we are working remotely. [Inaudible] Almost all projects were delayed or canceled. Working from home. Access to the system, so we have been cataloging. Remote staff. Everything is a flood plane eventually. Alicia writes a lot of our projects were postponed, but they have taken a lot longer to accomplish, and would not have -- [Inaudible] So it sounds like a wide range, both from the poll and from the comments that depending upon the institution, some have been able to and others have been sidelined. The poll, I wish I had made a comment about academic and public library, how the institutional level, the different type of institutional levels responded as well. A lot of reading. [Inaudible] I have a few more minutes before our next section . If there respect comments and questions put them in the chat and we will circle back to it.

thank you, Rick.

and in this discussion area we're going to be talking about staff and some of you have touched on staff in some of these other chenets, and we're going to start out with a poll. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected staffing levels in your library and this is a vehicle all that apply, a, reduction of work hours, B., furloughs, C, lay offs, D., hiring freeze, E., loss of vacant positions, F., retirements and, G., staffing levels have not changed. How is it going in your library with the staffing. And remember, this is a check all that apply. A few more seconds to get your tallies in there on the poll. I feel like I need that for the final hour hour. It seems to be taking a little long to get those results back. There we go. '31 indication a reduction in work hours. Lay offs, 20. A high of 87 for hiring freezes. And 70 libraries have lost vacant positions. Oh, my gosh. And a lot of retirements happening. And the lucky 66 libraries that have not had any staffing levels change. Interesting. Our third question then is how are you or your library responding to changes in staffing levels? Are the changes temporary? Are the changes part of a permanent plan? And how are you managing with all of the changes that are going on? Some of our retirements come by furlough. A lot of these are time dependent. First and then reduced hours and then back and retirement. Kind of a up-and-down situation. We did get to hire a couple of new librarians. Very good!

need to add a question. Do you know if it will be a temporary or permanent? Do you know, Jenny?

some faculty hiring has resumed. Mitigate the changes. Rick says we'll really need to justify the need. We have had mixed success . Chad, we're staggered schedule now. Changes like we talked about earlier. Kate says we're hoping to be able to replace retirement. Please, I'm covering her duties. Good luck with

that, Kate. I hope you get your position. Circulation department is severely under staffed, says Lisa, while the rest of the entire library, with the exception of government departments department, works from home, the majority of the time. Morale challenges. Yes, indeed. Anytime you have staffing changes like this, there are always going to be morale issues there as well. Valerie says our university offered retirement incentives last year to replace the one person from my department who left. That is always good news when you get to hire back a vacant position. Elizabeth says the new faculty, a change. Is that a change, Elizabeth Elizabeth?

yes, it is a change, okay.

Mary says she has lost assistants, funding was cut. Administration is taking the opportunity to relook at open positions, evaluating them. So most of the staff is working from home.

and I retired during the pandemic. Our systems librarian detired and we struggle to film that role. Furloughs were due Tom budget as well, so it wasn't just the pandemic. Okay.

Alicia, we're looking at reorganization, which my library had already been thinking about, but it is more important to realign with less staff. Andrea, all library staff have been able to keep their scheduled hours that is good news. We have a rotation of a number of staff at certain times. Staffing levels have not changed. Still the same staff. Very good.

we hope to get back good. And resignation happened quite a bit due to the staff morale. A few days, a few months at a time, the changes there. Morale issues there.

Jenny says the union agreement has within a blessing right now. It will mean many retirements next year. Jenny is in a union.

our library did a reorganization of positions and staff as well, though we have mixed feelings about things. Reorganization can do that. Simon, it is not for the rescue plan, my city public library. Our public library is only allowing internal, no new hirings. You have to get approval for anyone who needs hiring. Quite a few people have retired in the last few months in various departments.

and Nate says it is likely our student I budget will be permanently lowered. Patricia, our library has lost the head of technical services and the head of public services and five out of -- [No audio] Lots of things going on here. We have some good news in some places and not so good news in other places. We shifted staff around to fill the shortages.

and two more in January to cover retirement. Move to asis at that particular time personnel when we return. Hopefully by July. City buildings and other city departments. All different job responsibilities. Margaret says our educational technologist has retired. We have had retirements, too and we have been lucky enough to put positions on the board and happy people have been able to fill those positions. Elizabeth says hiring in our library, down three and a half, down reference hours. For the first time in years I have to work the evening shift. I postponed retirement for a year. Miles says staff was temporarily furloughed. And they are hiring positions that have been open. That is good news. And -- I didn't see any questions to address. It is really interesting information about staffing levels. Lots of changes over the next while. Jenny. Oh, Jenny can't hear because it is raining. Jenny? I'll try to talk louder. I hope you can hear me, Jenny. And Kat, we have been lucky thus far at the university of Washington, but I think for all of the depositories and student hours it is significant. Yeah, I can certainly

understand that. I was lost student assistants as well. Yvonne, retirement positions have not been filled, and some may not be. Staff responsibilities are shifting . It sounds like positions will be filled. Tom, it is not just COVID. For many public libraries some of these conditions began in 2008 and have been with us ever since. The current environment exacerbated the situation. The situation that was just under the surface there. Jenny says why do deficits trickle down over several years, but never the money. Okay. Rhetorical question.

Selena, I have been able to use a retirement to keep my hire former student employ on contract. I am hoping to make that position permanent. I hope you are able to do that, Selena. Deborah, one good thing is that our student assistant budget was mostly unspent, so we're able to buy some big ticket items.

realignment of money.

let me go back up and see if I missed anything.

and we are waiting a decision about a restructuring process for our university. We might rose a few staff positions. So that is at the university level and not the library level. So the effects are trickling down into the library. Okay.

Amy, starting next year, all state employees will have mandatory furlough days.

okay. It is starting to flow up a little bit, so I'm going to pass on the -- pass on the ball to Alicia. Thank you all for your staffing comments. I appreciate it!

okay. So I have the last main section here where we're going to focus on any kind of backlog you have, publications and otherwise and more libraries are opening and with vaccinations rolling out, we're able to go back, and hopefully sooner for system of this work that we haven't been able to get done. And I know there is still a lot to catch up on. And one of the things that we have been thinking about throughout the pandemic when libraries are closed, so our first poll is getting an idea of how many of you have shipments. So the poll question is what types of depository shipments have you resumed for your library? Select all that apply. So a, regular shipments of paper and separates. B., maps, C., microfiche. D., have not resumed shipments or, E., do not ref tangible depository materials. [Captions transitioning]

Yeah, I wonder if that we did not get entered into the polling system as select all that applies. So, if you want to enter in the chat, we can see it that way. Okay, I am sure because of that issue, we have regular shipments and I am guessing most of you could have separate maps in a smaller amount. I'm guessing if you are getting regular shipments that you are likely getting those other ones. It looks like several libraries responded that they have not gotten shipments. Hopefully your backlog isn't too terrible. For some reason, my chat is not open and I don't know why. Okay, some people in the chat have been able to say and some people just don't get maps. Okay, we will go to the next polling question. What types of backlog are you experiencing at your library? Fiche team processing new material B. shelving C. processing offers to your regional or D. Regional processing of offers less. You can check all that applies. Okay, the results are in and it looks like the high number, 67 of you have backlog processing new material. That is our guess that it would be the biggest backlog and followed closely by shelving. Those are pretty close and 37 said regional and offers list. So, let's get to the chat here. Actually, we should go to the actual question if you want to advance the slide. How are you handling this backlog with other

types of work that has been backing up and what issues have you been experiencing with gov docs related work? Okay, getting to the chat, William says helping ease back into the shipments. It can be quite a shock to get back to your library and have a lot to deal with, for sure. Dan says shipping list. Simon says coordinator with the boxes that resume. A lot of us are coming back with all the mail to go through in the various boxes and other types of material and not just gov docs but if it is altogether and you are having to sort through it, it can be really overwhelming and not fun to sort through. We do not currently have a backlog. That is wonderful to hear. That is one thing that we found. We resumed shipments last fall and it has mostly been waiting for the records to get loaded with our vendor on that. By and large, that part of material has been good. Library has been fully open since August and we have been able to keep up. That is also great to hear. Victor also says no backlogs. Okay. Simon, I am having major issues trying to get separate GPL.

Hopefully, someone from GPO can help you on that. Leslie says there are materials for six days. I am guessing that is part of your shelving. That is something we are talking about with my library. To come back to campus, that based on the guidelines and information that we have now about how COVID is touching books and that sort of thing, we will probably go to know quarantining time at least for books with other types of media equipment being possibly different. That will hopefully help with the shelving and processing backlog. Jenny says not speaking for any particular library but it is hard to process when staffers are still partially remote. Most definitely. If you rely on workers to help with that, you can get schedules and all that. Kathy says the processing materials that GPO is sending to catch us up. Mary Beth, having a backlog with receiving shipments, not able to deal with new materials at all. Yes, being remote is a big part of this. As we get back, there will be other things where reopening, I am sure a lot of you wear many hats and we have to look at what the priorities are. Suzanne says no backlogs. That definitely helps. Scott says you can cut back up. Great. I am really happy to see that people don't have backlogs and they are ready to go. That is wonderful. I think we all just have to work through this time. Teresa says planning on catching up this summer. We are still scheduled for in person. I think a lot of us as looking at this summer as the last chance to really get a lot done or at least thinking with the academic schedule. I think we are looking at the summer as trying to get things a bit more up to snuff before we go into the fall. Dan says no backlog but waiting for shipping lists. Beth says all of my department staff are working remotely and processing boxes. Yeah, it is tough. I think we have all had some hiccups in our workload. Vicki says no backlog and that is great. Hopefully, some things can be done remotely and that helps. No backlog receiving materials. Yes, that is great. That was very fortuitous timing. Renée says we just started from the download. Yes, migrations are never fun. Especially when you are in a pandemic, [Laughing]. Kathy says no backlog. I am sure they will have shipments earlier and have more time to get back up.

Injure says cannot submit to the region as they are not open. I asked about this in one of the earlier questions because I can see this being problematic and we have struggled with this because while our students are working with one staff member on-site who is coordinating all of the student work, the main person in charge is remote. It has been trying to translate our work through another staff member that oversees the students and that has been hard. We have been able to get it done but it is difficult. Rick says materials are increasing documents to process. That makes a lot of sense and I bet that helped a lot. Burt said I have to accept the processing shells. Let's see, some people are able to return throughout COVID and get shipping back and done twice. James says a lot has piled up and in the library once a week. Some people are even helping through the day. That is great. It is great to have help from individuals through the backlog. Renée says my staff has boxes home to process. As a region, we are not able to review as quickly as we would like to. Yes, it is just hard to get into the stats too. Mary says pulling materials for withdraw, I remind myself that you can eat an elephant just one bite at a time.

That is the only way. You are getting fairly caught up. Is great to hear. Working on a hybrid schedule and finding time to shelve. We are seeing now lot throughout here with shelving and not enough students to get that work. It sounds like some people are trying to make lists of offers so that it is ready to go. Jennifer says no backlog and that is wonderful. No gov.student worker. Vicki says the only real backlog is due to the major influx of change. The last six months we see 50,000 records in all of that that you have to do. The cataloging staff is unable to get access to the ILS. That is a pretty big deal. A lot of that work is on-site so that is wonderful. Debra says staff member communion with no student shelters. It seems like the way you have been prioritizing makes sense. Shelving will happen. Hopefully you will have more student staff back. Kevin says sees the opportunity to learn other aspects of the processing while things are scarce. You have seen the positive side of things. Okay, I am just looking through here and there are a lot more comments. It looks like we only have about two minutes. Okay, Kate said we switched last summer when a lot of people were furloughed and I'm glad we were able to switch things around until things were under control. Ronnie says I believe we shifted funds from the digital collection to physically process. There is always a pro con there. We have been finding that as we are moving towards electronics at there is still a lot of staff time in other ways that we are having to put in time to research for all sorts of things. Okay. So, we have a minute left. You can see if there are other ones that I did not mention. Overall, it sounds like some of you don't have any backlogs which is really awesome. Hopefully, you are able to put some time and effort into some projects that you have not been able to get to. I can't remember if that was wills question or Rick's question but once you get caught up, it is nice to focus on some of the other projects and that can be really helpful in some ways. Okay, I think we will wrap it up here. Thank you all for your amazing participation in the chat. We have so much great information to go back to and to look at the areas we need to focus on. All of that will be really great. Thank you so much for your attention today. After this, we are moving to the LSCM update.