Reimagining the **Built Environment** of Public Libraries in the time of **COVID-19**

Highlights from the CULC/CBUC Toolkit

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Working Group Members

- **Terry Gallagher, Senior Manager, Facilities and Finance**
  Halifax Public Libraries

- **Amanda Fullerton, Manager, Service Design**
  Halifax Public Libraries

- **Lisa Hardy, Facilities Design Lead**
  Calgary Public Library

- **Rosemary Bonanno, Executive Director**
  Vancouver Island Regional Library

- **Åsa Kachan, Chief Librarian & CEO**
  Halifax Public Libraries

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Background

The Toolkit is not a document where you will find all the answers, as the science and practice of COVID-19 response is changing, and the "right answer" might look different from one jurisdiction to another, and from one space to another.

Goals:
- Practical, timely and accessible
- Be relevant to the widest possible audience of Canadian public libraries
- Ask the right questions and consider all issues
- Share innovative responses

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Guiding Principles

- Health and safety
- Inclusion and accessibility
- Role technology plays in our society and in our libraries
- Supporting community members in participating in the economy
- Providing access to information and knowledge
- Promoting community connection and engagement
- Exemplifying strong, public organizations working in diverse remote, rural, and urban communities across the country and committed to Reconciliation, environmental sustainability, innovation, partnership, and responsible financial stewardship

Toolkit Overview

In our analysis of considerations we need to make within the **Built Environment**, we mean:

- Capacity and Layout
- Building Systems
- Furniture and Finishes
- Technology
- Moving through and interacting within the space

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Key Considerations

- Capacity and Layout
  - How do we apply social distancing and keep people safe in a variety of spaces?
  - What's the decision making process for making changes in libraries including those that are co-located?
  - Are there areas of the library that should be high priority?
  - Are their new tasks (like quarantining materials) that will need dedicated space?

Key Considerations

- Building Systems
  - How does the library ensure good airflow?
  - Are AMH machines preferable to staff handling material?
  - What changes might need to be made to existing service contracts?

Key Considerations

- Furniture and Finishes
  - Which surfaces and finishes are most susceptible to contamination and how long does the virus live?
  - Which surfaces are highest touch within our spaces?
  - Can automation reduce the amount of touch on faucets, self-checkouts, etc?
  - Are their new tasks (like quarantining materials) that will need dedicated space?

Key Considerations

- Moving through and interacting in our spaces
  - How do we manage number and positioning of people?
  - What problems do elevators, escalators and stairs pose?
  - Can you separate entrances from exits?
  - Do emergency evacuation procedures need to change?
  - What about children's areas?
  - What about staff areas?
  - Stacks? Food? Handwashing?
  - Procuring plexiglass? peel and stick footprints? signage?
  - Designated hours for vulnerable people? Outdoor Spaces?

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Best and Leading Practices

We explored these issues through 4 phases of building use:

1. Staff only
2. Staff with distribution of materials out to the community
3. Staff with limited public interaction and materials in and out
4. Staff with full public access

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- Social distancing guidelines will limit capacity and physical layout

- Occupancy load will need to pay attention to functional areas and will be different depending on furniture and equipment

- Furniture and equipment will likely need to be moved out or relocated.

- Think of your space design as evolutionary

- Watch both staff and the public as they adjust to new layouts and check social cues around distancing – are people moving the way you thought they would?

Best and Leading Practices
Building Systems

- Maximize the air quality in buildings

- Increase the percentage of outside air

- Replace air filters frequently

- Keep the ventilation system working beyond open hours

- Open exterior windows

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- Look to health care for the best advice in furniture materials
- Choose upholstery that is stain resistant and has antimicrobial protection and fluid barrier
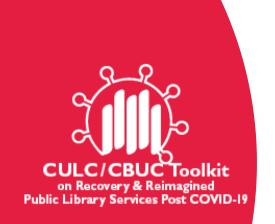- Hard, non-porous surfaces are generally easier to disinfect than soft and porous

- Focus cleaning on the high touch surfaces: chair arms, chair backs and study table surfaces
- Affix notices to each chair and seek public health in disinfecting touchpoints

Best and Leading Practices
Cleaning

Phase 1 & 2

Staff only and staff with distribution out

1. Have easy access to handwashing with soap and paper towel
2. Prioritize cleaning high touch surfaces
3. Choose a product that both cleans and disinfects
4. Create a cleaning procedure and make sure it's followed

Best and Leading Practices
Cleaning

Phase 3 & 4

Staff with limited public contact and full public contact

1. Identify optimal locations for additional hygiene stations
2. Reduce clutter to allow for easier cleaning
3. Review customer paths through the space to create cleaning checklist
4. Outdoor areas should be clean, but do not generally require disinfecting

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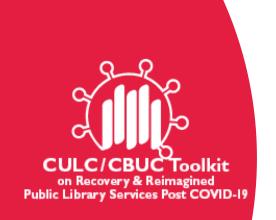Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada

Best and Leading Practices Technology can reduce risk

- Automated materials handling machines reduce touching

- Retrofit doors to open automatically

- Identify opportunities for automated devices (hand sanitizer dispensers, taps, toilets, etc.)

- Encourage use of self-checks or mobile checkouts and configure machines to minimize touchscreen interactions.

- Enable tap for debit or credit

- Discourage use of cash and consider waiving all fines and fees. Override copier charges to enable free copying and printing

Best and Leading Practices
Moving Through the Space

Phase 1 & 2

Staff only and staff with distribution out

1. Determine how staff will enter and exit the building
2. Reorganize space to achieve physical distancing
3. Assign specific work spaces for each employee
4. Determine paths of travel
5. Create a cleaning procedure and ensure staff follow it
6. Handwashing stations

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Best and Leading Practices
Moving Through the Space

Phase 3 & 4

Staff with limited public contact and full public contact

1. Have staff enter and exit the building separate from the public
2. Designate "in" and "out" doors
3. Set up queueing space
4. Consider using contact tracing apps
5. Create a cleaning procedure and ensure staff follow it
6. Handwashing/sanitizing stations – more than just existing washrooms

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Best and Leading Practices
Moving Through the Space

Phase 3 & 4 (cont.)

Staff with limited public contact and full public contact

1. Monitor space use and consider scheduling specific areas for type of occupancy (i.e. expand teen area after school)
2. Implement occupancy limits for elevators and consider an elevator attendant
3. Promote use of stairs with signage on how to safely pass
4. Review emergency evacuation procedures
5. Make use of outdoor space

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Best and Leading Practices
Moving Through the Space

Phase 1 & 2

Staff only and staff with distribution out

1. Determine how staff will enter and exit the building
2. Reorganize space to achieve physical distancing
3. Assign specific work spaces for each employee
4. Determine paths of travel
5. Create a cleaning procedure and ensure staff follow it
6. Encourage a culture of hygiene and social distancing
7. Handwashing!

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Best and Leading Practices
Interacting Within the Space

Phase 3 & 4

Staff with limited public and full public contact

1. Stacks should be access in a single direction
2. Reconfigure service desks for fewer staff
3. Reduce the reasons for close transactions
4. Try to eliminate self-serve areas – shared headphones, hand-outs etc.
5. Reduce meeting room capacity and limit public gathering
6. Where face-to face is required, consider adding a plexiglass barrier

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Best and Leading Practices
Interacting Within the Space

Phase 3 & 4 (cont.)

Staff with limited public and full public contact

1. Provide garbage receptacles so the public can dispose of their own garbage

2. If food and drink is allowed, encourage washing of food

3. Water filling stations are safe, but let the water run first

4. Consider special hours for vulnerable populations – preferably immediately after deep cleaning

5. Consider extending hours to accommodate lower capacity

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Best and Leading Practices
Children's Areas

Phase 3 Public in the building with limited access

1. Remove and store toys, play materials and loose parts

2. Close or limit access to fixed play structures

3. Collect loose books in the are and follow return procedures

4. Arrange seating and table to allow for physical distancing

5. Online program delivery in lieu of in person

6. Consider all surfaces high touch, with frequent cleaning

Best and Leading Practices
Children's Areas

Phase 4 Public in building with full access

1. Allow access to toys, following local guidelines and schools

2. Keep only enough toys for individual play and remove and clean after use

3. Sensory tables and materials like Play-Doh and Sand are not recommended

4. Consider all surfaces high touch, with frequent cleaning

More Resources

Retail Council of Canada
Technology and Furniture Vendors
Government of Canada
WHO
CDC
Restaurants Canada
Cushman Wakefield
Public Health
Building Managers and Owners Association (BOMA)

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