

Oshkosh Public Library Highlights April 2020

As the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic and our state feels the impact of living under quarantine, Oshkosh Public Library has found creative ways to serve our patrons and our community. The library building is closed to the public, but our staff is still here to help our community with information resources and services for reading, learning and entertainment.

1. When the library closed, OPL and the Winnefox Library System quickly took steps to ensure that the status of library materials and patron accounts not be a concern for library users. Due dates have been extended, library cards will not expire, fines won't be assessed and holds were suspended until curbside pickup service began.
2. Information services have continued without interruption throughout the library closure. Staff take questions via phone and email during regular library hours and a new online chat service has been implemented to give the public an additional way to contact the library.
3. Our digital resources are being heavily promoted and access has been expanded. The requirements for getting a library card online were relaxed to allow new patrons quick access to online offerings. We increased the borrowing limit for Hoopla from five to 10 items per month. Vendors have stepped up as well: Hoopla added Bonus Borrows – more than 1,000 items that don't count against a patron's monthly borrowing limit; Ancestry now allows at-home use; and Newspaper ARCHIVE has allowed access to its entire collection.
4. Staff have taken library programs online to continue to offer rich literacy and learning opportunities. Taped and live storytimes, Wonderlab, the return of Anytime Book Club for adults, and a new local history feature, Librarian Learns, are all allowing staff to connect with patrons in a new way.
5. The library recently launched an Instagram account, to offer the community another way to connect at a time when they can't visit our physical space. The image-driven platform offers a different way to experience the library – to not only see what's happening at OPL but also engage with content that reflects the library's values, offers a sense of community and fosters connections among users.
6. Since the City of Oshkosh declared a State of Emergency in March, the library has worked in partnership with other city departments to serve the community in some unexpected ways:
 - Using OPL's 3D printer and two others borrowed from Fond du Lac Public Library, staff made 200 face shields for the Oshkosh Fire Department.
 - Staff helped to process absentee ballots at City Hall and staffed the library polling place on Election Day.
 - OPL librarians continue to provide research assistance for the Emergency Operations Center and our Marketing Coordinator was part of the EOC's Joint Information Committee.

7. On Fri., April 24, the library began providing scheduled curbside pickup of library materials, which was allowed in the most recent revision of the state's Safer at Home order. Patrons place items on hold and once the items are available, a time is scheduled for pickup in the library parking lot. Precautions were built into the service to make it safe for both staff and patrons. The community has responded enthusiastically to the prospect of being able to check out library materials again.