

Area libraries continue to serve communities during the pandemic

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As the COVID-19 pandemic regulations begin to change once again local libraries find new and creative ways to serve their communities.

At the Hastings Highlands Public Library, they have just announced their initial reopening plan. They are officially open to the public as of Monday, Sept. 28 with new operating hours.

These hours include Mondays from 11 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. During these hours library patrons will be able to use the library computers and browse through the stacks of books. The computers will be able to be booked for 30 minute time periods which will allow staff to clean in between uses. Those interested in reserving a computer are asked to call the library at 613-338-2262 or email hhplcurbside@gmail.com.

Curbside pickup of books, audio books and other library resources are available Mondays through Fridays. This service started in May and since then the library has had over 160 pickups. To book a time to do a curbside pick up call the library at 613-338-2262 or email hhplcurbside@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page.

In between each pickup or visitor to the library the staff are following an extensive list of sanitary measures that they created to insure the safety of their patrons. Those visiting, either for curbside pickup or entering the library to browse the shelves themselves, will be required to wear a mask.

Those visiting the library will be asked to maintain physical distancing and to use the hand sanitizer provided. There is also a maximum capacity of 10 patrons in the library at one time. To ensure that all safety practices are followed all individuals under the age of 16 need to be accompanied by an adult at all times.

The HHPL staff says, "We are looking forward to seeing all of our patrons again! We have continued receiving our monthly orders of new books, so we have a good supply of current materials for your use. Welcome back!?"

The North Hastings Public Library is also open to the public, by appointment. The library staff have to limit the number of people in the building at one time so they are booking the spaces available.

This is both for browsing for books and using the library computers. The library is open the same hours as before the pandemic. However some of that time has been slated for cleaning the library as per Hastings Prince Edward Public Health recommendations. The NHPL now has shopping baskets for browsers. This allows for minimal contact and any books removed from the shelves during browsing, and the shopping baskets, are sanitized before being re-shelved for the next patron. Any borrowed materials from the library is quarantined and sanitized before they are re-shelved to be borrowed again.

It is not just books that the NHPL is allowing patrons to borrow from the library. NHPL CEO KIM McMunn says, "We have our Experiential [tactile] Learning collection now available for borrowing. It's full of puzzles and games with a STEAM learning theme. As with our other lending materials, all returning activities will be quarantined upon return."

The NHPL has also recently hired Emma Dafoe as a summer student. She will be promoting the Experiential Learning Collection this fall and running the library's Instagram Book Club. The Experiential Learning Collection is based on the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math Program. New items will be added to the collection at random intervals so that there is always something new for at home learners to do.

Those interested in visiting NHPL or would like more information on the Experiential Learning Collection are asked to call the library at 613-332-3380 or email nhpl.customerservice@gmail.com or visit their Facebook Page.

?We have created temporary safety barriers to get us up and running; and will be looking at how a revised floor plan would improve library service. We will also need to accommodate the growth of the new Experiential Learning Collection, so lots of changes are forthcoming. We should also mention our plans to expand our presence through social media. Watch for our Instagram Book Club, and Pinterest is also on the horizon. These are exciting times for the library, and we are embracing the opportunities to stay engaged with our extended community,? says McMunn.

Those entering the library will be required to wear a mask but curbside pickup is still available for those unable to wear a mask.

The Wollaston Library has been open to the public and running under a new operating policy since July 30.

Booking an appointment to visit the library for curbside pickup is possible by calling 613-337-5183.

Those who are looking for something new to read can contact the librarian by phone or by email through the website www.wollastonpubliclibrary.ca.

The library also has an online catalog full of its latest books and DVDs and staff are able to put items on hold for pick up. E-books and audio books are also available for downloading. Area libraries are continuously working through the ever changing COVID-19 regulations to serve their patrons. More information on services offered by local libraries can be gotten by calling a local library and talking with staff who are willing to help with all reading needs.