

News from New Brunswick

News from New Brunswick Public Library Service

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Reopening

All public libraries closed on March 17th due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Libraries began to reopen with limited open hours to offer in person circulation (i.e. limited browsing, checkout, and return of materials) on May 25th, and all libraries in the province were open by mid June, including Library Service by Mail. Interlibrary loan service resumed in August. New Brunswick was the first province in Canada to have all of its public libraries reopen.

During the shutdown, New Brunswick public libraries maintained services by supplementing digital collections and electronic resources. They also offered reference service by email via the “Have a Question?” link on our website, and fulfilled requests for library cards received online.

Some staff were redeployed to other areas of government to support response to the pandemic. For instance, some library staff worked in a Red Cross call centre, processing applications for the NB government’s Workers Emergency Income Benefit. Others have been working in hospitals as screeners. No staff members were laid off.

In June, NBPLS launched its first-ever “virtual” Summer Reading Club. Children registered and submitted their reading progress online. Staff created online story times and other programs that children could watch via NBPLS’ YouTube Channel.

Protocols for offering computers for public use were issued in July and libraries began restoring access to computers as a priority at that time. Most public libraries now offer at least one computer for public use while a few will need to install additional barriers to help ensure physical distancing.

As of September 3rd, COVID-19 protocols are in place to resume other services such as in-person programming and access to meeting rooms and general reading/seating areas. Libraries are working to restore services as resources and local logistics permit.