



THE ASSOCIATION FOR
RURAL & SMALL
LIBRARIES

“The Voice of Small
& Rural Libraries”

*To provide a network
of people and
materials to support
rural and small library
staff, volunteers,
and trustees to
integrate the library
thoroughly with
the life and work of the
community
it serves.*

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Dear library leaders and governing bodies,

The Board of Directors for the national Association for Rural and Small Libraries [ARSL] supports the safety and well-being of library workers and the small and rural communities we serve. In order to best protect library workers and our communities from exposure to COVID-19, we strongly recommend that small and rural libraries, their trustees, and their governing bodies consider closing library buildings to the public and only reopen when guidance from public health officials indicates the risk from COVID-19 has significantly subsided.

This is a difficult recommendation to put forth as we recognize that in some cases, small and rural libraries are the only means for residents to access government and utility resources in their respective communities. Service and stewardship to our communities are core to our profession, and many small and rural libraries have advocated hard for funding for these services for that very reason. We are often the only institutions to remain open during times of crisis.

Regardless, the health of library workers and the communities we serve is of utmost importance. Libraries are, by design, unable to practice social distancing and disinfecting to the degree recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health authorities. Keeping libraries open at this time has the potential to harm our communities far more than help. By closing libraries, we understand that lives may be saved.

Although closing a library may be a local decision, we urge library administrators, boards, and governments to close library facilities until such time as library workers and visitors are no longer at risk of contracting or spreading the COVID-19 coronavirus. Additionally, and in alignment with the American Library Association’s Allied Professional Association, we encourage libraries to ensure that all library workers receive paid leave, including health coverage, while libraries are closed.

ARSL Board members are facing many of the same challenges and difficult decisions for our libraries that you are facing for yours. Our organization remains committed to supporting library workers and the communities we serve during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

[ARSL Board of Directors](#)