The American Library Association (ALA) Executive Board released this statement in support of libraries and library workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The ALA Executive Board unequivocally stands in support of the safety and well-being of library workers and the communities we serve. To protect library workers and their communities from exposure to COVID-19 in these unprecedented times, we strongly recommend that academic, public and school library leaders and their trustees and governing bodies evaluate closing libraries to the public and only reopening when guidance from public health officials indicates the risk from COVID-19 has significantly subsided.

It is very difficult for us to put forward this recommendation. Libraries pride themselves on being there during critical times for our communities. We are often the only institutions to remain open during times of crisis. Service and stewardship to our communities are core to our profession.

We have weighed the situation of our country and what has happened in other countries around the world. The health of our library workers and the communities we serve is of utmost and equal importance. Libraries are by design unable to practice social distancing 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 communities more than help. We underscore the importance and need to come together in this crisis and commit to ensuring our libraries, which provide so many important services to our communities, do not serve as vectors for a fast-moving pandemic.

Libraries are responding creatively and proactively to this crisis. School libraries in many states have closed along with schools and many have plans to provide online classes to students. Public libraries are making virtual resources available and considering other ways they can help during the crisis. Academic libraries are providing online services and access to resources. All libraries are working with their school administrators, governments, boards, and university administrations to determine critical services and closures following local directives.

Additionally, and in alignment with our companion organization, the ALA Allied Professional Association (APA), we encourage libraries to ensure that all library workers receive fully paid leave, including health coverage, while libraries are closed.

Although closing a library is a local decision, we urge library administrators, local boards and governments to close library facilities until such time as library workers and our communities are no longer at risk of contracting or spreading the COVID-19 coronavirus.

The ALA Executive Board is committed to supporting our library workers, ALA members, and the communities we serve during these challenging and uncertain times.

For more information about ALA resources on COVID-19, visit our Pandemic Preparedness page.