



# HANDLING MATERIALS DURING COVID-19

This guide is a resource for the current best practices on handling materials in the safest manner during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Maryland State Library Resource Center**  
**Enoch Pratt Free Library**

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The Maryland State Library Resource Center and Enoch Pratt Free Library is committed to the safety of our staff, customers, and state partners. The following best practices are in accordance with the most current and credible resources available and will be updated as state and local guidelines change.

## **SAFETY PRACTICES**

Practice handwashing after handling returned materials (e.g. book drop returns, over-the counter returns, internal material deliveries, etc.).

Using gloves while completing tasks like emptying book drops and delivery totes is not necessary if hands are properly washed after handling. Staff who prefer to use gloves must be mindful to use and remove them properly. Be sure to avoid face touching while wearing gloves. Hands should be washed immediately after removing gloves.

Please wear face coverings while handling materials. Surgical grade masks are not required - a proper face covering must cover the nose and mouth, and ideally homemade coverings are thick enough that sunlight does not easily filter through.

Continue practicing social distancing of at least 6 feet while working with staff and customers alike.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS + GENERAL PRACTICES**

The presence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been tested on various library materials through the REALM ([REOpening Archives, Libraries, and Museums](#)) Project. The Project does not provide recommendations for quarantine periods.

Based on updated guidance from the CDC, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has indicated that Libraries may discontinue quarantining of materials.

Library materials should be handled and circulated in ways that reduce risk to both staff and patrons, even when the risk of infection due to handling these materials is felt to be low. Viral particles on surfaces will eventually die, but even if they are present, it is possible to prevent infection after touching the surface by thoroughly washing or sanitizing one's hands. MDH recommends the following actions that libraries can take to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. These recommendations should not substitute for wearing facial coverings and social

distancing of at least 6 feet in the facility.

- Employees should wash or sanitize their hands after handling materials. Generally, if hands are washed or sanitized after handling materials, gloves are not necessary for infection prevention purposes. Care should always be taken to wash or sanitize the hands prior to touching the face (especially eyes, nose and mouth) or eating.
- MDH does not recommend applying disinfectant to circulating materials.
- Newly acquired materials do not need to be quarantined upon delivery before being placed in general circulation. Materials donated by the general public should follow the same standards as returned library materials for quarantine.
- Library staff who are reshelving materials should wash their hands after handling returned materials. Materials in the stacks or shelves do not need to be quarantined after being handled by a library patron and returned to the shelf.
- Hand sanitizer should be provided at the entrance and throughout the facility.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/ARTICLES

- [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) (CDC)
- [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#) (EPA)
- [Use of Cloth Face Coverings](#) (CDC)
- [How to Remove Gloves](#) (CDC)
- [Handwashing](#) (CDC)