



# 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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## **SAFETY FIRST**

Please be sure to use gloves at all times while handling incoming material for safety. Make sure you don't touch your face while having gloves on. Wash your hands shortly after removing gloves. Continue practicing social distancing when working with others.

At this time, please handle materials using the same caution - items from the book drop and deliveries should be treated the same. A separate procedure for new items from vendors was incorporated in this guide to account for processing workflow.

## **RETURNED MATERIAL - QUARANTINE PROCEDURE**

1. Establish a quarantine area for returned materials and ensure staff know where it is located to avoid contact.
2. Put on gloves. Prepare a slip for the cart for incoming materials, noting the date and time. Add additional signage to the cart as needed so that staff do not accidentally handle the material.
3. Retrieve materials from the book drop. Place items on the cart.
4. Avoid contact with door handles and other contact points after you've touched materials. Move the cart to the identified quarantine area.
5. Remove gloves and promptly wash your hands.
6. After items have been on the cart for a minimum of 48 hours, you can return the items in your ILS and shelve them as normal.

In lab testing, the presence of the virus is gone after 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel and 24 hours on cardboard.<sup>1</sup> The CDC is less worried about transmission from porous surfaces (paper items) and a quarantine of library materials (including materials with plastic covers) of 48 hours is sufficient.<sup>2</sup>

If you do not have enough space to quarantine carts in your workroom, you can use bags to contain the items for 48 hours.<sup>3</sup> Some libraries are using their meeting and study rooms in the interim.

## **NEW MATERIAL - QUARANTINE PROCEDURE**

1. Establish a quarantine area for your incoming materials from vendors and ensure staff know where it is located to avoid contact.
2. Put on gloves. Prepare a slip for the cart for new materials, noting the date and

time. Add additional signage to the cart as needed so that staff do not accidentally handle the material.

3. Unbox materials from your shipment. Place items on the cart.
4. Recycle or throw away the cardboard box. Since the virus can live on cardboard for up to 24 hours, staff emptying recycle bins or trash cans should take precaution and wear gloves when handling collection and disposal.
5. Avoid contact with door handles and other contact points after you've touched cardboard and the new materials. Move the cart to the identified quarantine area for new materials.
6. Remove gloves and promptly wash your hands.
7. After new items have been on the cart for a minimum of 48 hours, you can process and shelve them as normal.

## SANITIZING MATERIALS

At this time, quarantining items has been the most recommended action for handling incoming library materials. Disinfectant wipes or liquid disinfectants may damage books.<sup>4</sup>

Harder surfaces like plastic DVD cases are a more appropriate use of EPA-approved disinfectants if you suspect the item has been compromised, but quarantining for 48 hours is also acceptable.<sup>2</sup> “There is very little research on the effects of medically effective sterilization and sanitization measures on the condition of library materials, another reason to favor quarantine.” - Jacob Nadal, Director for Preservation, The Library of Congress<sup>4</sup>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/ARTICLES

[Handling Library Materials and Collections During a Pandemic](#) (ALA)

[Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) (CDC)

[Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#) (EPA)

Webinar - [Mitigating COVID-19 When Managing Paper-Based, Circulating, and Other Types of Collections](#) (IMLS)

[Recommendations for Disinfecting Books](#) (Northeast Document Conservation Center)

[Coronavirus Can Live For A Long Time In Air, On Surfaces](#) (NPR)

[How long does coronavirus live on different surfaces?](#) (The Guardian)

## REFERENCES

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3. Disinfecting circulating books. (2020). Retrieved from [http://www.ala.org/alcts/sites/ala.org.alcts/files/content/UPDATE\\_NEDCC%20recommendations%20for%20disinfecting%20books\\_Mar2020-converted.pdf](http://www.ala.org/alcts/sites/ala.org.alcts/files/content/UPDATE_NEDCC%20recommendations%20for%20disinfecting%20books_Mar2020-converted.pdf)
4. Nadal, J. (2020, March 25). [Electronic mailing list message]. Retrieved from <https://archive.mail-list.com/ulc-collections>