Public Libraries in Europe and COVID-19: Findings from NAPLE Members, April 2020

Background

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) began to lead to closures of library buildings to the public at the start of March 2020. The following document summarises the measures taken in response to the virus by public libraries in 20 NAPLE member countries to date[1], with specific focus on the extent of closures across Europe; the engagement of staff during closures; services offered to the public (both physical and online) while buildings were closed; quarantining of books and other health and safety measures; efforts by libraries to support national healthcare initiatives; and library efforts to address misinformation about the COVID-19 virus.

The information contained in this report is based on responses from NAPLE members submitted to a shared spreadsheet between March 20th and April 24th 2020. As such it should be seen as a snapshot of this period.

Executive Summary

At the time of writing, most public libraries around Europe are closed to the public until further notice. Some libraries are offering reduced or alternative services for the lending of physical library materials until full services resume, though generally the focus is on online services and digital content.

The staff in many public libraries around Europe are working remotely during closures. In countries where library staff need to work from their office or library, it is noted that provisions are in place (e.g. anti-bacterial gel is provided, staff work in shifts to allow for physical distancing). There are several reports of staff being redeployed to assist with healthcare efforts, one report of staff being stood down and one report of staff being put on unpaid, open-ended leave during the lockdown.

Alternative services for the lending of physical library materials have been offered in a number of countries and include: 'drive-through' library services, 'take away' service, 'book bags', and home delivery by various means. In most countries, return boxes are closed and people are asked to keep borrowed books at home. Most libraries have prolonged loans automatically and have stopped sending out reminders of fines.

With physical lending limited or suspended there is huge focus on online services and digital content, with a wide range of available online services and content across all countries. In some cases, online services have been extended or vendors have eased restrictions on the access of digital material. Many library services report the development and publication of new online content, such as online story-times, in response to the COVID-19 lockdown.

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[1] Many thanks to NAPLE members and colleagues from the following countries: Belgium (Flanders); Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Ireland; Lithuania; Norway; Netherlands; Poland, Portugal, Scotland; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland.

Many library services have requested official advice regarding the risk of virus transmission via library materials. Where official advice has not been received, common sense procedures have been implemented. In some countries, a system is already in place for the quarantining of returned physical materials, and in others the plan is to implement this as part of a phased reintroduction of services. Presently, however, most countries' public libraries are not accepting returns, but where returns have been accepted staff have been disinfecting returned books, wearing gloves, and taking other precautions.

Along with the increased focus on e-services, many countries' public library services are active on social media and involved in making important information available online. This includes communication through social media, mailing lists and the posting of information on websites. Several countries have national hashtags around the theme of staying at home or accessing culture online, or are operating virtual helpdesks through Twitter.

There is generally an awareness of the risk of fake news about COVID-19, and several library services note that they are sharing information from official sources only.

Main Report

This report is structured in the following way:

1. Closures
2. Staffing
3. Services for the Lending of Physical Library Materials
4. Online Services
5. Quarantining Returned Books / Other Official Guidelines & Recommendations
6. Library Services to Support Healthcare Effort
7. Social Media and Fake News

There is also a case study with detailed information regarding libraries' online offerings in the Netherlands, which is included as an Appendix.

The information contained in this report is based on responses from NAPLE members submitted to a shared spreadsheet between March 20th and April 24th 2020. As such it should be seen as a snapshot of this period.

1. Closures

Public library buildings in many countries have been closed to the public for several weeks now, either in response to national guidelines or regional decisions[2]. There are generally no

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[2] This is the case in France (since March 17), Czech Republic (since April 16), Denmark (since March 13), Finland (since March 18, until at least May 13), Germany (since the week of March 12-17, and until at least April 19/20), Greece (Since March 13), Ireland (since the evening of March 12, now until at least May 5), Lithuania (since between March 16-30 until at least April 17), Norway (from March 13), the Netherlands (until at least May 20), Poland, Portugal (since March 9/10), Scotland (since between March 18-20), Slovenia (since March 13), Spain (since between March 10-16), and Switzerland (since March 17).

definite dates for the reopening of library buildings. In many cases, closures have already been extended beyond their original span in line with the extension of official lockdown periods.

The total closure of library buildings is not universal, and in some cases library buildings are operating a reduced or adjusted service. In Flanders (Belgium), public libraries are categorised as an essential service by a national guideline and as such are expected to remain open. This applies on weekdays only and for a limited 'take-away' service in which patrons come to collect materials on reserve only. Despite this, many municipalities had decided to close their libraries completely by decree of local mayors, but as time goes on more are partially opening to offer a 'take-away' service.

In Croatia, Zagreb's 46 public library branches remained open initially to provide basic lending and return services. Events were cancelled, the reading rooms were closed, and access to the library was limited to one member of the public at a time with social distancing and regular disinfecting of surfaces in place. More recently, as Croatia entered the third phase of combating COVID19, all cultural institutions and companies closed their doors for at least 30 days (except for life-supporting ones). The Ministry of Culture issued a release calling on all cultural institutions and professionals who have the necessary resources to go online and provide as much virtual access to cultural contents to the public as possible. In some other regions in Croatia, public libraries had already closed entirely as directed by the regional headquarters.

In Estonia, the government declared a state of emergency on the 12th of March until at least the 1st of May. This period may be extended as necessary. During this state of emergency, Estonia's libraries are open only to a limited extent. All public gatherings are prohibited and so all library events, workshops and training sessions have been cancelled. Some libraries serve users in a restricted area and leave reserved books on a specific shelf.

In Sweden, 86 % of the public libraries are in business (more or less) as usual, 10 % are operating with some restrictions in place (i.e. closed branch libraries, all or some programs cancelled), 3,7 % are operating at a minimal service level, and 0,3 % of the libraries are fully closed[3]. There have been a shift since the first count, some of the fully closed have moved to operate with minimal service. During 13- 17 April only one municipality had a fully closed library. Those which changed category had added services to patrons to collect and return books. 85 % of the libraries which offer the patrons to access the library without staffing are operating the same hours as before COVID-19. 85 % of the book mobiles are still running according to schedule. 60 % of the libraries have cancelled all, or most of the events and programs planned to take place in the library, and another 20 % have cancelled some of the events. Book readings, author presentations, children's programs, ICT training sessions, language café etc. have been cancelled.

Some libraries have started to use a plexiglas screen between patrons and staff, adding stickers to the floor marking the correct line spacing, and sealing off areas where larger groups

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[3] Using descriptions from IFLA as an indicator of the level of open or closed https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries)

may gather. In Stockholm, which is a hot spot for COVID-19, some libraries count manually, and only the allowed 50 patrons at the same time are let into the library.

Some libraries announce on their websites that they have rearranged the furniture in the library to prevent spreading of COVID-19, study rooms for groups have closed and some computers have been turned off.

As in some other countries, additional services are reported. These include book delivery to the doorstep for high-risk groups and people aged 70+ (50 %) and take-away book bags (50 %).

2. Staffing

In some cases, all library staff are now working from home, and in others at least some staff are still reporting to work in their libraries or offices. Where staff are still attending library buildings, physical distancing and other health and safety measures are in place. There are several reports of staff being redeployed to assist with healthcare efforts, one report of staff being stood down and one report of staff being put on unpaid, open-ended leave.

In some cases, most or all library staff are working from home. This is the case in Denmark, for example. In France, staff can only attend the library where it is deemed operationally necessary (e.g. processing payroll, for building security, etc). In the Netherlands and Poland, too, most library staff are working from home.

In Ireland, staff in 29 out of 30 authorities were going into work in library buildings at first. The exception was Dublin City, as the guidance was to lessen impact on public transport of public sector workers. By the end of March, however, staff were not going into library buildings in general, although some managers have been going into the office for a few days a week.

In Estonia, staff are working from home where possible (and particularly in the case of high-risk groups and people aged over 60). In libraries in Estonia where staff are working inhouse they are working in shifts to maintain physical distancing.

In Scotland, on the other hand, at the time of the most recent report, staff were still going to their libraries if healthy, with an arrangement for staff with underlying health issues to work from home. A plan was being developed to make the Scottish library workforce available to support the NHS and other health services through local community hubs. At the time of the most recent report from Flanders (Belgium), too, most staff there were still going to work in the library. This depended on the municipality, though, and in some cases it was possible to work from home.

In Spain, too, different regions responded differently, and FESABID (The Spanish Federation of Societies of Archivist, Librarians, Documentalist and Museology) requested that all library staff be sent home. Generally, specialised staff have been working from home since March 16, while some library staff continue to work in library premises, but without admission to the public. Security and cleaning services, as well as maintenance and IT, have been retained as a basic service in most cases. These are normally services that are outsourced.

In Portugal, about 50% of library staff were still working in their libraries at the time of the most recent report, with the other 50% working remotely. This is in tune with many reports internationally, where approaches are mixed with some staff working from home and others working in libraries. In the Czech Republic, for example, library staff are working from home where possible, but some staff are still working in libraries that are closed to the public (e.g. on collection management, cataloguing, preservation, revision of collections, and so on).

In Germany and Norway staff are either working in the library with physical distancing measures in place or working from home. In Lithuania, the recommendation is for libraries to provide the opportunity for their staff to work remotely where possible, but some staff have been stood down. Otherwise, physical distancing should be maintained while staff are working on premises. In Greece, some libraries allow remote working, some have security staff only and others have ceased all services.

Remote working is recommended in Finland and has been arranged widely. Although staff in most municipalities there are still working, there are areas where staff have been forced on unpaid, open-ended leave. Some personnel with fixed-term jobs have been instructed to work in roles supporting health care duties.

In Slovenia, library staff can work from home where possible, and employees waiting to work from home are entitled to 80% of their basic pay, according to a government decree.

In Sweden there has been minor reorganising of staff as an effect of COVID-19. Some staff are on sick leave and branches have temporally closed due to that. Less than 10 % of the municipalities have closed branch libraries. A few cases of staff who belong to high-risk groups have been given alternative tasks to prevent close interaction with patrons.

3. Services for the Lending of Physical Library Materials

Some libraries are offering reduced or alternative services for the lending of physical library materials (e.g. Books, Audiobooks, CDs) until full services resume, although generally the focus is on enhancing existing online services and digital content. In a creative scheme to allow contact-free access to physical library resources, some public libraries in Lithuania have started a service for older members of the community whereby they can choose library books for library staff to read to them over the phone. Other alternative services for the lending of physical materials include 'take-away' services, home delivery, 'drive-through' library services and delivery of books by post.

Alternative services for the lending of physical library materials in Sweden include 'drive-through' library services (return and pick up books without leaving the car); 'take away' services (collect pre-ordered books in a bag at the library door at a specific time); 'book bags' (bags with books selected by a librarian according to a subject topic); delivery of books to the doors for users aged 70+ or in high risk groups; and extended opening hours for those aged 70+ or others in high-risk groups. A lot of innovation has been taking place, new ways of delivering physical library material to patrons using bicycles, volunteers or staff from other closed activities in the municipality helping to deliver books at the doorstep of patrons who need it. Some libraries use book reservations as a mean of reducing the time spent inside the library, the patrons collect reserved books instead of browning the shelves.

Some local libraries in the Netherlands are also offering 'bookbags' for collection from outside the library or for delivery to library users' doorsteps. In Switzerland, some public libraries have started book delivery services by bike courier (Velo-Kurier). In Flanders (Belgium), people can reserve physical materials and collect them from the library at a specific time. Some libraries in Germany have facilitated the placing of orders for physical materials by phone or email to be collected at the door of the library, at a window of the library or for home delivery. Some have installed a special bookshelf at a covered exterior wall of the library.

In Estonia, too, some libraries allow users to reserve books online and collect them at the library without contact with the librarian, or to order a book for contact-free home delivery. One library in Estonia offers book delivery to self-service parcel terminals. The National Library of Estonia planned a book delivery service by bike courier in cooperation with the food delivery service provider Wolt/Bolt. In Norway local library book cars were in operation in some areas at the start of the period but in general, take-away services (collecting pre-ordered books in a bag at the library door at a specific time) have become quite normal throughout the country.

In Ireland there are physical lending services based on existing housebound models in five counties, with the expectation of more soon. Memberships that were about to expire have been extended until the end of June and will likely be extended further. The reserve functions on the Library Management System have been disabled to prevent a big backlog, and the national delivery service has been suspended for the month of April. Some libraries have been printing off government forms needed (for financial support, etc.) and leaving them outside the library or at local shops for collection.

55 public libraries in Portugal are running book lending services with extra hygiene precautions in place, in coordination with local health authorities. These services are run on a take-away, drive-thry or home delivery basis with bags and boxes for collection at the library door or home delivery, in all cases with minimum personal contact.

At the beginning of the closures in Finland some libraries kept their book drops open and some were distributing library books in pre-packed bags, but these activities were widely stopped following recommendations from the Regional State Administrative Agencies.

During the fourth week of lockdown, a few public libraries in Lithuania started a book delivery service, where users can order books from their local branch via an online system or by phone, and librarians will deliver the books to their doors.

There is a growing system in Slovenia for the borrowing of physical library materials by post. This was started on April 4 when Škofja Loka Public Library offered the option of borrowing physical library materials via standard mail and, with some restrictions in place, by personal pick-up. By April 7, five public libraries and one university library in Slovenia were offering to send library materials by standard mail to their users. It was projected that by April 21 all 58 Slovenian Public Libraries would be likely to offer some form of loan by standard mail. In most cases, this service applies only to non-fiction materials related to research or study needs. Having said that, some libraries in Slovenia are expected to also offer lending for fiction for specific target groups only (e.g. older people).

4. Online Services

There is a lot of focus across the board on online services and digital content. There is a range in terms of available online services and content across countries and localities. In some cases, online services have been extended or vendors have released barriers to the access of material by schoolchildren.

Many libraries in Flanders offer e-books and e-readers, but there is not yet an online platform for the loan of e-resources. The Flemish online e-book platform is launching in a few months. Libraries in Croatia that have e-lending systems in place are providing access to e-content.

Students and teachers of public and private universities in the Czech Republic have temporary access to the collections of the National Library and public universities since March 17, thanks to an agreement between the director of the National Library and the director of DILIA (the collective copyright administrator) which was signed on March 16[4]. More than 206,000 titles (over 59 million pages) of digitized monographs and periodicals are available. The digitized collections of the National Library are accessible through the Kramerius application. This access includes works that are protected by copyright law, and an integrated web portal with library online resources has been created[5].

In Denmark, there is continued access and for some public libraries extended access to the digital library (including e-books, digital audiobooks, movies, and newspaper databases). The public library websites and their social media sites are maintained and updated with relevant information about COVID19 and the libraries' online services, electronic resources, and databases. Information about e-books for children while the schools are closed is available on the public libraries' websites. The public libraries' site about literature has also been updated, and there is focus on further use of its online literature debate forums. Most municipalities, including Copenhagen, have upped the loan quota per citizen. In Ringkøbing-Skjern, for example, they have increased the number of loans from five to 20. Many commercial vendors have removed barriers to content for schoolchildren.

In addition to the online reservation system for physical materials in some libraries in Estonia, Tallinn Central Library has established a second e-book platform (ELLU) as well as extending access to their pre-existing platform (OverDrive) to all Estonians. There has been increased promotion of this in the media, on social media and on the library website.

Many libraries in Finland have opened call centres and are issuing lots of guidance regarding e-material via websites and social media. The "ask a librarian" web service is running as usual, and libraries are also boosting existing online content and developing new strategies, especially around live streaming. Some libraries have purchased more licenses to e-materials.

Libraries in Germany are also promoting access to online resources (including e-books, e-audio, e-music and e-films) via their websites, pointing to platforms like divibib or Overdrive. Many public libraries now allow new members to join electronically for access to digital services. Some libraries are offering story-time via their website or social media.

In Greece every library manages its own resources, and there is a focus on utilising new technologies.

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[4] https://www.nkp.cz/files/ostatni/dohoda_nk_dilia.pdf
[5] https://protiviru.knihovny.cz/index.html

In Ireland, too, libraries are heavily pushing online services and have removed restrictions on new joiners having to physically visit the library to collect their card to start using them. There has been massive uptake of online resources. New library memberships during the COVID19 crisis have nearly doubled compared to the same period last year. Over 30,000 new members joined the library in March 2020 compared to just over 17,000 in March 2019. The week commencing 29 March saw a 313% increase in new users of eBooks and eAudiobooks service, a 467% increase in e-learning courses being taken, a 227% increase in language courses being taken and a 246% increase in usage of the online newspapers/e-magazines[6]. All authorities have been preparing online content, including doing Facebook Live story-times and sharing printable colouring pages for kids.

Libraries in Lithuania are promoting access to e-books through the national portal at www.ibiliotek.it, as well as open access e-book collections. Some libraries have moved planned events online through live streaming. A series of lectures planned for 'All digital week' on March 23-29, for example, migrated to online. Coordinators of the makerspace at the National Library of Lithuania have also started to maker lessons for those staying at home, which happen on YouTube twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11am.

The public libraries in Norway, too, are promoting e-books and other digital content through various channels. The Ministry of Culture and the National Library have launched a number of support measures to help retain a library, including more funds for e-books, better access to national online resources for the educational sector, public digital access to legal deposit content, and funds for regional and local libraries to arrange digital events and promotion of digital content. eBook and eAudiobook loans increased by 136 % compared to the previous month, eAudiobook loans alone increased by 264 %.

The National Library of Poland provides access to more than three million items via its digital library at www.polona.pl. More than a million of these are downloadable PDF files, including over 100,000 books and almost 900,000 newspapers and periodicals.

Most libraries in Portugal do not offer any digital services, although some libraries have made information available through their social media, websites and newsletters. The Portuguese Public Library Network has started curating online information on a Flipboard account and sharing the link with public libraries[7]. They have also invited public libraries to submit online resources and links to their own activities to be collated in Flipboard[8]. This collaborative work has received a lot of attention in the press and on national television.

Scotland's libraries are offering online services (including e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines, and newspapers) through all 32 library service websites.

Slovenian Public Libraries are offering access to e-resources, answering information requests from users, preparing web-based content (including reading lists, quizzes, and virtual competitions). They are maintaining communication with their user using social networks (mostly Facebook and Twitter). Biblos is the platform for lending e-books in Slovenian public libraries, and with the addition of more than 100 new titles there are now almost 4,000 titles of e-books available. Free access to e-services has been allowed for users who had any kind of restriction on using library services (for instance, because of unpaid fees). The supply of

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[6] https://www.gov.ie/en/news/090bca-use-of-online-public-library-service-soars-during-covid-19-crisis-mi/
[7] https://flipboard.com/@rnbp_dglab
[8] http://bibliotecas.dglab.gov.pt/pt/noticias/Paginas/vamosaissornbp.aspx

webinars has increased dramatically, and some libraries also offer a Q&A with a librarian service in the form of video chats, with information on resources that users can access digitally.

Libraries in Spain are offering contents through virtual platforms such as eBiblio (platform for e-lending), eFilm or Tumblebooks. These have seen a significant increase in the number of users, and the contents have been enriched with new acquisitions in some regions. Information from official sources is being disseminated through social media and by email and telephone. Online courses are being provided for librarians. There has been a growth in online activities and campaigns for reading promotion. In the Balearic Islands, for example, libraries have provided videos of authors talking about their books in place of in-person presentations. Library users are also invited to submit videos recommending books. Other videos show librarians reading poetry and short stories. Online reading clubs are taking place and online story-telling for kids is provided (through YouTube). Some Spanish libraries also offer a phone service whereby users can ask for a librarian to call them at home and read a section from a book over the phone. The Navarra Region has created an app to offer digital resources (including resources for reading promotion, registering for a virtual library card, access to information about the pandemic, etc.), with a section (accessible with username and password) for librarians to use as a work platform. This provides librarians with access to email, learning platforms, documents and information about how to work from home.

In Switzerland, pre-existing platforms for e-books, audio books, films and music are being promoted more intensely on libraries' websites. The Library Association as well as individual libraries are sharing ideas for online activities during the national lockdown. Recently, Zoom conferences have been held to exchange ideas around best practice during the lockdown.

In Sweden ca. 25% of the municipalities have increased the access to e-books or increased the e-lending budget. About 30% of them offer better access to movie services with live streaming of quality movies. 15% of them offer an extended period of time of downloads for the news articles from the Pressreader Display service. About 20% of the municipalities give e-services a prominent place on their library web sites and promote digital media in their social media channels.

Some libraries have offered children's story reading live on Facebook or on Youtube. Book readings, book presentations and author's talks have also been either live on Facebook or on Youtube. Digital reference desks have been set up, ICT problem solving services etc.

The national resource for ICT and Media and Information Literacy (MIL), Digiteket, has been working on overdrive to deliver COVID-19 relevant material. New articles and self-study courses have been added to the website[9]. The Digiteket website has library staff as a primary target group, but is open for all to use. The web statistics for Digiteket have seen a huge increase during COVID-19, as a lot of staff have taken the opportunity to read the articles and take the courses. They have used free time to educate themselves in MIL.

Sweden also managed to negotiate free access to all digitised Swedish newspapers for a limited time. Usually the libraries have to buy licenses for a dedicated computer in the library, but during April, the National Library released the entire service online for everyone.

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[9] https://digiteket.se/inspirationsartiklar/ and https://digiteket.se/kurs/coronainfodemin-ett-lackmustest-pa-din-motstandskraft-mot-falsk-information/

5. Quarantining Returned Books / Other Official Guidelines & Recommendations

Most library services report that overdue notices have been suspended and that any physical items on loan are not being returned for the moment. This largely has removed the need for a systematic quarantining of returned materials. Several countries' library services have sought official directives from health institutions concerning the quarantining of returned materials. Some have received this guidance or had policies approved. There is some preparation underway for dealing with returns when closed libraries begin to reopen.

Borrowed books are not being collected in Ireland at present. The Department of Health has endorsed a set of Recommendations for Handling Physical Materials in Libraries in Relation to COVID-19[10], which will enable the setting up of physical lending services to older, vulnerable, and marginalised people in the community.

The Norwegian Institute for Public Health has advised libraries upon request that books should be put away for 2 days before they are loaned again. The Institute advised that risk of virus transmission from books is low, and that quarantine or disinfection of books is not necessary, but that staff should have and follow procedures for washing hands after handling books.

In Croatia, where Zagreb Public Libraries were accepting returns early in the lockdown period, staff were disinfecting returned books, wearing gloves and taking precautions. The National Library there issued instructions for handling returned books during the pandemic (this leaflet is available in English here: https://ipk.nkp.cz/images/informacni-letak-o-vraceni-knih-eng).

The National Library of Poland is working on updating previously issued recommendations for the treatment and quarantining of books returned to libraries after the lockdown ends based on newly published research articles. These recommendations suggest that returned materials should be handled in proper gloves and that the surfaces on which they have been resting should be disinfected with detergent or alcohol. They also recommend that quarantine should last for a minimum of ten days and up to two weeks[11].

In Flanders, the Flemish Library Association warned of the possibility for the virus to spread on the surface of books. Most libraries there are not accepting returns, and the ones that do are quarantining and/or disinfecting.

The Danish public library system is prolonging loans without fees. The Royal Danish Library (National Library) has requested information from the Danish Health Authority concerning the risk of virus transmission via library books. At the time of reporting they had not yet received an answer.

In Finland, there were at first no national guidelines on quarantining returned books. Most libraries, though, stopped taking in books and prolonged the loan period for all checked out items without charging late fees. At the start of April, the Regional State Administrative Agencies issued new recommendations advising libraries to stop handling physical library materials, which includes not accepting returns.

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[10] https://www.librariesireland.ie/handling-physical-materials-in-libraries-during-covid-19

[11] https://bn.org.pl/aktualnosci/3938-bezpieczenstwo-epidemiczne-w bibliotekach.html

There was no official advice in Estonia at the time of reporting about how to treat returned books, though the recommendation is to quarantine books for 72 hours. Some libraries are not accepting returns in the interests of staff protection.

At the time of reporting there had not yet been official advice on quarantining of materials in Germany, although the German Library Association had issued a request for this to the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment. According to the latter's website, there is no evidence that the virus can spread via toys or food. Some library services that allow for automatic returns during closure are leaving book stock for 48 hours before sanitising and returning to the shelf.

In Portugal, since the libraries closed, they have not been accepting returns. Any materials that have been returned are being quarantined in open spaces or in sealed plastic bags. When libraries reopen deep cleaning and disinfection will be recommended.

Although there has been no definitive guidance in Scotland on book quarantine, some library services are leaving book stock for 24 or 72 hours before sanitising and returning to the shelf.

In Sweden, all the municipalities decide locally how to handle returned books and there are no national guidelines about quarantine. Each library has their own measures they find relevant. It appears that most libraries have worked out a routine, either no quarantine since circulation is low, or putting returned books aside for a couple of days before shelving.

6. Library Services Support to Healthcare Efforts

There are various reports of libraries supporting healthcare efforts. In Lithuania and Ireland, for example, libraries' 3D printers have been used to print personal protective equipment (PPE). In Lithuania this has been coordinated by the Maker Space of the National Library of Lithuania and 58 libraries have joined, printing holders for protective plastic shields for local health workers. More information here (https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1156410/lithuanian-libraries-start-3d-printing-face-shields-for-medics).

In France, too, the Facebook group "Labenbib" has gathered a group of librarian makers to make protective visors.

In Ireland, some library services are involved in the operation of Community Response Teams, with dedicated helplines in operation focused on ensuring that the cocooning members of the community or those living alone can access deliveries of groceries, medicines and fuels. Some library services' staff are at hand to help the Health Service with contact tracing.

In Norway, too, library employees have been carrying out administrative tasks for the Health Service. Some librarians in France have decided to become involved in "Solidarité numérique", an initiative to help people who have issues with e-administration and digital skills. Some authorities have mobilised their librarians to help with COVID-19 tasks such as cleaning and helping in health centres, funeral homes or public nurseries. In Spain, some libraries have been sending comics and magazines on a weekly basis to hospital libraries, residential units and hotels that are being used as field hospitals.

Libraries in the Czech Republic have been helping to sew face masks. There is a government regulation in place on wearing facemasks in public and it is very difficult to buy masks in

pharmacies. Some libraries with 3D printers joined the national call "All Czechia is printing" and are helping to print PPE.

7. Social Media and Fake News

Along with the increased focus on e-services, many countries' public library services are active on social media and involved in making important information available online.

In Sweden, the National library of Sweden has set up a new website for COVID-19 information, which is updated regularly[12]. Also the website Digiteket is used to highlight the risks of fake news and misleading information. [13]The National Library in Norway operates a mailing list which is used by public libraries.

There is generally an awareness of the threat of fake news about COVID-19, and library services note that they are only sharing information from official sources. Several countries have national hashtags around the theme of staying at home or accessing culture online. Some libraries in Germany (eighteen currently), following an initiative from the public library in Dusseldorf, have joined forces to offer advice via a virtual helpdesk using the hashtag #twittothek.

Some other hashtags mentioned include: #Knihovnyprotiviru ("libraries against the virus"), #kupknihu, #BibatHome, #BibliothekenSinDa, #takeacloserlook, #zostańwdomu (#stayathome), #Covid19RNBP, #vamosaissoRNBP, #BibliotecasNaSuaCasa, #ficaemcasa, #culturaemcasa, #EstamosON, #scotlibsonline, #digitalabiblioteket, #Bibliotequesacasa #YoMeQuedoEnCasaLeyendo, #BibliotecaEnCasa #LaCulturaEnTuCasa

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[12] https://www.kb.se/samverkan-och-utveckling/biblioteken-under-corona.html
[13] https://digiteket.se/kurs/coronainfodemin-ett-lackmustest-pa-din-motstandskraft-mot-falsk-information/

Appendix: In Detail - Online Services in the Netherlands

The KB (National Library of the Netherlands) and other libraries in the country are trying to make the most out of the situation and trying to spread the joy of reading by expanding their remote services with several initiatives. These initiatives include a Home Library app for access to free e-books, the addition of 100 free audiobooks to the website, online help for vulnerable people, and dedicated online resources for children.

The Home Library app (ThuisBieb-app) was launched for iOS users on April 6 and contains over a hundred free e-books. This app is available to everybody with an Apple device and was trending amongst free apps in the Appstore after one day. The Android version was launched on April 11. The publicity campaign about the introduction of this free app has been well received on social media and was mentioned on national television in a news programme for young people (Jeugdjournaal). Almost all Dutch public libraries have embraced this campaign and refer their members to it.

As elsewhere, there has been an explosive growth in online library visits in the Netherlands, with a peak of 43,000 visits in a single day to the online library on March 17, and an average of 32,000 to 35,000 visits per day in the following days. There has been a tripling in page views for e-books, and the page views on the audio book page have gone through the roof following the addition of 100 free audiobooks. This increase has been from a normal average number of 900 views in a day to nearly 25,000 page views in a single day following the launch. Since then, the number of page views has stabilized at around 10,000 a day.

A special version of 'Digi-taalhuis', offering online help for vulnerable people, has been developed since the libraries closed. It offers an overview of informative websites that are easily accessible from home, as well as infographics on how to deal with COVID19 and prevent it from spreading. The websites referred to provide answers to health-related questions, financial questions, information about how to keep in touch with relatives digitally and how to deal with computer technology. There are also resources for learning Dutch. This information is also available on www.bibliotheek.nl.

On March 30, the first episode of Huisarrest (Being Grounded), a ten-part series of story-time sessions for children who are not allowed to leave their homes because of the virus, was published online. This series is an initiative of KB (the National Library of the Netherlands) and De Schoolschrijver (the School Writer) that enables primary schools to offer children the pleasure of reading and stories at a distance. See www.jeugdbibliotheek.nl/huisarrest or www.deschoolschrijver.nl/huisarrest for more.

The KB also supports a 'book a writer on your screen for home schooling' initiative of de Schrijverscentrale (The Writers' Centre) with an incentive contribution. This has started with a pilot of online writers' visits, allowing teachers who now teach online to enrich their programme with an online visit by a writer or illustrator. This initiative is an alternative to the visits of writers to primary schools that are often organised by public libraries. Organisers can opt for a personal video of the writer that is specially tailored to them or a live online visit during which students can interact with the writer on their screen. To support libraries that want to organise an online visit for their members or schools in the area, the KB offers an introductory discount for online visits during the pilot period from April 9 to May 9 2020.

Public library members in the Netherlands can also browse through over 28,000 Online Library e-books for children and adults in the online library at www.onlinebibliotheek.nl

(membership is required and is free for children and young people up to the age of 18). One hundred extra audio books have been temporarily added to the audio book app and have been made available free of charge to the public, including those without a membership.

The Delpher website (www.delpher.nl) contains over a hundred million pages of digitised Dutch books, newspapers and magazines and is accessible to the public. More than 95,000 digitised newspapers were recently added and over 24,000 magazines and 5,000 books are also accessible from people's homes.

The Digital Library for Literature from the Netherlands (Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren) includes thousands of literary texts, books, children's books, secondary literature and additional information such as biographies and portraits and is available without membership.

Since the closure of libraries and schools, the Jeugdbibliotheek (Youth Library) has adjusted its website and created an extensive overview of remote services available, including everything from e-books to audiobooks, read-to-me clips, Yoleo and Junior Einstein[14].

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[14]You can find more on Online Services in the Netherlands here:
https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/info-society/documents/ifla_website_dutch_online_initiatives_libraries_and_reading_promotion_april_2020.pdf