

Your Name, Title

Library

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### **OP-ED: DECATUR PUBLIC LIBRARY REOPENS WITH CAUTION -- AND A MULTI-PHASE PLAN**

As Decatur and most of Illinois move to Phase 3 of Governor Pritzker's "Restore Illinois" plan, leaders of the Decatur Public Library are carefully considering ways to reopen library doors in a way that is safe to residents, library staff and library materials.

Throughout the Stay-at-Home order, staff at Decatur Public have been working behind the scenes, bringing residents an array of services, including access to online learning and tutoring sites for students, e-books, audiobooks, streaming storytimes, job assistance and access to health information. Yet, those who know the library, know that it's more than just services and programs, it's an integral part of our community. As such, a three-phase plan has been introduced for a safe building reopening.

The first phase is to prepare the library building for safe occupancy. At this time, the building will be closed to the public and open to staff only. Staff will be trained on new protocols for safely checking-in and re-shelving books and other returned materials, how to process new materials, and how to prepare counters, computers and shared furniture. Training for working with other staff and patrons with regard to social distancing will also occur. Virtual services will continue.

A second phase includes phasing in of "curbside" or "drive-up" services, with careful attention to physical distancing and safe return of materials.

Finally, a third phase calls for a reopening of the library building to the public, with certain modifications in place. Seating and computer stations will be modified to comply with social distancing and gathering guidelines. Service points will be modified to prioritize social distancing. New signage will encourage appropriate social distancing.

We are all learning more about COVID-19 on a daily basis. As such, officials at Decatur Public are closely monitoring the guidance issued from the Illinois Department of Public Health. Current priorities include:

- sufficient, effective protective measures and cleaning supplies
- understanding of the virus's viability (or lack thereof) on returned library materials
- capacity of your area's medical facilities if cases of the virus were to increase as graduated re-openings commence
- preserving the well-being and health of the community
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No one wants the library to fully reopen more than library staff. We appreciate your patience as we work to provide a safe environment for all.