Darkest predictions eventually came true: Covid-19 pandemic is now spreading all over the world.

The EBLIDA Executive Committee met in an extraordinary online meeting on 26 March. Our first thoughts go to all people who are now at the forefront of the war against the invisible viral enemy.

We wish to express our deepest sympathy to all librarians and their families, who are coping with the current crisis in a way or another. It is a difficult time for all of us with an impact that will be
Libraries are locked down in many countries. For a library being closed is much more than the opposite of being open. Access to collections, service availability, human inclusion and librarians’ attitude - all in a library speak the language of openness. To be closed for a library is a non-identity clause. It is the paradox of this crisis. Normally during crisis the library is an information center and a safe haven for citizens. In this crisis however the library cannot act as a gatheringpoint for sharing stories, answering questions and be a hub in the community.

The EBLIDA Checklist presented in this Newsletter seeks to facilitate libraries to find a common strategy in the face of Covid-19.

What is essential and non-essential in a library service? What must, should or could be set in place when libraries are locked down? The EBLIDA Checklist is groundwork for a series of measures, practices and possible services that library associations and coordinating centres could initiate for a partial recover in an extreme situation as the one we are living. It may be interpreted as an invitation to present EBLIDA Members’ experience in additional Newsletters. It may also be considered as a Call for action - what libraries can do when their right to exist is denied.

Answers to the 19-item Checklist should not be considered as parts of a Library emergency or a B plan. Emergency plans in libraries are established to help people who are in to get out; a B plan is executed when something goes wrong within a well-established scheme. Answers to the list may be considered a quest for identity - a necessary albeit sad legacy that libraries in the European continent, at the moment the worst hit by Covid-19 - can offer to the rest of the library world.

It should never happen again that cigarettes, whose harmfulness makes no doubt, are considered basic goods and free access to information, however justified it may be for health requirements, is the object of restrictions.

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**EBLIDA checklist for library associations and libraries in the face of the Covid-19 crisis**

The following questions can help you decide about strategic decisions your library association / library can take in a time when emergency locks down libraries.

We invite other EBLIDA Members to send their answers to the checklist to the email address below.

Should you have a question on a specific item, please ask: g.vitiello@kb.nl.

We will try to link you to a colleague in Europe who has been working on the topic highlighted in the text.

1. Does your (national) library association release regular website information, newsletters and/or updates on library posture in your country during the Covid-19 crisis?
2. Does information provided by your library association provide legal advice (or links to legal information) on the role, rights and duties of the library as an employer?
3. Do you provide any information or links about Covid-19 that are relevant for libraries (e.g. lifespan of the virus on paper and plastic)?
5. Is the Covid-19 crisis impacting on the financial position of your (national) library association (for instance, cancelled conferences)?
6. Does your association collect information on how the crisis impacts the financial position of the libraries?
7. Is your association negotiating with (local/national) government bodies for support to libraries in order to deal with financial effects and loss of results?
8. Is your association, the (national) library or other library coordination centre releasing regular information about the digital offer and library services to the general public?
9. Are digital services freely accessible to everyone? If not, is someone (association, national library) negotiating with relevant commercial partners and government to remove barriers as a crisis measure?
10. Have libraries organized specific hours/helpdesks for the public to help them access the digital services?
11. Is there – especially in e-books- a more extensive and targeted offer for specific groups like elderly citizens isolated at home, young people and children?
12. Is there a (national) platform, list-server or otherwise where libraries can post their best practices of services during the Covid-19 crisis?
13. Is there a (national) platform, list-server or otherwise where libraries exchange and (re-)use digital products (e.g. Youtube movies with storytelling)?
14. Is there an exchange on physical services by libraries? On how libraries try to stay relevant for their patrons within the safety measures that have to be taken?
15. Is there an exchange on services by libraries to schools and education?
16. Is there an exchange of how library staff is working from home, doing (online) learning and training or delivering services?
17. Is there a (national) platform, list-server or otherwise for online learning and training possibilities for library staff?
18. Is there a (national) platform, list-server or otherwise for other tasks performed by library staff (e.g. helping (online) in the community information centre or giving telephone calls to isolated elderly patrons/citizens)?
19. Is there any proposal you would like to make at European level?

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Library Associations in the face of the Covid-19 crisis

Marina Encheva

Българска библиотечно-информационнa асоциация (Bulgarian Library and Information Association - BLIA)

Checklist Point 1. The Bulgarian Library Association is monitoring the situation and started to release website information related to the Covid-19 crisis. When the libraries were closed, in the beginning they reacted individually. However the guidelines from the Association will be of big
Checklist Point 2. The Association is traditionally active in providing library related legal information on its website and this will be connected with the new situation as soon as the current needs of the libraries are deeper analysed.

Checklist Point 3. The Bulgarian Library and Information Association started to publish on its website a series of materials and links based on the current research provided by the medical and scientific communities on COVID-19. The materials are related to the staff safety, the quarantine for books and other library documents, the online services and the operation of libraries in digital environment.


Checklist Point 5. It is still too early to be predicted what will be the impact of the crisis on the financial position of the Association. It is possible the annual conference of BLIA traditionally organised in June to be postponed for the autumn.

Checklist Point 6. It is important such information to be consistently collected by the Association.

Checklist Point 7. The Bulgarian Library and Information Association will react when such necessity occurs. In the situation of Covid-19 crisis libraries in Bulgaria have to operate differently. The academic libraries started to promote through social media the available electronic resources and digital collections and to provide access to them not only to the academic staff and students but in most of the cases to a wider audience. Public libraries in the big cities also reacted relatively quickly by delivering electronic reference services and providing remote open access to their collections of e-periodicals.

Checklist Point 8. The Bulgarian Library and Information Association will organise the Annual Marathon of Reading (2-23 April 2020) in a digital environment. The following activities are planned for the Bulgarian libraries: online readings, online meetings with authors, distribution of video recordings with readings of different books through the social media, etc. The good library practices in Bulgaria in the current situation performed in a digital environment will be summarised and promoted by the Association.

Checklist Point 9. Some of the digital services of the academic and public libraries in Bulgaria are freely accessible to everyone.

Checklist Point 10. Some of the Bulgarian public libraries have initiated email contact with the patrons to help them access the digital services.

Checklist Point 11. Traditional initiatives like the meetings with poets and writers and the activities of the readers’ clubs are happening online or through social media – Facebook and Instagram (e.g. Poetry without Quarantine initiative of Sofia City Library and initiatives related to the International Children’s Book Day – 2 April).

Checklist Point 12. After the end of the Annual Marathon of Reading which will happen in a digital environment in April the Bulgarian Library and Information Association will collect and promote the best practices of library services during the Covid-19 crisis.

Checklist Point 13. Till now there is no a national platform where libraries can exchange and (re-)use digital products. Channels like Facebook groups and YouTube profiles are used for these purposes

Checklist Point 14. Social media are actively used for the distribution of practical information to
Checklist Point 15. School libraries are not active in such services. Academic libraries perform successfully this function in the current situation.

Checklist Point 16. All libraries in Bulgaria have been closed since 14 March. The librarians from both public and academic libraries support each other through different formal and informal channels by sharing educational platforms and exchanging professional information.

Checklist Point 17. There’s no a national platform yet but different open source learning management systems used by the Bulgarian libraries can be adapted to the current training needs of the librarians.

Checklist Point 18. Options for online help to the patrons are available.

Checklist Point 19. This is an important issue which requires deeper analysis and further discussions between the associations in order a Europe-wide decision to support the libraries in the current Covid-19 crisis to be sought.

Steen Bording Andersen

Danmarks Biblioteksforening
(Danish Library Association)

Checklist Point 1. The Danish Library Association is worried about the consequences of post-Covid 19 crisis and has requested a meeting with the Ministry of Culture to discuss what the outbreak implies for Danish libraries.

Checklist Point 8. Librarians are going to work regularly and here is a good opportunity to communicate about library services, including audiobooks for example.

Checklist Point 14. In Denmark library policies focus on the distribution of digital library resources and services are under pressure. Home delivery is a service often activated with book packages to be picked up at the door.

Julie Calmus

ABF, Association des Bibliothécaires Français
(French Association of Librarians)
Checklist Point 1. Libraries are closed in France, although some of them provide drive-in services. At the very beginning, restrictive public measures were not applied in a homogeneous way and some libraries stayed open. This is no longer an issue. Academic digital resources are now in open access to the public. Some cultural institutions make their services/collections available online. ABF called on politicians to allow libraries to continue with services while adhering to strict Covid-19 hygiene rules.

Checklist Point 3. ABF has also made available an online resource Guide where the main ongoing initiatives during the current crisis are listed.

Checklist Point 6. With the call for more online resources, also advocated by some French MPs, legal issues have emerged and this is another field of intervention for MPs. Library re-opening will also be an issue, since it may cause health emergencies again.


Checklist Point 19. A possible Europe-wide proposal would be to make a distinction between essential and non-essential library services and ask for a European moratorium on essential public services provided by libraries.

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Hella Klauser

BID - Bibliothek & Information Deutschland (Federal Union of German Library and Information Associations)

Checklist Point 1. In Germany’s federal system with mainly federal and local responsibility for this decision, all public libraries are closed until 19 or 20 April (end of Easter holiday); so far. All schools and universities and their libraries are closed as well. The German Library Association issued a press release informing what libraries can offer during the Covid-19 crisis in an
The German Library Association is offering an overview of special services provided by libraries in the time of corona virus, [https://bibliotheksportal.de/spotlight-corona/](https://bibliotheksportal.de/spotlight-corona/)

Checklist Point 9. Libraries are promoting access to online resources (e-Books, e-audio, e-music, e-films) via their websites pointing to platforms like divibib or overdrive. Many public libraries offer potential new members of their community to join electronically for the digital services. An interactive map is available on the DB Portal [https://netzwerk-bibliothek.de/de_DE/standorte#12/52.5296/13.2260](https://netzwerk-bibliothek.de/de_DE/standorte#12/52.5296/13.2260)

Checklist Point 10. Book loans are extended until the end of the closure. At the initiative of public library Duesseldorf, some libraries (18 currently) have joined forces to offer advise via a virtual helpdesk using the hashtag #twittothek. Other hashtags are used like #BibatHome, #BibliothekenSinDa.

Checklist Point 13. Some libraries are offering storytime via their website or social media. Digital storytelling is a new activity; an initiative launched in one of the Laender has got 43,000 registered users in only two days.

Checklist Point 16. Libraries are closed down and most librarians are working from home looking into technical possibilities on how to develop online services. This time lapse before they open again could be usefully be focused for staff training exercise.

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Stefano Parise

Associazione Italiana Biblioteche - AIB  
(Italian Library Association)

Checklist Point 1. Since end February, all non-essential activities in the whole country have been suspended and libraries are closed.

Checklist Point 3. The Italian Library Association has released a list of health links useful to fight Covid-19.

Checklist Point 8. MLOL (the Italian e-lending platform) is the de-facto coordination centre releasing regular information about the digital offer and library services.
Checklist Point 11. There is concern for those who are digitally not literate, have connection problems and access to e-resources which are not easy to access since contracts with publishers only concern access to digital content by registered users.

Checklist Point 16. Librarians often record stories and post them on websites to offer support and comfort to people.

Checklist Point 17. The Italian Library Association has opened its e-library to everybody, and not only to Associates. The shift from a physical to a digital working environment has brought about a large amount of new registered users for e-resources.

Checklist Point 19. APPEAL: In Italy we need to select online resources which could be made available to immigrants and do not have the linguistic skills to select them. We are going to ask our Chinese interlocutors to make available online resources in their own language. Can we ask the same to European library associations, especially those operating in countries having an immigrant population in Italy? Is there a local library in other European states that has already set up a repertoire of online resources in the different languages of their immigrant population? And can we ask EBLIDA to act as a liaison in this undertaking?

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Ton van Vlimmeren

FOBID

(Netherlands Library Forum)

Checklist Point 1. All libraries are closed, but a few libraries are offering physical services to their users.

Checklist Point 2. The Dutch Library Association has been active in informing libraries with several newsletters. e.g. on workers’ rights and explaining the duties of employers towards employees; e.g. staff cannot be forced to take leave, and on government policy.

Checklist Point 6. There is general concern that library budgets may be cut and it is the task of the Association to negotiate with the Association of City councils on the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on library budgets. The current reflection concerns how to advocate to keep library budgets intact, and what to do when budgets will be cut.

Checklist Point 8. The Royal Library, which has a national coordinating role in particular for digital services, has been much pressed to open more services and to all citizens.

Checklist Point 12. Although there is a lot of sharing between libraries of interesting practices there is no coordinated central platform (yet).
Checklist Point 1. The current library lock down has now been extended to 11th April at least.

Checklist Point 2. FESABID has asked the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) to distribute to town and provincial councils the request that librarians are allowed to work from home. The Spanish Government decree stated “The opening to the public of museums, archives, libraries, monuments (...) is suspended”. It did not decide anything about staff working in these centres. Request for smart working is not an issue.

Checklist Point 13. Creative undertakings concern storytelling connecting via social media.

Checklist Point 17. The Ministry of Culture has opened the e-learning platform to all public.

Checklist Point 1. The spread of the coronavirus can have major consequences for the Swedish economy, but there is for the moment an uncertainty on financial implications for libraries linked with the progress of Covid-19 crisis in Sweden.

Checklist Point 13. The National library has launched a Corona for libraries platform which says: “The corona crisis affects the libraries. Digital resources are becoming extra important.”
https://www.kb.se/samverkan-och-utveckling/biblioteken-under-corona.html

Checklist Point 18. There is a Facebook group on the matter “Libraries in Corona crisis”
https://www.facebook.com/groups/2567709373559107/
Checklist Point 4. Last News from the National Library of Lithuania – Checklist Point 4
Lithuanian libraries offer support to healthcare professionals

[Checklist Point 4.]

Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in cooperation with the country’s public libraries are actively involved in the Robotics School’s initiative to help produce 3D printed face masks for healthcare workers. Over 50 public libraries of Lithuania have joined this initiative.

“Currently, we are in dire need of strong solidarity and mutual support. In order to meet the growing demand for protective equipment as the country is being hit by the coronavirus outbreak, we have mobilised our processes and human resources and started coordinating the production of protective face masks in Lithuanian libraries in cooperation with the Robotics School,” said Prof. Dr. Renaldas Gudauskas, Director General of the National Library.

“A total of 54 libraries throughout Lithuania have joined the campaign. They are supporting the medical staff of the local medical institutions.

We will continue to produce 3D printed face masks as per demand.

These masks will be supplied not only to healthcare workers but also to volunteers and representatives of other professions who are working in high-risk areas,” said Donatas Kubilius, project coordinator and manager of the National Library’s DIY Workshop.

The libraries launched production of the masks a week ago. A total of 1,669 face masks were printed during the first stage of production. Later today, three libraries (the National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius county public library and Kaunas county public library) will receive 10,800 shield blanks made of eco-friendly plastic which will later be distributed among the country’s libraries based on demand. The volunteers working at the libraries will produce the required assembly components using 3D printers and will send the packaged protective equipment to the medical institutions serving their areas.

The face shield protects the face and offers protection against airborne viruses thus reduces the likelihood of contracting the virus. The design for the face masks is the result of the joint work of the Robotics School, volunteers and the 3DCreative team. The National Library of Lithuania
2020 as part of the project “Promoting Smart Use of Refurbished Public Internet Access Infrastructure Among Residents” (VIPT) (the project is financed from the Operational Programme for EU Structural Funds Investments for 2014-2020).

The country’s libraries have been closed due to the coronavirus outbreak following the enforcement of quarantine on 16 March. Understanding the importance and urgency of such service, the libraries took initiative to conduct the work on a volunteer basis using their own funds and resources.

EBLIDA is promoting NewsGuard as well as any other software designed to combat disinformation and misinformation. NewsGuard’s peculiar feature is that it works on website evaluation; therefore, it examines the context of news, rather than its text. It does not apply filtering systems intended to eliminate information, nor uses lexical or combinatory systems forcibly based on more or less biased algorithms.

NewsGuard provides credibility ratings and detailed “Nutrition Label” reviews for the information websites that account for 90% of online engagement with news in each country in which it operates (France, Germany, Italy, the U.K., and the U.S.). The ratings are conducted by trained analysts from diverse backgrounds, who review and describe the websites’ adherence to nine journalistic criteria. Each news website receives a Green or Red rating. Green-Red ratings signal if a website generally is diffusing accurate and correct information or knowingly publishes falsehood and propaganda.

Here is the NewsGuard list of websites which diffused fake news or disinfomed citizens about Covid-19.

For more detailed information, follow the Coronavirus Misinformation Tracking Center: https://www.newsguardtech.com/coronavirus-misinformation-tracking-center/
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About the Newsletter

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Editors: Unless otherwise specified, all articles are written by the EBLIDA Secretariat.

EBLIDA-LIST is a general mailing list intended to foster communications between EBLIDA, its membership and members of the European library community. The goal is to facilitate information exchange as well as professional communication and development within the EBLIDA community. Subscribe now!