

# american libraries DIRECT

American Library Association • April 14, 2020

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## IMLS to begin awarding CARES Act funding

The Institute of Museum and Library Services announced measures on April 13 to award the first \$30 million of \$50 million [appropriated](#) to the agency in the CARES Act. The \$30 million in this first funding phase will be distributed according to population. The funds are in addition to previously announced measures to support the urgent needs of museums, libraries, their staffs, and the communities they serve. States and territories will be able to use the funds to expand digital network access, purchase internet accessible devices, and provide technical support services to citizens to address digital inclusion efforts and related technical support. ALA President Wanda Kay Brown praised IMLS's swift response in an [April 13 statement](#)....



*Institute of Museum and Library Services, Mar. 27, Apr. 13; ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Office, Apr. 13*

## Topeka library offers Wi-Fi through its bookmobiles

The Topeka and Shawnee County (Kan.) Public Library is helping to fill a gap in internet access by repurposing two of its bookmobiles as Wi-Fi hotspots. Both buses are set up in southeast Topeka, in areas that lack internet access as a way to support Shawnee Heights school district students.



“One issue that has become apparent in light of our current circumstances is the lack of fast and affordable community broadband,” library CEO Gina Milsap said. The library plans to consider additional Wi-Fi sites if the initiative proves successful....

*Topeka (Kan.) Capital-Journal, Apr. 13*

## Columbus Metropolitan Library approves furloughs

The Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library board of trustees on April 13 approved the furloughs of 609 (72%) of its 846 employees. The decision was announced following an executive session to discuss personnel matters. The furloughs are effective April 19. All furloughed employees hold positions whose job functions can't be performed remotely. Health benefits for those enrolled will continue. Other library furloughs are taking place in [Lake County](#), Florida; [Akron–Summit County](#), Ohio; [Mount Prospect](#), Illinois; and [Quincy](#), Illinois. San Diego, California, [rescinded announced furloughs](#) for many library workers due to pressure from the city labor union....



*Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, Apr. 13; WFTV-TV, Orlando, Fla., Apr. 10; Akron (Ohio) Beacon-Journal, Apr. 10; Des Plaines (Ill.) Journal & Topics, Apr. 10; Quincy (Ill.) Herald-Whig, Apr. 9; San Diego (Calif.) Union-Tribune, Apr. 9*

## When nonessential is anything but

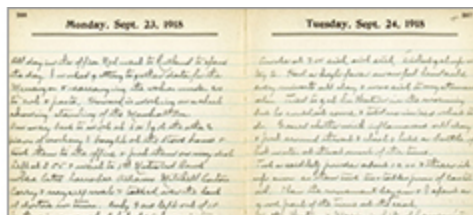
Allister Chang writes: “Demarcations of ‘essential’ versus ‘nonessential’ services should not prevent the growth of creative efforts to leverage ‘nonessential’ services against the pandemic and its rippling consequences. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most local governments have decided to close their library buildings. But libraries should not be put on the bench just because their buildings are closed. Libraries are still offering critical resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many librarians are working behind the scenes to entertain, educate, and inform families from a distance. Libraries are teaching us how ‘nonessential’ services can offer essential assets to the pandemic response.”...



*The Hill, Apr. 10*

## Why you should start a coronavirus diary

Jen A. Miller writes: “As the pandemic stretches on, your observations matter, and jotting down your thoughts and feelings may help you make sense of them. These are all reasons you should consider starting a coronavirus diary right now, even if you don’t think what you’re seeing, experiencing, and feeling is important. It is. Dawne E. Dewey, head of special collections and archives at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, said that when she talks to people in her community about donating their papers, she often has to convince them. They usually tell her that they’re just ordinary people. ‘Some of the best stories we get are from ordinary people who are experiencing something extraordinary,’ she said.” Take, for example, [diaries kept during the 1918 influenza pandemic](#)—these century-old musings are invaluable historical resources, as well as sources of inspiration or diversion....



*New York Times, Apr. 13; Smithsonian magazine, Apr. 13*

## Disinfecting historic sites

Winnie Lee writes: “The Giza pyramid complex. The Leaning Tower of Pisa. The Western Wall. These historic sites and others all over the world are usually teeming with tourists, vendors, and guides. But as they close and empty due to COVID-19, the tourists have been replaced by other figures.



Municipal workers from sanitation and utility departments, as well as volunteers, can be seen sanitizing these public places. Usually clad in masks, gloves, and protective suits, their job is often to pressure wash these famous spots or spray them with disinfectant. Atlas Obscura has collected some images of those giving a helpful hand at historic sites that, thanks to their efforts, will one day welcome tourists again.”...

*Atlas Obscura, Apr. 9*

## Japanese library uses drone and AI for shelf-reading

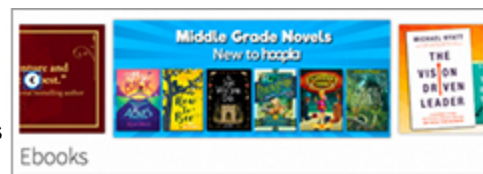
A drone will soon be flying through the shelves of the west branch of the city library in Funabashi, Chiba Prefecture, Japan. The drone and artificial intelligence will be adapted to eliminate the time-consuming task of inventorying books at libraries by humans. Each of the 267,000 publications kept at the library is marked with a dedicated nine-digit identification number, barcode, and electronic tag. The drone reads the tags and the AI later identifies which books are misshelved. The library plans to refine the precision levels of image recognition, AI analysis, and the number of books read by a single scan....



*Asahi Shimbun (Japan), Apr. 11*

## Connecting kids to books when your building is closed

Abby Johnson writes: “How can we connect kids to the great books we have in our digital collections when our libraries are closed? Here are some ideas for marketing digital books. First step? Make sure they are there. With the astronomical cost of digital books, it didn’t make sense for me to buy too many kids’ titles because they simply weren’t used at the rate that our ebooks for older readers were. Now, with kids out of school and unable to access our physical books, I’m beefing up our offerings for younger readers. If you’re really starting from scratch, reach out to your rep who can help suggest ways to find less expensive books that could allow you to quickly build up your collection.”...



*ALSC Blog, Apr. 14*

## Teaching online with special collections

Michael Morand writes: “Teaching with special collections—normally a very hands-on and on-site endeavor—poses its own particular challenges and opportunities in the pivot to digital-only instruction in the present moment of public health challenge.

Classroom courses are a distinctive part of teaching and learning at Yale. Here are some insights from the first two weeks of the Beinecke Library’s effort to take courses using library special collections ‘out of the archives, onto Zoom.’”...



*Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Apr. 7*

## Three centuries of distance learning

Livia Gershon writes: “These days students, teachers, professors, and parents are figuring out an awful lot about how distance learning works. But teaching and learning remotely is [not a brand-new thing](#). As microbiologist Roy D. Sleator writes, it’s actually much older than Zoom, Google Classroom, or even the internet itself. Sleator begins the history of distance learning in 1728. That’s when shorthand teacher Caleb Phillips bought an ad in the *Boston Gazette* promising that students ‘may by having the several lessons sent weekly to them, be as perfectly instructed as those that live in Boston.’”...



*JSTOR Daily, Apr. 13; Science Progress 93, no. 3 (2010): 319–334*



## Your pets need alone time too

Heather Schwedel writes: “Millions of American pets have seen their daily routines change drastically in recent weeks. Where they once had the run of the house, now they’re sharing space full time, and things are getting a little crowded. For humans, there were few illusions going into quarantine: It was going to suck. But pets, blissfully unaware of the tragic circumstances, could be forgiven for thinking this isolation thing [didn’t seem half-bad](#): Finally, they’d get all the quality time with their people they ever wanted. Midday belly rubs. Fetch at all hours. Constant attention. Be careful what you woof for. A few weeks in, some pets find that they miss their alone time. They, too, wouldn’t mind a little social distancing.”...





## We got that database

Tredyffrin Township (Pa.) Libraries staffers Angie, Kate, Stephanie, and Zoey join singer Kat Lemon in a song about library services in the time of COVID-19. "We've Got That Database" (2:24) was written by Kate Boyle as a parody of Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass."...



*Tredyffrin Libraries YouTube channel, Apr. 8*

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