

January 2022

Dear Patron,

As I am sure you are aware, the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus is hitting our community. At the time of this writing, the Vermilion County Health Department reports a test positivity 7-day rolling average of 20.5%--an average far higher than the 8% warning level.

Danville Public Library has been committed to continuously and safely serve the community since the pandemic began. We have offered new services like curbside pickup and craft kits when we had to close; we have adjusted hours as needed. Even during the initial 15-day "flatten the curve" closure in March 2020, we were registering patrons and walking them through how to use our digital services from our homes.

We have always followed the CDC and State's guidelines for maintaining a safe work environment, changing our operations as needed in response their changing guidance. Anytime we have had a positive case from a public-facing staff member, we close the library and have it disinfected. Not only does this disrupt our daily operations and inconvenience patrons, it is a service we gladly pay for but starts to add up each time we need to do it. It also costs us in labor, as staff are sent home to quarantine until they receive test results. Until Omicron hit, we were fortunate to be faced with this situation only a few times.

However, around the Christmas and New Year's holidays, we were negatively affected by COVID, as many staff members tested positive and started a chain reaction of many others who in were required to stay home waiting test results. This is of course required us to close the building, disinfect and scramble to cover service desks and fulfill our daily operational duties while our staff recovered.

I am happy to report that all staff who were out sick have fully recovered. However, the Library Board of Trustees, Administration and I have agreed that it is not in the best interest of the staff or public's health to open the building to meetings, programs and general browsing. The risk of closure, cost of disinfection, and the additional strain placed on staff is not sustainable while our county remains above the 8% warning level for positive cases.

We are committed to the health and safety of our staff and our patrons. We acknowledge this is decision is disappointing to patrons and we appreciate your understanding. In the meantime, we continue to be operational. Our Reference staff continue to research, answer questions and digitize patron materials in the Memory Lab. The Children's Department is busy putting together craft kits, completing personal shopping requests and weeding. The Public Services staff are pulling holds, registering patrons for cards, fulfilling curbside pickup requests, and making home deliveries. We also are running a temporary computer lab in the first floor meeting room, where patrons have access to socially distanced public computers, faxing, printing and copier services. Meanwhile, the Danville Library Foundation is selling used books in our lobby.

We are keeping an eye on local and national news regarding the virus. Reports that the bigger cities have peaked is encouraging and we hope to see the same trend locally soon.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the rest of the staff, I appreciate your understanding and patience as we continue to find creative ways to serve the public during this pandemic.

Jennifer Hess  
Executive Director

PS: We will be hosting a vaccination clinic in our first floor meeting room on Saturday, February 12.