When the COVID-19 crisis struck our community, it put the library in the difficult situation of trying to strike the right balance between providing our customers with library service and acting in the interest of the health and safety of our staff and the public. We tried to be measured in our responses to the pandemic, and to keep our customers informed about any decisions that would impact their ability to access the library.

When Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings announced that he would issue a stay-at-home order, effective March 26 at 11 p.m., we decided that it would be best to align with many of our counterparts in the county, including the Orange County Tax Collector, Orange County Property Appraiser, Orange County Public Schools and others, and temporarily halt services that required a significant number of people to be in our facilities each day. Many government agencies are focusing on offering virtual services, which employees can work on from home, until the stay-at-home order is lifted. In the meantime, our wonderful staff are focusing on maintaining our wide selection of virtual services still available during this shutdown:

- A vast selection of ebooks and audiobooks available through our website
- Live online classes
- Storytellers performing recorded versions of educational storytimes on YouTube and Facebook
- Talking Books for the visually impaired educational databases and guides maintained by our librarians, that offer everything from homework help to instructional manuals for car repair
- Language learning resources
- Providing reading and resource recommendations on our blog

We hope that this shutdown is brief and our community heals quickly from this crisis. We look forward to getting back to business and being able to offer the traditional services we take pride in, including home delivery, a service that we have been providing to the public since the 1970s. In the meantime, I hope you stay safe. And, for now, please stay home.

Mary Anne Hodel
Library Director/CEO

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HELPFUL LINKS

Get straightforward information on Coronavirus in a resource guide compiled by Reference Librarian Heidi Williamson at libguides.ocls.info/current/coronavirus

Keep up to date on the library’s response to COVID-19 at ocls.info/information-regarding-covid-19.

BEYOND WALLS

by Scottie Campbell, Marketing Specialist

Citizens have long chosen libraries as a favorite “third place” – those places you choose to be that aren’t work or home. There are nearly 117,000 of these places in the United States alone. Within a library’s walls you find a place of knowledge, a place to come together as a community, a place that sparks so many possibilities.

When American Library Association selected “Find Your Place at the Library” as the theme for this year’s National Library Week (April 19–25), they more than likely were thinking of libraries as physical spaces. Now, as we work together to flatten the curve of a new coronavirus, we have had the opportunity to remember that our libraries can go with us these days. Though a library has always really been a place that goes beyond walls, Orange County Library System offers a wealth of digital resources that give you access to e-books, audiobooks, magazine, movies, music, concerts, classes and more. Our staff has been highlighting these resources at ocls.info/blog.

In particular, you’ll want to take a look at “How to Social Distance & Still Use Your Library” by Cynthia Velasco, Digital Media Specialist, which gives a comprehensive listing.

During this time, people can still get their library card. If you’re reading this, chances are you already have your library card, but a fun way to celebrate National Library Week is to encourage your friends and family to make sure they have them. Do they know what you know about all the digital services available at the library – right now? Have them visit ocls.info/getyourcard to sign up online.

Just before our 16 locations closed, several of our favorite storytellers came in to create videos for our young customers. Storytellers will also be creating content from their homes. All of these can be found on our Facebook page. Additionally, instructors will be teaching from their homes – learn QuickBooks, Photoshop, cooking and more. Visit ocls.info/online for a complete listing of our upcoming live online classes.

Be sure you follow us on social media for content and updates. Like you, we look forward to getting beyond this and fully being your place to learn, grow, connect, again.
April 6, 2020 marks the 35th anniversary of Orlando Public Library’s 230,000 square foot expansion. In 1966, when the building was first constructed, it occupied a comparatively meager 60,000 square feet. However, it was always the intention to further expand upon the library, and that consideration went into the original structure’s design by architect John M. Johansen. To complete Johansen’s vision, the library selected the talents of Duane Stark, whose other contributions to Central Florida include Orlando Museum of Art and Epcot’s Mexico pavilion. Painstaking efforts were made by Stark and his team to seamlessly blend the original building’s unique design with the new expansion, including the use of 19,000 cubic yards of concrete.

Yet, there are still some slight differences between the two sections of the structure. For example, did you know that arched doorways and awnings only appear in the original section?

Upon completion of construction, Orlando Public Library became one of the largest public libraries in Florida, spreading across a full city block and featuring five above-ground floors, a basement and an underground parking garage. Today, it remains an architectural landmark, being a key example of the architectural style popularized in the 1950s known as Brutalism, and is one of the last buildings remaining in this style that is open for public use.

For more information about Orlando Public Library, or the history of Orange County Library System, visit orlandomemory.info.