

From: Jeremy Snell <jsnell@wgrls.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2020 1:13 PM
Subject: West Georgia's Libraries

Good afternoon!

My name is Jeremy Snell, Director of West Georgia Regional Library System of which Carroll, Douglas, Haralson, Heard, and Paulding libraries are members. This email is going out to our County Commission Chairs, Mayors, and School Superintendents, and I hope you will share this email with the rest of your governing bodies as you see fit.

As our communities continue to adapt and respond to COVID-19, I wanted to take a moment to let you know what we are doing in response to the public health situation to continue to provide library services to our residents during this unprecedented time when our facilities are closed to the public.

Digital Access Library Cards

Obtaining a Georgia PINES library card requires a visit in-person to your local library. However, with our facilities closed and our residents sheltering at home, WGRLS made the decision to reconsider this policy and offer online signup of [Digital Access cards](#) beginning on Friday, March 27.

These cards allow library users to access our digital collections like CloudLibrary and eRead Kids for three months. In just 11 days, we've registered 51 new users and re-engaged with 49 customers who had not been using their library accounts.

We expect to see these numbers continue to increase as we promote this service and look forward to welcoming these library users back into our facilities once we are able to reopen!

CloudLibrary: eBooks & eAudiobooks

[CloudLibrary](#) is our eBook & eAudiobook service available to library card holders in our five county service area.

When our facilities began closing to the public in mid-March, WGRLS temporarily removed restrictions that require library patrons to have less than \$10 in charges on their library account and have less than 50 physical items checked out in order to be able to checkout and download these eTitles.

In March, we saw a 19% increase in CloudLibrary checkouts with over 200 new active users!

Library managers are also diverting some funds typically spent on print materials to purchase more titles in digital format. So far in March and April, we've added 839 new items to CloudLibrary and more are in the process of being purchased as additional funding is reallocated.

eRead Kids

[eRead Kids](#) is a state-wide ebook platform with over 15,000 books aimed at students in grades K-4.

With students learning from home, it is perhaps unsurprising that we've seen a 328% increase in checkouts during March in west Georgia!

Fines Amnesty

We want to make sure that residents do not leave home just because they feel the need to return their library items to avoid any late fees. To achieve this, WGRLS has moved all due dates on physical items currently checked out to April 30 and will be waiving fines on any item that was missed through this automated due date extension.

Additionally, we have asked that items not be returned in our dropboxes at this time, prompting people to please keep their items at home.

WiFi Access

We do recognize there are those living in our counties who lack internet in their home and still need access to perform daily life and school tasks. We are proud that Georgia's libraries are the largest provider of public WiFi in the state.

Though our buildings are closed, the public can still connect to free, open-access WiFi from the parking lot of the 19 public library facilities in west Georgia which is allowable under the Governor's current shelter-in-place ordinance as long as social distancing is practiced.

Looking Forward

Many of our libraries are beginning to experiment with providing early education lessons, craft instruction, book discussions, and other library programs through Facebook Live and other virtual services. With June not far off, library administration, managers, and other team members have begun brainstorming as to what summer reading may look like if social distancing efforts remain in place beyond the next few weeks. In short, we are planning for further disruption of our regular offerings but hoping for the best.

WGRLS continues to identify training needs to grow our team's comfort with these technologies, share the wide-array of online learning opportunities being made available, and organize weekly training for requested topics through Google Meet. We also do our best to keep morale up and provide "water cooler" chats so that team members may get to know each other and talk selfcare.

Thank you

We know that libraries are more than buildings, and I hope this email goes to show our work to live up to that ideal. Thank you for your continued support of library services in west Georgia and for your leadership.

Please let me know if you have any questions about WGRLS and library services during this time.

I hope you and yours are well.

Best,
Jeremy

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Jeremy Snell

Director

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