



March 20, 2020

Dear Library Community:

The CARL Executive Board commends the leadership of California Governor Gavin Newsom for his March 19, 2020 statewide stay-at-home order. With this order, Governor Newsom acknowledges "There's a mutuality, there's a recognition of our interdependence that requires of this moment that we direct a statewide order for people to stay at home."

Likewise, the CARL Executive Board stands in support of the health and well-being of library workers and the communities we serve from exposure to COVID-19 in these unprecedented times. We call on academic and research library leaders and their university administrations, trustees and governing bodies to close library buildings and only reopen when guidance from public health officials indicates the risk from COVID-19 has significantly subsided. Because libraries are designed to encourage collaboration and engagement, practicing social distancing to the degree recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health authorities is impossible. Keeping libraries open at this time has the potential to harm communities more than help.

Libraries are communal spaces. The ethos of the academic library community is to support the learning and teaching mission of our institutions. Our broader commitment to social responsibility means that we pride ourselves on supporting our communities during critical times and serving those within our communities who are often undersupported. Thus, we recognize that the students who will continue to use our facilities during this time are from some of our most underserved populations; requiring them to use shared facilities is inequitable in that they are being forced to weigh their and their families lives against their grades.

We know that even a slight increase in the amount of people who are engaging in "social distancing" makes a huge difference in the spread of COVID-19 – closing library buildings will save lives. Continuing to keep library buildings and spaces open is incompatible with county, state, and federal public health recommendations that are advising (if not mandating) limiting gatherings to 10 people or fewer. This is impossible in libraries.