

WethePeople

NewsBreaks' COVID-19 Coverage

In our last issue, we shared a couple of articles published by our online component, NewsBreaks, not long after many states' stay-at-home orders were put into effect. Since then, NewsBreaks' coverage has been ongoing, with twice-weekly updates. The following are condensed and edited excerpts from four NewsBreaks articles sharing what info pros have been experiencing during the COVID-19 crisis.

'GOING VIRTUAL: LIBRARIES SEE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PANDEMIC'

by Terry Ballard

The East Meadow Public Library in Nassau County, Long Island, was in a unique position to respond to the March 2020 shutdown in New York. In summer 2019, it had embarked on a total renovation of its building. For months, the library was closed entirely (with satellite locations set up to handle reserves), or it was opened with a much-reduced portion of its building accessible to patrons. All of this was put to the test in March. Zoom was used in the ensuing weeks to enable video chats with authors. However, the library encountered a malicious hacking incident in a program days later.

The library administration had by then decided that videoconferencing should be a feature of programs even after the library reopened, as it was reaching a previously underserved population of homebound patrons. Fortunately, a number of Zoom alternatives were springing up to fill this kind of demand.

The Reader Services librarians then set out to create an entirely new online product to emulate the type of service they had been providing in the physical space. Their team of three librarians worked out the mechanics, content, and design of the Your Next Read tool using the free online product JotForm. Within days, it had gone online and was discovered by patrons almost immediately. Referrals were passed out to the librarians depending on their literary specialties.

I spoke to area librarians about the changes they've been seeing. Manny Mavrikakis, head of reference services at the Levittown Public Library, said, "We added a live chat using Tidio, where we monitor the chats between Reference, Children's, and the Young Adult departments, between the hours of 10–7 on weekdays and 10–4 on Saturdays. We also have started a Tech Help email service where patrons are able to email

us with specific questions on how to use Libby, utilizing our databases, and using our video streaming services. We are utilizing Zoom to conduct programs, such as Talking About Books, [in which] patrons can discuss what they are reading and share their recommendations to the other participants."

James Hartmann, head of UX and technology at the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Library, said, "One of our bigger issues was getting staff who weren't fully acquainted with various technologies up and running. We had a few librarians who don't have internet at home, or only use their phones. It's something that made me think about patron access as well. If we have staff members unable to get online, we can't assume that all of our patrons can be served digitally either."

'TIPS FOR WORKING SMART AT HOME'

by Marianne Kay

I used to really enjoy working from home occasionally, but now that I'm doing it every day, things aren't as exciting anymore. Some days are productive, but other days, not so much. It made me wonder to what extent it's possible to engineer a working environment at home that fosters both high job satisfaction and high achievement. Here's what I learned.

When the lockdown started, I tried to stick to my daily routine and replaced my usual 1-hour cycling commute with a morning ride of similar length near my home. As time went on, I experimented with different regimens and found that a longer exercise period at the end of the work day is more beneficial because it acts as a natural divider between my busy working day and a relaxing evening with my family.

It is important to carry on doing things you enjoy. When we feel worried, anxious, or low, it's easy to forget about the good things in life. Make a conscious effort to plan your free time in a similar way to how you plan your working day—and stick to it. My favorite activities during the lockdown have been jig-

saw puzzles and listening to audiobooks by the fire in the backyard.

A productive day starts with a clear, meaningful, and achievable to-do list. Choose three to five things to do and aim to get most of them done by 3 p.m. Then review and reprioritize what you can realistically accomplish in the remaining hours of your working day, when your energy is naturally lower. Once your goals are clear, the next trick is to get into a habit of taking regular breaks. We all go through peaks of concentration that inevitably subside and fade into long periods of inattention and fatigue. According to a study by the Draugiem Group, the ideal work rhythm is 52 minutes of work time followed by a 17-minute break.

'ZOOMING IN DURING THE PANDEMIC: WORK LIFE ONLINE'

by Nancy K. Herther

Videoconferencing isn't new—but its recent growth has set new records. Zoom company officials announced a new milestone on April 22: It has more than 300 million daily Zoom meeting participants—up from just 10 million in December 2019. That's an unprecedented challenge for this relatively new startup.

The system has been criticized for "security lapses and poor design choices" in past reviews. However, on April 1, founder Eric Yuan officially apologized for the security issues, explaining that some existed because Zoom was initially designed for "large institutions with full IT support." Yuan announced then that the company would be releasing transparency reports. On April 27, with the release of Zoom version 5.0, the security and privacy concerns were addressed in detail, with Yuan later noting, "I am fortunate to witness our company helping millions of people during an extremely difficult time. It has also been challenging for us, with opportunities for us to drive meaningful change and improvement."

Despite access issues that are common to any new technology, Zoom and other systems have provided important



support for physical distancing and limiting the spread of COVID-19 for institutions and individuals. COVID-19 has naturally caused discussions about the future and raised urgent questions about the impact of pandemics, and their associated countermeasures, on the economy. Policymakers are in uncharted territory. And professionals are dealing with new business realities and service practices that require developing new skills.

'CLOSING AND REOPENING: COVID-19'S IMPACT ON LAW LIBRARY SERVICES'

by Amber Boedigheimer

Law library services have had to change rapidly due to the COVID-19 crisis, and librarians are working hard to come up with the best solutions for delivering them. "[L]ibraries and archives have 'superpowers' under the copyright law that allows us to supply our communities with access to materials for research, scholarship, and study," notes lawyer-librarian Kyle K. Courtney about how libraries can "harness the law" during the crisis.

Oregon law libraries have gone out of their way to ensure that legal infor-

mation is safely available to people in their communities. The challenge for librarians is being able to lend materials to patrons while supporting social distancing and public health containment efforts. According to Next City, curbside book pickup is becoming a popular method for delivering information to patrons to eliminate personal contact. "Another option is a books-by-mail system, which many libraries, especially rural ones, already have in place." In late April, the Washington County Law Library decided to offer contactless pickup and drop-off of library materials while providing for the safe handling of library resources.

Opening their doors again to the public means that librarians must do what they can to ensure public safety as well as their own. Information professionals have to develop best practices for handling collections materials. Moving furniture to maintain 6 feet of distance among patrons and staffers and among themselves is just the beginning. Frequently sanitizing surfaces, placing returned materials in quarantine for several days, and offering curbside checkout service on request are just a few of the ways libraries are preparing to serve their patrons in the near future. ●

LINKS TO THE SOURCE

"Going Virtual: Libraries See Challenges and Opportunities in the Pandemic" newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/Going-Virtual-Libraries-See-Challenges-and-Opportunities-in-the-Pandemic-140583.asp

"Tips for Working Smart at Home" newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/Tips-for-Working-Smart-at-Home-140727.asp

"Zooming In During the Pandemic: Work Life Online" newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/Zooming-In-During-the-Pandemic-Work-Life-Online-140815.asp

"Closing and Reopening: COVID-19's Impact on Law Library Services" newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/Closing-and-Reopening-COVID19s-Impact-on-Law-Library-Services-140935.asp