

TOPCATS:
Taskforce On Post COVID-19 Alignment, Trends and Strategies

Status Report - May 2020

Since the LibraryLinkNJ Executive Board established TOPCATS on April 16 to explore issues, strategies, and solutions, relative to the reopening of libraries post COVID-19, the Task Force has invited library colleagues from all multi-type libraries and various organizations and from throughout the State. We will continue to reinforce inclusiveness and representation of library staff of all levels for more effective approaches in carrying out our charges, in collaboration with the [New Jersey State Library](#) (NJSL), the [New Jersey Library Association](#) (NJLA), and other pertinent efforts that benefit New Jersey libraries in the post COVID-19 environment.

The Task Force has been working diligently to plan, implement, and deliver practical outcomes in the following Areas of Inquiry:

1. Coordinated efforts for reopening New Jersey's libraries
2. Needs assessment for providing library services post COVID-19
3. Communication Strategies for reopening our libraries
4. Staff training for working in a post COVID-19 environment
5. Advocacy for the inclusion of libraries in New Jersey's reopening initiatives
6. Framework for New Jersey libraries' response, recovery, and resilience in the post COVID-19 environment

Here are some fast facts that summarize TOPCATS activities so far:

Fast Facts	
Task Force Kick-Off Meeting, 4/24	Reviewed the TF Charges and Formed Five Work Groups (WG) --- Best Practices; Communication & Outreach; Futures; Policy & Advocacy; Survey --- to work more effectively in awareness of urgency in responding to NJ Libraries' needs.
Best Practices for Reopening New Jersey Libraries	Published and announced to NJ Libraries on May 6.
Reopening Needs Assessment Survey	Survey was conducted for May 6 through 15.
TOPCATS website - https://topcatsnj.org/	Launched and announced to NJ Libraries on May 15.
NJLA Virtual Keynote, 5/18	<i>"Planning for Library Reopenings Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic"</i> : Ralph presented TOPCATS plans and activities
Best Practices for Implementing A Curbside Service	Published on May 19 and announced to NJ Libraries in the near future.
FAQ for Best Practices	Published on May 19.
Working behind the scenes	TOPCATS has been working hard to:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get libraries representation on the Governor's Restart and Recovery Advisory Council ● Develop a plan to address the Digital Divide in NJ Communities and plan for the future in new normal post-pandemic ● Maintain clear communication and get more input and feedback from NJ Libraries |
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TOPCATS Activities (April 24 - May 20)

Best Practices for Reopening New Jersey Libraries

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kR5nSW4XuCdIjSt3rGmrDkwV4PxxhJkTfvmhPIFoOmvk/edit>

Best Practices Work Group (WG) quickly tackled this document after researching and reviewing resources related to reopening libraries. The document was announced to NJ Libraries on May 6. This is a living doc that is *open to everyone* and will continue to be updated, and NJ Libraries can download a most up-to-date version of the doc anytime.

- Leading WG: Best Practices
- *In collaboration with all WGs*

Reopening Needs Assessment Survey

Survey WG created and conducted this survey for May 6 through May 15. A Status Report was shared with TOPCATS members with two recommendations on Professional Development & PPE Group Purchase plans. The WG is producing a final report with in-depth analysis. The report will be shared with TOPCATS by May 22, and will be announced to NJ Libraries soon. We expect this survey results to help TOPCATS in revising documents we've developed and planning for future activities.

- Leading WG: Survey
- *In collaboration with Best Practices, Communication & Outreach*

TOPCATS Website Launch

<https://topcatsnj.org/> - *NJ Libraries from Surviving to Thriving*

TOPCATS launched a website that brings together the work of the Taskforce in one place. We will share all TOPCATS activities and documents developed by the Task Force via this website.

- Leading WG: Futures (Website Admin: Allen McGinley)
- *In collaboration with LibraryLinkNJ*

Best Practices for Implementing A Curbside Service

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TKSxNEsKra85OEyJvIS6eY6EObYX6mGam3jcj31BsEE/edit>

In response to the Governor's [Executive Order 142](#), Policy & Advocacy WG sent a letter to the Governor's Restart and Recovery Advisory Council for clarification on whether this applies to libraries. Juliet & Chris reached out to one of the Governor's aides, and we also reached out to the State Library on this matter. It is possible that another Executive Order may be issued that may mention libraries by name.

In the meantime, Policy & Advocacy WG reached out to Best Practices WG to review EO 142, and Best Practices WG developed this Best Practices document for curb-side service that libraries will apply to adapt to their needs, as we need to encourage libraries to begin now to plan for providing curbside services.

- Leading WG: Policy & Advocacy, Best Practices
- *In collaboration with Futures, Communication & Outreach*

FAQ for “Best Practices”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hNChhXMp3kBmsplrye4HJqc9b6nvSJ5bZaQmKh2Hp40/edit>

Best Practices WG developed FAQ by reviewing the Reopening Needs Assessment Survey responses including valuable comments. They came up with questions based on them and added more for schools and academics with inputs from TOPCATS members from school and academic libraries.

- Leading WG: Best Practices
- *In collaboration with* Survey WG

Advocating Libraries

Policy & Advocacy WG has been trying to get libraries representation on the Governor's Restart and Recovery Advisory Council. They will also share the Best Practices documents by TOPCATS with the League of Municipalities.

- Leading WG: Policy & Advocacy
- *In collaboration with* NJLA & the State Library

Improving Accessibility to Technologies in New Jersey Community

Futures WG has acknowledged and been looking at the issue of technology and digital divide in NJ communities. The WG is currently working on a statement about the digital divide and digital equity that they hope to release soon. They are also exploring various short-term and long-term solutions, including broadband connectivity and hot spot lending, which may require close collaboration with the State Library. TOPCATS will also discuss a possibility to get funds through the CARES Act. This may be a good way to do a partnership between libraries and schools.

- Leading WG: Futures
- *In collaboration with* Best Practices, Policy & Advocacy

Transparent Communications with Libraries & Library Stakeholders

Communication & Outreach WG has been supporting all WGs to share their activities and announce all documents & statements from TOPCATS to NJ Libraries. We believe that transparent and prompt communication with NJ libraries is one of the most important keys to the success of our plans. It's noted that during MentorNJ meet-ups (44 meet-up sessions with 581 participants through 5/20) many libraries expressed their expectation and hope for strong leadership from library organizations and groups like TOPCATS.

- Leading WG: Communication & Outreach
- *In collaboration with* all WGs, LibraryLinkNJ

More to come

TOPCATS will continue to explore more ways to support NJ Libraries in the times of a Pandemic that may include, but not limited to:

- Clearinghouse for Ideas
- Professional Development in collaboration with other groups, like NJLA and MentorNJ
- Outcome Based Evaluations: Conduct a survey to evaluate whether everything we've done and recommended has worked
- Contingency Plans for Libraries
- PPE Group Purchase via LibraryLinkNJ in collaboration with the State Library: We will present this in more details to the LibraryLinkNJ Executive Board for your consideration and review.

TOPCATS will continue to work on future plans to protect libraries and library staff, while we continue to advocate the libraries proactively and aggressively, as the catchphrase on our website --- *New Jersey Libraries from Surviving to Thriving*.

TOPCATS members:

- TOPCATS meets every Friday for its weekly status meeting
- Each Work Group meets as often as needed
- New members from New Jersey Association of Library Assistants (NJALA) will be added to each WG

Name	Library/Organization	Name	Library/Organization
Ex-Officio Members - Serving on All Work Groups			
Ralph Bingham	GCLS	Juliet Machie	LibraryLinkNJ
Best Practices WG Leader: Ranjna Das		Communications & Outreach WG Leader: Allan Kleiman	
WG GOALS & OBJECTIVES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop “Best Practices for Reopening NJ Libraries” to be distributed to the library community 2. Develop “Best Practices for Implementing a Curbside Service” 3. Post updated versions of documents on TOPCATS website 4. Develop FAQs to support BP documents 		WG GOALS & OBJECTIVES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop & Distribute Announcements to the NJ Library Community, as the TF’s Work Progresses 2. Serve as Liaisons to Communicate with Other Stakeholders 	
Ranjna Das	Burlington County Library	Ranjna Das	Burlington County Library
Linda Devlin	Camden County Library System	Allan Kleiman	Montville Township Public Library
Jill Mills	NJASL	Pat Massey	NJASL
Kathleen Moeller-Peiffer	NJSL	Pamela Price	Mercer County Community College
Darren O’Neill	Morris County Library	Pat Tumulty	NJLA
Andrea Orsini	Cape May County Library	Maureen Wilkinson	Warren County Library
Will Porter	Sussex County Library System		
Robert Rynkiewicz	Atlantic City Free Public Library		
Futures WG - Leader: James Keebler			
WG GOALS & OBJECTIVES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop & Maintain TOPCATS Website 2. Develop Guidelines on How to Ease the Digital Divides 			

3. Develop Contingency and/or Risk Management Guidelines for Libraries			
Brian Auger	Somerset County Library	Eileen Palmer	LMxAC
Phillip Berg	MAIN	Nadine Sergejeff	Newark Public Library
Danielle Cesena	NJLA Glen Rock Public Library	Jeffrey Trzeciak	Jersey City Free Library
Mary Chute	NJSL	Alyssa Valenti	Raritan Valley Community College
Corey Fleming	Paterson Free Public Library	Kurt Wagner	VALE Monmouth University Library
Jennifer Jamison	NJASL	Emily Witkowski	Maplewood Memorial Library
James Keehler	Hunterdon County Library	Chelsea Woods	New Brunswick Public Library
Allen McGinley	Teaneck Public Library		
Policy & Advocacy WG Leader: Christopher Korenowsky		Survey WG Leader: Susanne Sacchetti	
WG GOALS & OBJECTIVES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a <i>Principles of Safely Operating Libraries During a Public Health Crisis</i> for potential municipal Board or Commission adoption. 2. Ensure the voice of the library community is represented in Governor Murphy's statewide (and regional) COVID 19 task forces. 3. Map an aspirational message addressing the need defining where the New Jersey library community is going in its reopening efforts for staff and users. 		WG GOALS & OBJECTIVES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create surveys of library needs to order for New Jersey's libraries to reopen and their role during the recovery process. 	
Tricina Beebe	NJASL	Doug Baldwin	Piscataway Public Library
Chris Carbone	South Brunswick Public Library	Jennifer Jamison	NJASL
Dave Hansen	BCCLS	Bonnie Lafazan	Berkeley College Library
Christopher Korenowsky	Somerset County Library System of New Jersey	Mi-Sun Lyu	LibraryLinkNJ
Eileen Palmer	LMxAC	Luca Manna	PALS Plus
Pat Pavlak	New Jersey Library Trustees Association	Kimberly Paone	Matawan Aberdeen Public Library
Pat Tumulty	NJLA	Susanne Sacchetti	Cumberland County Library