

OWLS Director report

March 23, 2020 OWLS Board of Trustees Meeting

Annual Reports

All annual reports were submitted to the state on time.

ILS Migration Update

Due to recent events, we have had to reschedule a few design sessions, but we remain on track.

Libraries and COVID-19

On Saturday, March 14th, I received word that the Appleton Public Library would be closing effective the following day. While we knew on Friday that the library would probably close soon, this was faster than anticipated. Over the course of the week of March 15-20, all of the OWLSnet libraries closed to the public. I suspended delivery on Wednesday. A few libraries are offering curbside pick-up, but most are not. This wave of closures required a lot of work on the part of OWLSnet staff, and I am very grateful for their extraordinary efforts last week.

As of today, staff have access to the building during the usual “open hours” as long as we adhere to the 6-foot distancing rule. However, we are following the CDC recommendation to have everyone work from home as much as possible. Only one person is working in the office regularly, while others drop in as needed to complete site-specific tasks like changing the back-up tapes and printing checks.

This morning, the Governor announced that he will issue a “Safer at Home” order which will take effect this week. I am confident that we can keep most OWLS staff very busy from home for several weeks if necessary. The ILS Migration project will continue and time usually spent supporting library operations will now be redirected toward improving and supporting online library services. The staff most impacted will be two part-time staff who handle materials. Their jobs cannot be done remotely.

We have two options to consider for employees whose jobs have been disrupted:

1. Lay off employees and instruct them to file for unemployment benefits.
2. Adopt a policy that OWLS employees who are available to work but prevented from working due to the suspension of delivery services and the Governor’s “Safer at Home” order will be paid for their regularly scheduled hours until such time as operations resume or until the board takes action to amend this policy.

Since the “Safer at Home” order is likely to be implemented this week, I request the board choose a course of action at today’s meeting.

Resources

- Status of OWLSnet Libraries: <https://www.infosoup.info/ws/mar-19-2020/covid-19-update>
- COVID-19 Information for Wisconsin Public Libraries: <https://dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors/disaster-planning/coronavirus>
- COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/covid19/public/ui.htm>
- Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>