

REOPENING *of* HISTORICAL *and* HERITAGE SOCIETIES

Historical society volunteers have shown an admirable capacity to adapt to the strange conditions imposed by the COVID-19 lockdown. This flexibility has been shown in such ways as the transition to online meetings and seminars, a move (where circumstances permit) for volunteers to work from home on digitisation and other projects, and instituting the collection of pandemic-related materials.

Now, as we come closer to the easing of the COVID-19 lockdown it will become possible for historical and heritage societies to reopen and recommence their normal activities, while also incorporating some of the new methodologies that they have adopted. We hope this guide will be of some help in planning for that reopening.

These guidelines are also cognisant of the fact that COVID-19 and maybe other influenzas will be with us for a long time and that we may be moving up and down the scale of restrictions for some time and that we should plan for flexibility.

Also we are aware that different states and territories will be working to different timetables and have different limitations and exclusions.

On the whole our volunteers tend to be from an older and more vulnerable demographic so the return to normal might be slower than the general populace.

GENERAL ADVICE

Initially you may be able to allow a limited reopening of your premises so your volunteers may continue their work in your collections and museums. Public entry and gatherings can only occur once permitted by government authorities, and this will likely be in stages.

Some services which have been established during the lockdown will need to be removed as they will be redundant. However, other innovations such as greater digitisation and online activities will most likely become a part of future normal service and, should this be the case, more thought needs to be put into payment for digital and online activities which have tended to be provided free during COVID as a quasi public service (such as free distribution of newsletters).


There will need to be a continuing focus on the safe handling of items for research, processing and display. There will need to be ongoing caution about social distancing and close working. You should calculate how many people your rooms can hold at any one time according to the easing of restrictions.

The slowdown in the transmission of normal flu and colds has been an unexpected silver lining of this lockdown and it should be our goal to maintain many of the new hygiene practices that we've introduced to safeguard the health of our volunteers. We do not always know the health deficiencies of our volunteers so they should be counselled that only they can make the decision about when they deem it safe to have greater contact with their colleagues and the public.

Our volunteers are renowned for their enthusiasm and commitment to the work of their societies, but they need also to be aware of the need to stay at home if they are feeling unwell.













Consider how you can rearrange furniture and add signage to encourage social distancing.



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19: IDENTIFYING THE SYMPTOMS

SYMPTOMS	COVID-19	COLD	FLU
Fever 	Common	Rare	Common
Cough 	Common	Common	Common
Sore Throat 	Sometimes	Common	Common
Shortness of Breath 	Sometimes	No	No
Fatigue 	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Aches & Pains 	Sometimes	No	Common
Headaches 	Sometimes	Common	Common
Runny or Stuffy Nose 	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Diarrhea 	Rare	No	Sometimes, especially for children
Sneezing 	No	Common	No

Adapted from material produced by WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is very difficult to distinguish between the symptoms of COVID-19, influenza and a cold. If you have any infectious or respiratory symptoms (such as a sore throat, headache, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, cough or runny nose) don't go to work. You need to self-isolate and to be assessed by a medical professional. You may need testing for COVID-19. You must not return to work until cleared by a medical professional. You need to ensure that the people you care for are protected and safe.

TOGETHER WE CAN HELP STOP THE SPREAD AND STAY HEALTHY.
For more information about **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** visit health.gov.au


Coronavirus (COVID-19)


GOOD HYGIENE IS IN YOUR HANDS.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to prevent passing on germs. Dry your hands.

TOGETHER WE CAN HELP STOP THE SPREAD AND STAY HEALTHY.
For more information about **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** visit health.gov.au

HELP STOP THE SPREAD AND STAY HEALTHY





Australian Government

Public health posters are available to download from www.health.gov.au.

STEPS YOU MAY TAKE

- Undertake an assessment of risk factors in your society. (What are these factors? Are people forced into close proximity in the lunch room? Lobby? Lifts? Stairwells? Do people share equipment and desks? Are they accessing the same research material? Do you have easy access to hand-washing facilities and hand sanitisers? Can you control the number of people who enter your space? How regularly are your kitchen and toilets cleaned?)
- Prepare a timeline for a staged return to services. Do this in discussion with your volunteers who might be feeling anxious and vulnerable.
- Prepare written guidelines for your volunteers so they are aware of all precautions and procedures. These should be both distributed and displayed in prominent places.
- Notify your members of the staged return to services and the ongoing precautions and procedures that will be necessary.
- For the immediate future you will most likely need social distancing measures. Plan these, arrange furniture and display signage. Observe how other public spaces do this and copy and adapt.
- Provide hand sanitiser, wipes and other cleaning equipment.
- Materials should be cleaned after handling, or quarantined for up to a week before rehandling. (There are various guides and resources at this site <https://www.imls.gov/coronavirus-covid-19-updates#resources>)
- Plan and start to publicise an appropriate calendar of openings and events. Maybe start with smaller events. Be aware that if there is a second outbreak we might be plunged back into previous restrictions.
- Reintroduce your full programme as the final phase.

In compiling this document, FAHS acknowledges the contribution of Rosemary Cameron (RHSV Executive Officer) and the work of the Australian Library and Information Association whose more detailed document has assisted in its development (<https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/Reopening%20Libraries.pdf>).