

The Post-Pandemic Transformation of Art and Architecture Libraries

Subjects: [Architecture And Design](#) | [Cultural Studies](#)

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This entry considers the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the processes and functions of art and architecture libraries in North America and distinguishes between temporary changes and those that will endure and are here to stay. COVID-19 impacted all aspects of human life, placing tremendous stress on institutions and individuals globally. Academic libraries responded to the crisis by bringing resources to communities remotely and keeping constituents engaged to maintain a sense of normalcy. While libraries in schools of architecture, art, and design, responded similarly to other academic libraries, they also had unique needs. This entry is informed by two surveys of art and architecture library staff and faculty, alongside a preliminary literature review. The results of the first survey were published in *Art Documentation* and the results and analysis of the second survey are forthcoming. Both temporary and long-standing changes were implemented to ensure uninterrupted service in academic institutions. Temporary solutions included extending loan periods, quarantining materials, enforcing social distancing, and expanding document delivery. Changes that will endure post-pandemic include the increased acquisition of digital materials, remote instruction and reference consultations, increased resource access, and the utilization of a vast array of technologies.

COVID-19 pandemic

post-pandemic

libraries

online access

remote services

digitization

transformation

art and architecture

academic libraries

The recently published report *The Library of the Future* indicates that "the library profession, much like the library itself, is undergoing profound change" ^[1]. Indeed, following the COVID-19 pandemic, many library activities have moved online. Librarians have adapted and become "vital partners with scholars, instructors, students, and patrons in a way few had experienced before" ^[1].

December 2019 saw the first outbreak of the coronavirus disease in Wuhan, China. By mid-March 2020, all 50 of the United States had reported cases, leading to a rapid shutdown of businesses, cultural and religious institutions, and public and private educational facilities, including libraries. Few if any were prepared for the changes necessitated by the shutdown. Preparedness manuals offered little relevant content, and practices were rarely uniform even within institutions. We have now reached a point in the operation of libraries where predictions can be made about temporary workarounds versus changes that are here to stay.

Beginning in 2021, publications focused on library responses to COVID-19 were released, providing information on both public and academic libraries ^{[2][3][4][5]}. The majority address particular case studies, or specific library functions such as research productivity, management, copyright, or technological advancements. *The Handbook of*

Research on Library Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic takes a scholarly approach to understanding how libraries transformed during the global health emergency. Chapters highlight a range of topics including crisis leadership, data management, and virtual programming. Library types from around the world are also represented. Chapters include *Opportunities and Challenges Offered by the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Academic Libraries* which proposes, “libraries cannot afford to close down their formal duties of providing information to the users ... The libraries should be in continuous coordination with the researchers conducting research in the field of the cure of the COVID-19” [6]. However, little attention has been paid to the specific response of architecture, art, and design libraries.

This entry applies to the information science field and information professions, more specifically to those in the art, architecture, and design disciplines. This content is informed by an exploratory review of current literature addressing responses and changes to academic library functions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside two extensive surveys of library staff and faculty users. These surveys were circulated during the early and late stages of the pandemic. Detailed findings have been published [7].

References

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