

VPL Alice MacKay Temporary Computer Lab – Q and As

This is a compilation of questions we have received from other library systems about VPL's temporary Computer Lab.

The Computer Lab opened on Monday, May 25th, 2020 with 8 computers with internet access and the Microsoft Office Suite. Printing and scanning to email is available for free. The service is targeted for patrons who have no access to technology.

Registration and hours:

VPL Security Guards take registrations twice a day – starting at 9:00 am for 3 morning sessions, and starting at 1:00 pm for the 3 afternoon sessions, with 10 minutes between each session. The 10 minutes between each booking allow staff to wipe down the keyboards and mice after each user, finish up last-minute printing requests from patrons and for patrons to settle in and or log off. The Lab is closed from 12:15 to 1:30.

The workstations are cleaned at 12:15 and at 4:15, after the last session of the day, and keyboards and mice are exchanged for a new set to allow a more thorough cleaning of both. Please see attached cleaning protocol for details.

Staffing:

The lab is staffed by a branch head, a community librarian and library technician. Their shifts are Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. Because of the cleaning requirements and to minimize the need for staff handovers and periods where the lab is minimally staffed, the lab is closed from 12:15 to 1 30 for cleaning and staff lunch. There is also a security guard in the Lab at all times.

Questions

Have they had more than 8 people show up at once? Have they always had enough terminals to meet demand or have community members told to come back in an hour to try again? How about folks "hanging around".

- **Not at the lab, but upstairs at registration. Registrations are done at 9 am and at 1:00 pm. This was done to reduce the likelihood of "no-shows". We have 9 computers and 9 spots in 6 designated bookings (54 slots) during the day. There is a waitlist for each hour, which the security guards use to fill the spots in case someone doesn't show up.**
- **We initially started with 8 computers and added one more on June 15, to address demand.**
- **We do not have seating available, so patrons are not waiting anywhere inside the building.**
- **Patrons that are waitlisted may have the opportunity to come in after the booked patron leaves early.**

Why did they choose to use generic logins and not have public use their library cards and why did they make printing for free? Is there a limit for the free printing?

- **Because we wanted to get around the issue of issuing library cards and selling photocopy cards, and just focus on providing computer access. This also reduces the risk of close**

interactions like library card registrations and cash transactions (exchanging bills, collecting coins, etc) which necessitates the exchange of things between staff and patrons.

- Patrons can print up to 15 pages of blank and white documents, and 2 pages of colour documents.

What is the ratio of security staff vs library specific staff?

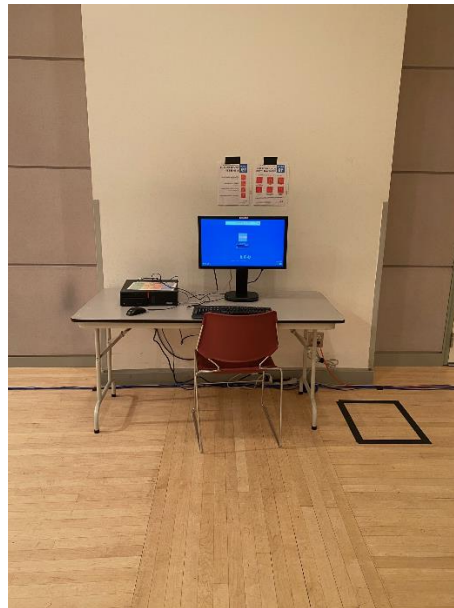
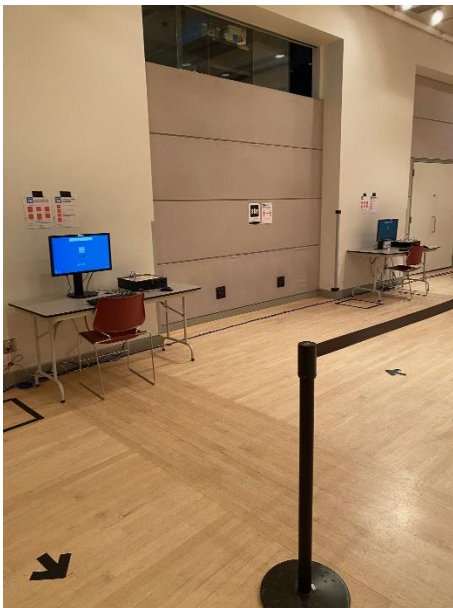
- 2 security staff (1 in the room, 1 outside the concourse for registration) and 3 staff in the lab.

How often do staff change their masks/gloves? Is there an expectation at all? Does VPL provide the PPE or are staff wearing their own masks?

- Masks – we tend to use 1 per day as they tend to be fairly clean.
- Gloves – at least 6 times a day (we change gloves with each new shift of people to help). We also wash our hands when we take off the gloves.
- VPL provides all the PPE. We also have the option of using a face shield, and protective eye goggles when cleaning.

What have been the challenges of running the lab?

- Not being able to assist patrons closely because of social distancing rules, which makes it very difficult to see the screen. Because staff wear masks, it could be difficult for patrons to understand us, particularly for patrons with hearing difficulties. Our Maintenance Department has created a mobile plexiglass barrier which we can take with us to help patrons. See illustration below.



(L) Stanchions to mark 2 m social distance requirement; (R) 2 m distance staff point of view



Plexiglass barrier used to come closer to patron, staff can still wear PPE as they wish

- It is also difficult to enforce social distancing rules with patrons, as they are used to coming up close to staff for help. Any structural or engineering barriers put into place will assist in this regard.
- We have had some complaints from patrons that the 45-minute sessions are not long enough (before the pandemic, patrons have the option of extending their 1-hour booking to 2 hours with the possibility of extension at the Central Branch).
- Our restrictions on in-patron registration was not well-received by patrons used to being able to book a computer online or over the phone. This was a deliberate decision by the Library to focus on the mandate of the lab, which is serving people who have no access to technology. However, we have made special accommodations for seniors or folks with mobility or physical challenges to access the lab, on a case-by-case basis, by either taking their registrations over the phone, or arranging next-day bookings with the security staff.

Do they have public washroom facilities available for the public? What is the cleaning schedule for those?

- **Yes, we do, on the same floor, open from 8 am to 5 pm. These washrooms are cleaned every 2 hours.**

Prior to starting, did staff have any specific concerns?

- **Exposure to the covid-19 virus**
- **Exposure to chemicals (for cleaning)**
- **General anxiety jumping into public facing work after a 2 month hiatus**

Are the public entering and leaving by the same door or different one?

- **Yes, they use the same door.**

Would they have written documentation they are comfortable in sharing? Worksafe? Staff instructions?

- **These are included in this information package – safety guidelines for staff and our cleaning protocols**

Have you had the experience of families or groups coming together? If so, how have you addressed it? For example, if a parent comes in with their children and want each child to use a different computer.

- **No, because our services are specifically targeted for those without any access to technology at all. Our lab patrons are all adults, and mostly seniors and men. On the rare occasion where a parent was accompanied by a child, the child was given an extra seat while the parent used the workstation.**