



New Air Purification System Helps Fondulac Library Turn Page on Pandemic

As the heart of many communities, libraries have long been a destination for people to read, learn, and connect. The Fondulac District Library in East Peoria, Illinois is no exception.

In fact, in 2019, the library welcomed 120,000 visitors, circulated more than 220,000 items, and offered more than 600 programs. In March 2020, however, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the library to temporarily close its doors to its building and transition to only online and virtual services.

“Normally, we want people to come to the library and sit, study, read, and learn. But with the COVID crisis, we had to rethink a lot of things,” says Library Director Genna Buhr. “To quickly function so differently than how we usually would was a hard hurdle to clear mentally — it hurt our librarian hearts. But we knew we had to keep the safety of our patrons, staff, and the community top of mind.”

Staff returned to the library in late May and begin developing more online programming and preparing to re-open to the public in July. Air quality in the 32,000-square-foot building had never been more important.

Buhr began researching public safety recommendations from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control. She then consulted with the library’s HVAC partner, ENTEC, about the feasibility of various recommendations related to equipment settings and ventilation.

ENTEC recommended Global Plasma Solutions’ Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization System, which could be easily installed on existing HVAC equipment on the library’s rooftop. The system is proven to kill pathogens, including the COVID-19 virus, while helping to neutralize odors and control allergens.

As an Ameren Illinois Program Ally, ENTEC was also able to identify utility incentives available for the project.

“We understand that a cookie-cutter approach does not work for every project. Our Custom offering provides incentives for unique projects or emerging technologies that save energy and money,” says Jim Dillon, Senior Manager, Energy Efficiency Operations at Ameren Illinois.

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— **Genna Buhr**, Library Director,
Fondulac District Library

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The Power of Program Allies

Program Allies like ENTEC help customers identify energy-saving improvements and incentives to help pay for the projects. These independent contractors are specially trained on the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program.

“We work closely with ENTEC on all HVAC issues. They are our go-to-people. They brought to my attention the possibility of an air purification system — and incentives to help pay for it,” says Fondulac Library Director Genna Buhr. “We relied heavily on ENTEC’s knowledge and navigation of the incentive process. The fact that we already had a relationship with them and trusted them really worked for us.”



“Through our Custom offering, we were able to cover a large percentage of the Fondulac Library’s project costs.”

“ENTEK brought the Ameren Illinois incentives to our attention and estimated what the library’s final investment would be,” says Library Director Genna Buhr, who was able to present a compelling case to the Library Board.

Given the green light by the board, ENTEC installed the system in September.

Totaling nearly \$7,000, the incentives from Ameren Illinois helped to greatly reduce the project payback period and made an important safety measure even more do-able.

“This was a major investment that could help us now and after the pandemic. This is something we wanted to do quickly for health and safety,” says Buhr, who also worked with Ameren Illinois on an LED lighting project at the library in early 2020. “We were going to do what was right for the library, and the incentives from Ameren Illinois definitely had a positive effect on that.”

Though air quality was the priority with this project, the low-maintenance system also offers an estimated 30 percent energy savings by reducing outdoor air intake by up to 75 percent. The new air purification system is expected to reduce the library’s energy use by more than 25,000 kilowatt-hours and 660 therms for total savings of more than \$2,000 every year.

“As organizations rethink the way they operate in the wake of the pandemic, there’s no better time to tackle energy-saving projects that make your facility more sustainable for years to come.”

— Jim Dillon, Ameren Illinois

“Public health was the driving force behind this project; the energy savings are a bonus. We will take energy savings where we can get them because that’s more money we can spend directly on library service.” notes Buhr.

“As organizations rethink the way they operate in the wake of the pandemic, there’s no better time to tackle energy-saving projects that make your facility more sustainable for years to come. For nonprofit groups and public facilities like the library, every dollar saved goes to provide a needed service in the community,” says Dillon. “The Fondulac District Library has created a safer, healthier indoor environment while achieving energy savings — and Ameren Illinois is proud to be part of that.”

“We had a very good experience with Ameren Illinois. I would absolutely recommend the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Program to other public facilities and businesses,” says Buhr. “The additional funds they provided made a lot of things possible.”

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