

The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. In the foreground, several books and papers are scattered on the floor, suggesting a state of disarray or a crisis. In the background, tall bookshelves filled with books line the walls, creating a sense of a large, organized space. The overall tone is somewhat somber due to the mess on the floor.

Contagion & Crisis Communication in Libraries

DEFINITIONS • CHALLENGES • PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES • BEST PRACTICES

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What is Crisis Communication?

Crisis

- Unexpected event
- Threatens operations or stakeholders
- Requires rapid response

Crisis Communication

- Accurate
- Timely
- Consistent information

Contagion

- Spread of fear
- Rumors
- Misinformation



Crisis



Uncertainty



Information Contagion



Effective Communication



Trust & Stability



Libraries Have Two Roles

Libraries During Crisis

Organization

Protect staff

Continue services

Communicate operations

Manage disruptions

Community Resource

Trusted information

Internet access

Recovery support

Community resilience

Libraries manage their own crisis while helping the public navigate another.

Speed vs. Accuracy

Need to communicate quickly

- Reduce speculation
- Reassure stakeholders
- Maintain credibility



Communication Channels

- Website
- Social media
- Email
- Meetings
- News media



Good first message includes

- What happened
- What is confirmed
- Immediate actions
- Next update



Transparency Builds Trust



Purposeful transparency

- Regular updates
- Explain decisions
- Share confirmed information
- Admit uncertainty
- Correct mistakes openly

NOT

- Information overload
- False reassurance
- Unnecessary alarm

Key Issue #3

Misinformation as a Crisis

Libraries Respond By

- Fact-checking
- Information literacy
- LibGuides
- Credible resources
- Multilingual communication

Misinformation

Shared unintentionally

Disinformation

Shared deliberately

How Far Should Libraries Go?

Expand the Library Role

- Community support
- Emergency information
- Social services partnerships
- Public resilience

Exercise Caution

- Staff limitations
- Safety concerns
- Professional boundaries

Balanced Position

Prepare staff

Know referral pathways

Escalate to professionals

Before Crisis Happens

Preparedness Checklist

- ☐ Crisis communication plan
- ☐ Spokesperson
- ☐ Contact lists
- ☐ Partnerships
- ☐ Practice drills
- ☐ Communication templates



Emerging Training

- Virtual Reality simulations
- De-escalation practice
- Empathy building

During the Crisis

Do

- Stay calm
- Listen
- Validate emotions
- Use plain language
- Offer choices

Avoid (TACOS)

- X** Threaten
- X** Argue
- X** Challenge
- X** Order
- X** Shame

Six Takeaways

1. Plan ahead
2. Respond early
3. Communicate consistently
4. Make information accessible
5. Train staff
6. Evaluate and improve

"Effective crisis communication protects people, strengthens trust, and supports community resilience."



Questions

- Do you prefer more or less detail about what's going on during a crisis? Why?
- Do you think libraries should play more or less of a role in helping their community during a crisis? Why?
- Does your local library have any public information about how they will respond during a crisis (i.e., protocol during severe temperatures, lockdowns, etc.)? Do you think their planning/documentation is adequate?





Thank you!