

Creating Response Strategies for Library Leaders

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How Can We Help?

- If we want to have the resources we need to “Help” —as a service—we must use the time between Helping to build readiness and prepare responses.
- Help as a posture of service and Help as a way to prepare are not mutually exclusive.
- Preparation beats improvisation, especially during disruption.



Disruptions

Economic & Funding

Political & Policy

Local Media & Technology

Library Workforce & Patron Needs

What's Changing • Economic & Funding

- Local revenue volatility.
- Competing municipal priorities
- Austerity budgeting and planning practices.
- Maintenance-of-effort risks.
- Vendor changes and collection costs; inflation.

What's Changing • Political & Policy

- Shifts in laws - even in other states and by elected officials who do not manage IL libraries - can impact your collections, programs, services, and spaces.
- Watch indicators: FOIA spikes, coordinated challenges, First Amendment audits.

What's Changing • Local Media & Technology

- Local virality and gossip.
- Mis- and Disinformation shape narratives quickly.
- Cybersecurity threats.
- AI tools are changing workflows.
- AI tools can change the perception of your relevance.

What's Changing • Library Workforce & Patron Needs

- Staff turnover, cross-training gaps, and front-line stress.
- Pressure on your community:
 - Economic dislocations.
 - Social / political pressures.
 - Immigration, aging populations, mental health, and social services.
 - K-12 and pre-K needs, especially at-risk populations.
- Vendor outages and consolidations.
 - Rising tech-help demands

Three Responders Framework

Me

Us

Them

The Three Responders Framework

Me = Individual staff as empowered actors in communications and relationships.

Us = The library with its institutional resilience, policies, protocols, and documentation in place.

Them = partner organizations led by the library to act in mutual interest and aid.

Me • Individual Staff: Strategic Readiness

- Understand the library policy environment and institutional landscape.
- Understand the legal and legislative landscape.
- Develop advocacy and policy fluency; know key library policies and processes.
- Recognize leverage points around you - regardless of job title.

Us • The Library: Resilience & Protocols

- Conduct risk and asset assessment: scenarios, assets, champions, channels.
- Materials challenges: policy, timelines, appeal path, records.
- Budget threats: talking points, metrics, service tiers.
- External political pressure: board alignment, counsel coordination, single voice communications.

Them• Partners Led by the Library

- Coalition mapping: education, business, faith-based, social service, veterans, seniors, media, youth groups.
 - “Who else cares...?”
- Pre-need policy outreach: twice-yearly briefings with electeds; the art of the short policy brief.
- Be the expert witnesses: impact data and 2–3 findings you can verify.

Actions About Issues • Four Moves

1. Draft Your Policy Brief
 - I. Problem, Library Role, Evidence, Options, The Ask
2. Pre-need outreach and leave-behinds.
3. Join or lead coalitions by population and place.
4. Self-ID as the experts on library impacts.

Anticipating Change

Economic & Funding = Prepare tiered service models and budget-impact one-pagers.

Political & Policy = Document reviews, appeals timelines, evidence standards, and public comment processes.

Media & Tech = Engage the conversation, prepare messages, designate spokespersons, and conduct "run-throughs" for incidents.

Library Workforce & Patron Needs = Build staff redundancies and communicate with funders about disruptions that patrons are experiencing.

Why Readiness Beats Improvisation



Principles of Readiness

1. Pre-commit to the threshold/escalation.
2. Pre-plan your roles.
3. Message while calm.
4. Declare a single source of truth.
5. Have your data ready.
6. Conduct 'tabletops' and host after-actions.
7. Give your partners permission.

Q&A – Comments?

Three takeaways: Personal → Institutional → Partners

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Questions, Comments, Concerns?

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