



Challenges and Successes in the Post Pandemic Library

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Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference
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2:30 pm to 3:30 pm (CT)
Virtual/Digital Webinar

For almost three years, we have grappled with the well being, health and safety of our employees, library workers, constituents, and other stakeholders.

As we look to the future, library managers and leaders must look at the entire organization to create a viable operation.

Moving forward, the post pandemic library must make decisions on its public and support spaces, and breadth and depth of services and collections with consideration to how to measure and assess, preferred competencies and training needed, and communication and management.

- **Were the last three years unique? How so?**
- **How does the uniqueness matter during recovery?**
- **Where have we “been” for the last 2+ years?**
- **What are five major focuses moving forward?**
 - a. **Management (do’s and don’ts)**
 - b. **Leadership (do’s and don’ts)**
- **What are the ten things you can do tomorrow?**
- **What are the top 12 things you should do?**

**Were the last
three years
unique
among public
health
events?
Pandemics?**

How so?

- Rollercoaster, but spread more slowly
- More stages in public health challenges
- More variants/more seasons
- Ages and stages of infections/deaths
- Implementation is longer
- Global to Local Economy
- Health standards
- Information (obviously) slower, no single source, controversies and credentials
- Data scarce
- Treatments - more and more quickly
- Immunity (not achieved)

How does uniqueness matter during recovery?

- Few, if any precedents
- Longer road to “new normal”
- “Human” recovery slow, due to uncertainty, severity
- Uncertainty (never embraced, what’s next, unclear)
- More extremes (conditions, behaviors, media, etc.)
- Timing (frequency, speed of changes)
- Competition and marketing (terminology changes)
- Safety and security (plan for & integration of more, different)
- Communication (contextual, + references, citations)
- Reliance on digital, multiple info channels, business continuity unclear
- Assessment (more, different)
- Reactive and proactive

Where have we “been” for the last 2+ years?

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - Varied, unique, constant (cleaning public and staff areas)

CLOSURES Longer, redefined “closures,” “open” with reduced services

REMOTE Practices Institutionalized - primary and secondary and responsibilities to more staff/groups

SERVICES Refined and redefined

NORMAL Redefinition with rollercoaster expectations

RELATIONSHIPS WITH USERS CHANGED

SPACE The LONG look at physicalities and proximity - user interactions, staff interactions, facility infrastructure, furniture (age, placement, options for change/doing without)

What are five major focuses moving forward?

1. Integrating **remote roles and responsibilities**
1. Institutionalizing **communication**
1. Dealing with **change** - in and of itself
1. Flexible **workspaces**/guidelines and standards
1. Broader **health concerns** - public wellness, employee health and wellness (being vs. living)

Management Do's and Don'ts

Do...for success

- **Review and revise operations content** including the strategic plan, position descriptions, new terminology/definitions
- **Assess data gathering & aggregation** to integrate value, impact, worth & benefit and who needs what, then present it, include it and describe why content for baselines for decision makers.
- **Integrate consistency** and technical style into communications
- **Create content** to post/present identifying changes, impact and why

Don't...

- **Forget** to signal stages for change with a specific timeline
- **Forget** to include impact going forward in budget, etc. request
- **Ignore** the data from the past $\frac{2}{5}$ years even though significantly different.
- **Repeat** standardized training/onboarding, instead-integrate "new" & "new normal" into training and retraining.

Leadership Do's and Don'ts

Do...for success

- Assess and address organizational culture
- Communicate commitment to equity, expectations and organizational concern for employees
- Address change in and of itself
- Clarify vision, mission and values

Don't...

- Stop communicating consistently
- Forget to lead by example
- Ignore expediency needed for timing activities, communication and decision making
- Ignore opportunities for expanding leadership given staff performance and commitment over the last two + years

**What are the
top twelve
management
“things” to do
overall?**

1. **Employ/continue remote** communication leadership techniques
1. **Practice honesty and evidence** (know/don't know, can/can't, control/no control)
1. **Identify employee/audiences** (internal, external - primary, etc.) and match data to audience - processes; products
1. **Review/revise marketing/public relations/BRANDING** – assess relevancy/consider changes
1. **Adopt/require technical writing** (language, design, categorization and information/data visuals using paradigm shifts, infographics)
1. **Integrate alternative aggregation** of information of data, etc.

What are the top twelve management “things” to do overall? (cont.)

7. **Choose focus (pick one or more)** benefit, value, worth, impact (Address “intangible” & integrate staff/expertise first.)
8. **Assess service and resource delivery** – techniques, modes, methods, costs, assessment, match to users
9. **Redefine existing/define new measures** and assessment techniques of user success & your role in success.
10. **Review and communicate expectations** of staff and users staffing identified (up, across, down and what and when) and expectations – users identified (primary, secondary, etc.)
11. **Standardize content (terminology, definitions, subject headings, forms, documentation)**
12. **Focus on not just items but access** (breadth, depth, match to user, tracking, etc.)

What are the Top Ten Things to do Tomorrow

- 1. Distribute a simple individual survey** for employee groups (group identification is for aggregation by frontline – circulation, frontline – reference, frontline – xxxxx; supervisory or middle level management, senior management, support staff, etc. and if small, consider using a focus group approach/place on discussion agendas.
 - If you returned in time to summer 2020, name three things you would do differently.
 - What three pandemic changes did the library get right?
 - What three pandemic changes did the library got wrong?
- 1. Identify a process** for - moving ahead - to assess measurements and – excluding those **required** by the umbrella organization, the state, the federal government or an association (and others such as stakeholders, peers, etc.) – what can you stop? What needs to change permanently?
- 1. Begin the discussion with decision makers** - what pandemic terms need to stay, what can “retire?”
 - Identify one change made for the pandemic that the library needs to keep.
 - Identify one change the library made that needs to change back to pre-pandemic processes OR stop altogether.
- 1. Begin the discussion among all staff** on what remote activities can be retained and integrated into the organization? (Ex. remote meetings, remote reference, remote book clubs, library communication posted online, etc.)
- 1. Prepare a presentation** for umbrella organizations, funders, (and staff where needed) etc. on who you are now. Consider paradigm shifts of what will change AND what will stay the same.

What are the Top Ten Things to do Tomorrow (con't)

6. Distribute a communication for a new timeline for this final stage of the pandemic as a pandemic. (Keeping in mind communication may possibly in the future have to explain and deal with epidemics, endemics or situations referred to with more commonly used terms such as outbreaks or seasons.
7. Distribute a communication with a 360-degree employee concern for health and well being using CDC and WHO and local information with what the organization will continue to monitor (ex. dashboards) and what employees need to do to assume responsibility (within HIPAA guidelines.)
8. Announce a review of the library's and the umbrella organization's mission, vision and values for revising or reaffirming.
9. Query your peers and – if available or your institution's practice – your identified benchmark institutions, what two things have they changed? What two things will they return?
10. Set aside any strategic plan you may have until Spring of 2023 and then revisit for comparison to the organization of today as well as reality checking, realistic expectations and a match to today's and tomorrow's user.

Thank you for attending!

I will be answering questions after the webinar, so drop your questions in the chat and staff will aggregate them. I will reply and staff will post content on the website - with the presentation content.

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