Creating A Crisis Communications Plan That Works

An Infopeople Webinar
March 27, 2019
Presented by Kim Crowder
Kim Crowder
Director, Communications, The Indianapolis Public Library

• Been in this role for almost three years.
• Launched the department after a Communications Department being nonexistent for more than five years.
• Has worked with Oprah Winfrey and for two Fortune 500 companies.
• Published journalist in The Houston Chronicle.
• Sings and salsa dances regularly.
• Has done presentations at the annual American Library Association conference, for InfoPeople, Linking Indy Women, and Indiana State Library.
• Trips and/or falls more often than willing to admit.
Crisis Communications Plans Are A Must

Because Anything Can Happen...And It Will
Prepare NOW For What Could Happen Later!

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In Crisis Communications, Your Response Helps Shape The Narrative

\[ E + R = O \]

Event + Response = Outcome
In A Crisis, Your Top Three Goals Should Be To:

1. Guide the narrative back to a place of normalcy
2. Protect your brand
3. Be transparent
What You MUST Do During A Crisis

BE READY: Have a plan in place ahead of the crisis.

GET IN THE MUD: Be easy to reach and ready to work.

BE HONEST: Remember when we talked about transparency?

BE NIMBLE AND BE QUICK: Share clear, factual messages as quickly as possible.
Thinking Ahead
How To Get Ready For Anything

01
Develop relationships early, and be clear about roles

02
Think through your list and analyze

03
Practice makes perfect

04
Know your channels of communication
Write It Before Crisis Hits: How Columbus Metropolitan Library Does It

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

SOCIAL MEDIA

Board Policy:
The Library has a centralized Social Media presence managed by Marketing. The Library expects all employees to remain cognizant of the Library’s brand and image when participating in public social media communities. Employees representing the interests of the Library as part of their job duties are expected to adhere to all Library conduct expectations. Employees are expected to use good judgment and common sense when engaging in personal use of social media platforms.

Administrative Procedure:

A. Employees should not implicitly or explicitly represent their statements in social media as official Library policy or position. Employees are permitted to associate themselves with the Library while using social media, provided that they clearly identify posted content as personal and purely their own. The Library will not assume responsibility or liability for any personally posted content.

B. Employee statements that may be construed as unlawful or threatening, harassing, discriminatory, or defamatory in the non-social media environment are equally restricted in the online social media environment. These incidents will be subject to review and consideration under all other applicable Library policies and existing laws, and potential discipline up to and including termination will be based on content and severity.

C. Employees are prohibited from falsely establishing an online presence and representing it as an official or Library-sponsored entity or Library-affiliated individual. Employees are also prohibited from publishing and/or publicizing Library images prior to official publication date (i.e., posting photographs of a new branch before it opens).

D. The Library’s confidentiality policies extend to social media.

E. Employees are expected to respect copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property rights while engaged in social media.

COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS / COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

Board Policy:
The Library communicates openly and freely with the public via all forms of media, including print, broadcast, and digital. Library trustees and staff who are contacted by any media outlet for comment on any Library business are asked to forward the inquiry to Marketing and should not make any statements on behalf of the Library. Official statements and responses are facilitated by Marketing in coordination with the Chief Executive Officer and as necessary, the Board of Trustees’ President in order to create coordinated and consistent communication.

Administrative Procedure:

Related Policies/Packs:
- Social Media
- Communications
- Confidentiality of Employee Data
The Big Rocks
Our Approach To Crisis Communications For Drag Queen Story Time

- A Bit About Indianapolis & IndyPL
  Some Background
- Pre-Gaming It
  How We Prepared For What Might Happen
- How We Promoted The Event
  PR, Social Media, And More
- When The Crisis Hit
  How We Kept Afloat
- Our Voice, Our Messaging
  Why We Decided Not To Stay Silent
A Little About Our City Indy

INDIANAPOLIS

12: Indianapolis is the 12th largest city in the United States

25: Indianapolis is the 25th largest media market in the United States

3: Indianapolis is the third most populous city in the Midwest with a population of almost 873,000

1: Indianapolis is the most populous city in the state of Indiana
Marion County Population Stats 2017

- 85.7% Have A High School Diploma Or Higher
- Indianapolis Boasts 91% Of Marion County’s Population
- 29% Of Residents Have A Bachelor’s Degree Or Higher
Who We Are
Tidbits about the Indianapolis Public Library System

01
Programs Held By IndyPL Each Month
IndyPL offers a variety of programs across branches, at Central Library, and throughout the community. This number is an average per month.

02
Locations
We are actively building and relocating to better serve Marion County residents to be completed in 2020.

03
Overall Circulation in 2017
Includes books, DVDs, eResources, CDs, and audiobooks

04
401,525 Cardholders
Almost half of the Library’s service population, with more than 40,000 being new in 2017
More Quick Facts
2017 Annual Stats

- 4,000,000 Walk-in Visits
- 10.2 Million Visits To Our Website
- 171,025 Active Library Borrowers
- 287,772 Total Program Attendance
- 1,551 Bookmobile Visits
- 2 Million Circulation For Electronic Materials

10.2 Million

The Library
Social Media Promotions
A Major Crisis Communications Tool

We ask patrons to use this hashtag to talk about programs and their attendance, as well as the Library and concerns regarding the Library overall. We want to track engagement and to get images of those that attended events.
Central Library
Indianapolis Public Library

Located in the heart of the city in downtown Indy, our flagship library is a major hub for events, media coverage, and has been featured in many publications touting the architecture of the building.
Our Commitment To Inclusiveness

All Library services are available to residents of the Library district without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation or gender identity.

“We are all different, which is great because we are all unique. Without diversity life would be very boring.”

Catherine Pulsifer
Preparing For Drag Queen Story Time

Research and Brainstorming

1. Our team took a look at other Library systems who had already had an event.

2. We viewed news coverage of those events.

3. Our Digital Marketing Specialist surveyed social media surrounding the events within other systems.

4. We questioned our core values and who we are as a Library system to create messaging.

5. Director, Communications ran point, knowing that the topic is delicate, so that we could truly own the narrative and messaging.
The First Event
Regular Post On All Social Media Outlets

#DragQueenStoryTime

The public response was overwhelmingly positive with very little opposing feedback.
Preparing For Drag Queen Story Time

The Optics, Before & After

Drag Queen Story Time
Green Screen Theater, Learning Curve
@ Central Library
Friday, June 9th at 11AM
Story time theme: Fairy Tales

Drag Queen Story Time
Green Screen Theater, Learning Curve
Central Library
Friday, June 8, 11 AM to noon
Join us for Drag Queen Story Time in celebration of Indianapolis Pride Week.
Dress up as your favorite superhero character and hear great adventure stories read byavy Gorge and Rynne Stone.

See you there!
As an organization, we are committed to serving all throughout Marion County. This is an event that libraries across the country have been hosting and only one of more than 1,200 that we, on average, host each month. Our desire to serve all in Marion County, no matter race, cultural background, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class or any personal identifier is why we host events such as this one. Those that want to attend will, and those who do not, will not come. Choice of attendance is applicable for all events that we offer. We also open our doors to those who would like to rent space and host events of their own that they themselves promote. As a Library, we serve all and will continue to do so on a daily basis.

- IndyPL’s desire to serve all in Marion County, no matter race, cultural background, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class or any personal identifier, is why we host events such as this one.

- IndyPL understands that some events it offers are not for everyone and understands some patrons may not wish to participate or fully agree. Choice of attendance, of course, is applicable for all events we offer.

- This program is only one of more than 1,200 that IndyPL, on average, hosts each month.

- This is an event that libraries across the country have been hosting. As a matter of fact, there will be a session on how to plan Drag Queen Story Times during the upcoming American Library Association conference.
Drag Queen Story Time Timeline

Public Relations And Social Media

June 8
First Drag Queen Story Time

Social Media Post-Event Mention
June 9

Press Release Sent To Media
July 15

July 18
Boosted Facebook And Other Social Media Posts

July 22
Second Drag Queen Story Time
Pay For Play Promotions

Boosted Post On Facebook

To insure attendance, we decided to boost the second event to reach more of the selected target audience.

$5 For One Day Of Promotions
Social Media Gone Rogue
Our Messaging When Patrons Began Addressing Us And Each Other Regarding Differing Opinions

As a government agency, we serve ALL. Those that came wanted to, those who didn’t did not. LGBTQ citizens pay taxes too.

We kept inclusivity at the forefront and did not discuss politics, personal preferences, nor religious beliefs as those were not reasons we hosted the program.
Sliding In Our DMs
Patrons Who Felt More Comfortable Dialoguing Via DMs Have And We Make Sure To Respond

I wanted to send a note saying thank you to the library for the drag queen story time the other day. I was quoted in the Star article and featured in the photo. Since then it has gone national and my words have been twisted by some journalists. I applaud this library for promoting inclusion and learning about all walks of life. My daughter and I had a wonderful time and will gladly not only attend, but promote any future story hours that you put on. I know you have faced some heat over this, know that there are MANY who applaud you and thank you for giving us a way to teach our children about the many different kinds of human beings who make up this world we live in.

I wanted to send a word of support and encouragement for the drag queen story time. As there was an op-ed piece published yesterday on foxnews, I thought it important to send some love your way. Keep up teaching and opening minds. Our state needs that so very badly! Here is a link if you haven’t seen it.


Thanks for messaging us. We try to be as responsive as possible. We’ll get back to you soon. In the meantime, visit us at http://www.indypl.org/

Drag Queen Storytime for kids at the library – What...
Welcome to the 21st century, America – where childhood...

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Hi! I am looking through the downtown events and there is an event called Drag Queen Storytime for preschoolers. Is this correct?? I really hope this is a mistake.

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Drag Queen Storytime
Jun. 8, 11:00AM
Little learners ages birth - 5 years old and their families are invited to come together in the Baby Zone of the Learning Curve for stories, songs and rhymes. All are welcome to stay after to play.

Drag Queen Storytime
Jun. 8, 11:00AM, 12:00PM
Preschool children and adults are invited for a superheroes-themed story time presented by the Indy Bag Ladies, an organization that conducts public and charitable events in support of HIV research. Those attending are encouraged to dress up as their favorite superhero and listen to age-appropriate adventure stories.

Summer Showtime: The Incredibles
Jun. 8, 1:30PM
Children of all ages and families are invited for a showing of the film “The Incredibles” (PG)

Hi! Thanks for such a fast and kind response. While I understand that not every program suits me, I do believe the public, government-owned library should steer away from politically charged classes for a variety of reasons. I’d love to voice my concerns to the right person. Is there someone specific I should contact?? Thanks for all you guys do. We enjoy the library very much!

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Social Media Post-Event

Our Messaging And Images Post-Event
When The Emails Poured In
Emails Sent To Our CEO And Emails From Unhappy Foundation Board Members

The first post did not spark the attention of the second as we chose to boost the second social media post to an audience beyond our followers as well as create media coverage opportunities.

As some of you may have heard, the Library has been receiving media attention for a Drag Queen Story Hour that was held at Central Library this past weekend. In case you have questions or are asked questions by others, here is some information you might find helpful:

Links to Coverage
- [https://www.facebook.com/indypl/](https://www.facebook.com/indypl/) (scroll down to the entry on July 18)
- [https://twitter.com/indylibrary](https://twitter.com/indylibrary) (scroll down to July 22)

Library's Statement
As an organization, we are committed to serving all throughout Marion County. This is an event that libraries across the country have been hosting and only one of more than 1,200 that we, on average, host each month. Our desire to serve all in Marion County, no matter race, cultural background, sexual preference, socioeconomic class or any personal identifier is why we host events such as this one. For those that wanted to attend, they did, and for those who did not, they didn’t come. Choice of attendance, of course, is applicable for all events that we offer. We also open our doors to those who would like to rent space and host events of their own that they themselves promote. As a Library, we serve all and will continue to do that on a daily basis.

I am happy to have a conversation with anyone who would like to discuss this further. Thanks again for your generous support of the Library Foundation!

Roberta

Roberta Knickerbocker Jeggers
President
phone (317) 275-4663
cougars@indyfoundation.org

THE INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION
www.indyplfoundation.org
Media Mania
The Story About The Second Event Received Both Local And National Coverage

Local Media
- Indy Public Library Hosts Drag Queen Storytime – WIBC
- The Drop For July 27 – IndyStar
- At This Indy Story Hour, Drag Queens Read To Kids – IndyStar
- Drag Queen Story Time Welcomes All Superheroes At The Central Library – IndyStar
- Indy Bag Ladies Host Drag Queen Story Time At Central Library – IndyStar

National Media
- Indy Public Library Hosts Drag Queen Storytime – Fox59
- Drag Queen Storytime For Kids At The Library – What In The Name Of Captain Kangaroo Is Going On? – Fox News
- At This Library Story Hour, Drag Queens Read To Kids – USA Today Network

We had TV appearances, print write-ups, and radio news coverage for this event.
Indy Public Library hosts Drag Queen Storytime
Media Mania
The Story Received Both Local And National Coverage

This is only a snapshot of media received as social media posts on local news stations and comment sections were full of responses, both in support and against the event.
Why We Chose Not To Be Silent
Supporting All Patrons Rights By Speaking Up

Our decision to have dialogue with patrons, staff members and those who mentioned the program was intentional. We responded to both those pro- and opposed to the event.
We felt it important that both sides were able to share their views respectfully. Those who were not respectful were removed from the conversation. We also felt it important not to be silent as that would’ve communicated a lack of support to our LGBTQ+ friends, which is unacceptable.

Our Voice, Our Message

We wanted to be clear, that no matter your stance, the Library is a safe space for ALL

- **We Pay Taxes. 01**
  LGBTQ+ citizens pay taxes as well.

- **This Is Anti-Religious. 03**
  We do not program religious events and do not consider sexual orientation a religious issue.

- **Libraries Shouldn’t Be Political. 02**
  This isn’t a political issue, and is based on our Commitment to Inclusiveness statement.

- **The Event Is Offensive. 04**
  We host more than 1,200 each month, and attendance to all events are optional.
SPREADING LOVE
SUPPORT
COMMUNITY

Tons of patrons posted images of their kids on social media at the events.

We received many more mentions of support than the other way around.

Many patrons expressed feeling support from the Library for hosting this.

Through this, no matter the stance, we saw patrons supporting each other.

We were overwhelmed by the positive responses

We did get responses from a few who were disgruntled, but we found most are in continued support. This is becoming a tradition during PRIDE Month that we plan to repeat as this program highlights our increasing desire to be a safe space for ALL. We now have a LGBTQ+ Support Committee, and staff, along with our Bookmobile, have represented the Library in the Indy PRIDE Parade for years.
Our Top Four Tips For Crisis Communications

Thinking Ahead

Be Transparent. 01
- Be honest with staff and the public about the issues around the crisis.

Stick To Your Core Values. 02
- Do not waiver from this in your communications and practices.
- If you lose your way or make a mistake, say so.

Respond Quickly And Often. 03
- Use social media as an immediate tool to respond to concerns.
- Contact stakeholders immediately through email and in person.

Plan Ahead. 04
- Have a fully functional crisis communications plan ready.
- Anticipate all scenarios for any programs that may cause unrest.
We Serve ALL!

At the end of the day, this is our overarching statement, core beliefs and values.
Questions?