

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2795
USA

Telephone 312 944 6780
Fax 312 440 9374
Toll Free 800 545 2433
TDD 312 944 7298
Toll Free TDD 888 814 7692
E-mail: ala@ala.org
<http://www.ala.org>

ALA Office for Library Advocacy

Contact: Office for Library Advocacy
312-280-2428
ola@ala.org

In Case of Controversy: Basic Tips for Crisis Communications

You will want to anticipate and prepare for dealing with organized opposition or other issues that might arise, whether it's anti-tax, the library's Internet policy, or other matters. All of the basic communications/advocacy strategies are critical when dealing with a crisis.

- Make sure you have all the facts.
- Respond quickly but don't overreact.
- Prepare a communication plan and work it.
- Focus on the solution, not the problem. Explain how the library is addressing the issue or concern.
- Let lawyers review any public statement on issues with legal implications but avoid "legalese" that may muddle your message.
- Use every opportunity to deliver your key message.
- Make sure all library advocates—and especially your chief spokespeople—have the messages, training and information they need to support the library.
- Above all, stick to the high road. Don't criticize or get personal with your opponents. Don't be defensive.
- Understand the direct correlation between crises and brand management.

- Centralize incoming calls to appropriate spokespeople.
- Respond as quickly as possible to media calls—but don't panic and don't compromise accuracy.
- Make announcements promptly, unless special circumstances exist.
- Tell good stories in advance so when bad news comes along you are given the benefit of the doubt.
- Don't fight with journalists even though you are under a lot of pressure.
- If a crisis is sustained, assign people to serve in shifts.
- Keep log of responses to journalists.
- Monitor news reports so you can quell rumors and correct inaccuracies.
- Provide information that gives public alternatives.
- Communicate with each audience as directly as possible.