



# OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

# Don't Miss!



## 50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are \$1 each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



## PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7  
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.  
Choptank Ballroom



## SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10:45 a.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.**



## KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7  
8:00 – 11:00 p.m.  
Windjammer



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## Crisis Communications

### PRESENTERS:

**Tim Pratt, Maryland State Library Agency**

**Jacob Gerding, Maryland Association of School Librarians**

# Agenda

- What is a crisis?
- Planning
- Dealing with it
- Experiences & Examples
- Tips & Tricks
- Scenarios
- Stories from the Audience
- Q&A



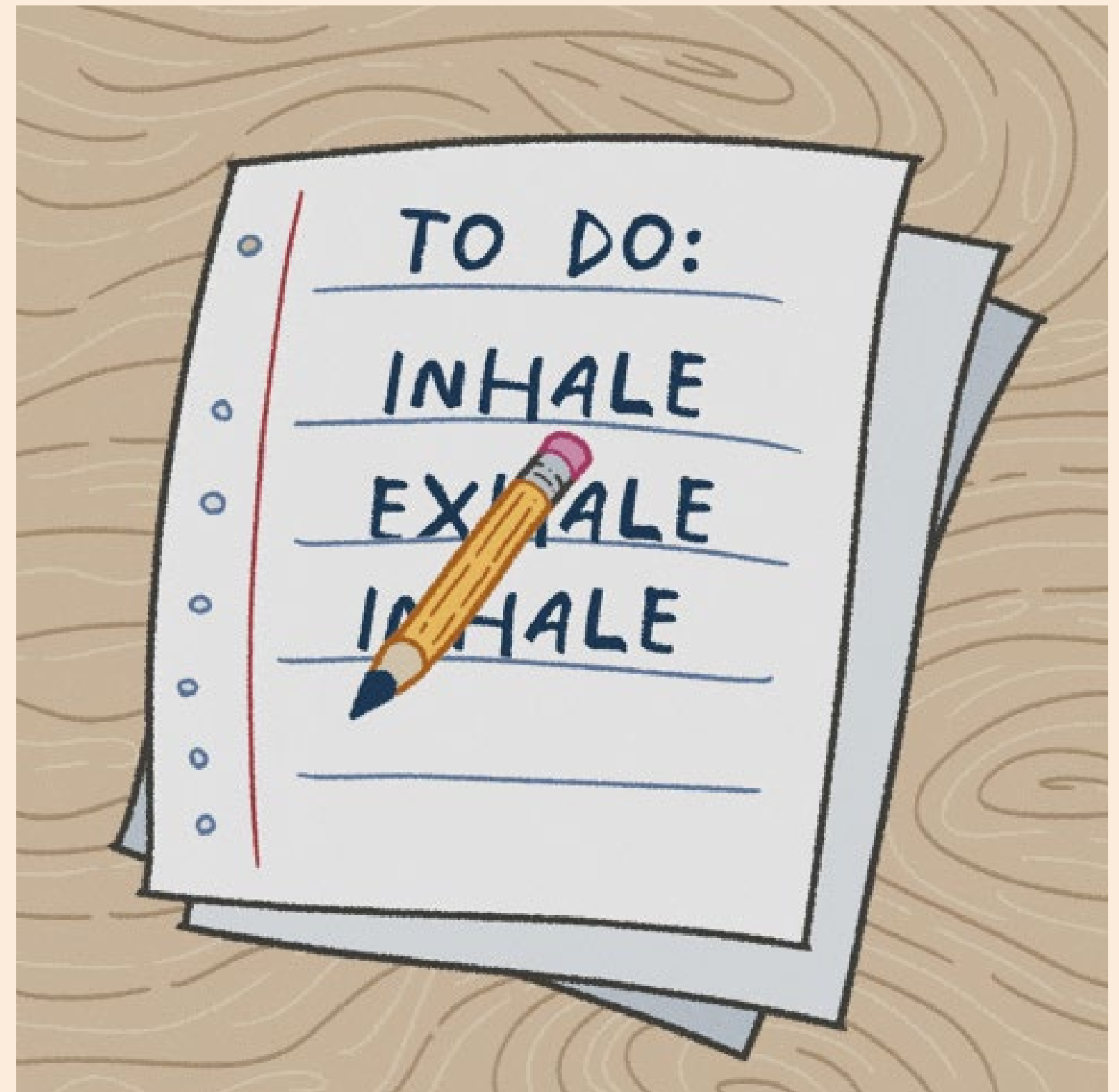
# What is a crisis?



# Crisis Communications Plan

## Key Elements

- Purpose/Objective
- Team Roster, Contact Info
- Designated Spokespersons
- Outline of Responsibilities
- Audiences
  - Communication Channels
- Key Messages
- Biographical Info
- Appendix
  - Policies, Bylaws



# Dealing with a Crisis




- Gather Info & Get Organized
- Communicate
- Messaging
- Inform
- Respond Promptly
- Collateral




# Following up

- Monitor Coverage
- Tell Your Own Story
- Update Fact Sheets
- Keep People Informed
- PIAs
- Evaluate








☰ THE BALTIMORE SUN Commentary | Rural Maryland libraries depend on vital... 

## Rural Maryland libraries depend on vital federal funding | GUEST COMMENTARY



The poster for 'Adventure Begins at Your Library' is mounted on a brick wall. It features a large red book with a yellow character emerging from it. The text 'ADVENTURE' is at the top, 'YOUR LIBRARY' is at the bottom, and '- BEGINS AT -' is in the middle. A date range 'JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31' is also visible.

### MOST POPULAR

-  **Carroll Schools awards bid to roofing company with history of fraud**  
Wednesday, April 15
-  **'Baby Jessica' from 1987 well rescue arrested on domestic charge**  
Tuesday, April 14
-  **Maryland men's basketball adds guard from Tennessee, but reportedly loses Dariu...**  
Wednesday, April 15
-  **'Exceptional young gentleman': Neighbors remember Branson Oduor,...**  
Wednesday, April 15
-  **Orioles call up new catcher; Ryan Mountcastle receives positive news**

# Following Up

**ACLU**  
Maryland

- Build Alliances with Community Groups and Allies to be the “feet on the ground”
  - ACLU-MD
  - Maryland State Education Association and Local Affiliates
  - PTA/PTO Groups in Schools
  - Grassroots Community Groups
    - Move Carroll Forward
    - Together We Will- Harford
  - NAACP



# Examples of Crisis Communication in School Libraries

- Somerset County: Censorship and Staffing
  - [Censorship Letter](#) (Collection Development Policy)
  - [Staffing Letter](#) (After Board wanted to eliminate school librarian positions)
- Harford County: Censorship
  - [Censorship Letter](#) (Regarding the book *Flamer*)
- Dorchester County: Staffing
  - [Staffing Letter](#) (When reductions were being considered in FY 2025 budget)
- Tips for Communicating via Letter:
  - Present position
  - Present evidence
  - Reference prior communication (if applicable)
  - Remind the recipient of their responsibility
  - Offer to continue the conversation




# MSLA & IMLS

- Recognized Potential in 2024
- Gathered Info
- Prepared Talking Points, Fact Sheet
- Communicated Internally & Externally
- Worked w/ Federal & State Leaders
- Lawsuit
- Media Inquiries & Op-ed



# Allegheny County Library Crisis Response

Allegheny County Library System  
May 18, 2025 · 🌐



## FLOOD RECOVERY web page

ALLEGANY COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EMERGENCY  
SERVICES



### Westernport Library Flood Initial Response

#### Library Update & Emergency Info

Due to the flood recovery efforts, library hours have been adjusted. Please check our website and social media for the latest updates.  
**PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ENTER THESE LIBRARIES**  
Please stay safe.

**George's Creek and Westernport Libraries Closed Thursday, May 15**

[www.alleghenycountylibrary.info](http://www.alleghenycountylibrary.info)

Frostburg Library 301-441-1741	George's Creek Library 301-442-5229	Lewis Library 301-716-5483	South Cumberland Library 301-716-5483	Washington Street Library 301-771-5243	Westernport Library 301-258-4455
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#### Flood Relief Resources

Visit our Flood Relief Resource Webpage

**George's Creek and Westernport Libraries CLOSED**

- Crisis Communication
- Damage assessment
- Building a resource hub

Provide a list of the 5 most important points

Summarize

By using AI Assistant, you agree to the Generative AI User Guidelines.

# Interview Tips & Tricks



- Be Prepared
- State the Facts
- Tailor Message
- Be Succinct
- Stay Positive
- Relax



# Speaking At a Meeting

- Know Your Audience
- Know the background of the situation (follow up with individuals making an initial complaint)
- Prepare your comments in advance (usually a 3 minute limit)
  - think of your comments as an elevator pitch about why something is either right or wrong
- Don't be afraid to reach out to those community groups using social media and other mass communication tools to get the word out and urge them to come to the meeting or e-mail comments as well.

An elevator pitch does the following:

- States the issue
- Explains how it helps or hurts stakeholders
- Provides some factual data to support your position
- Makes a suggestion about how you/your organization thinks the issue could be resolved.
  - Solutions increase the chance of a positive outcome



# Group Activity - Scenarios

## Scenarios

- Natural Disaster
- Funding Cuts
- Book Bans

## Audiences

- Media
- Elected Officials
- Library Board
- General Public
- Stakeholders
- School Board



Share Out



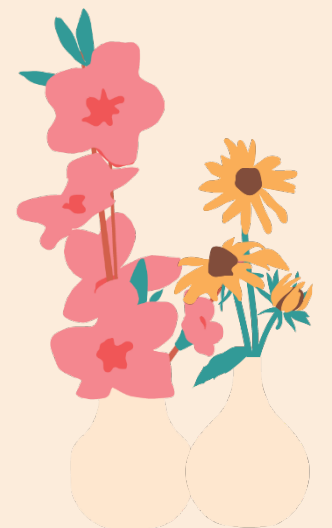
Questions?



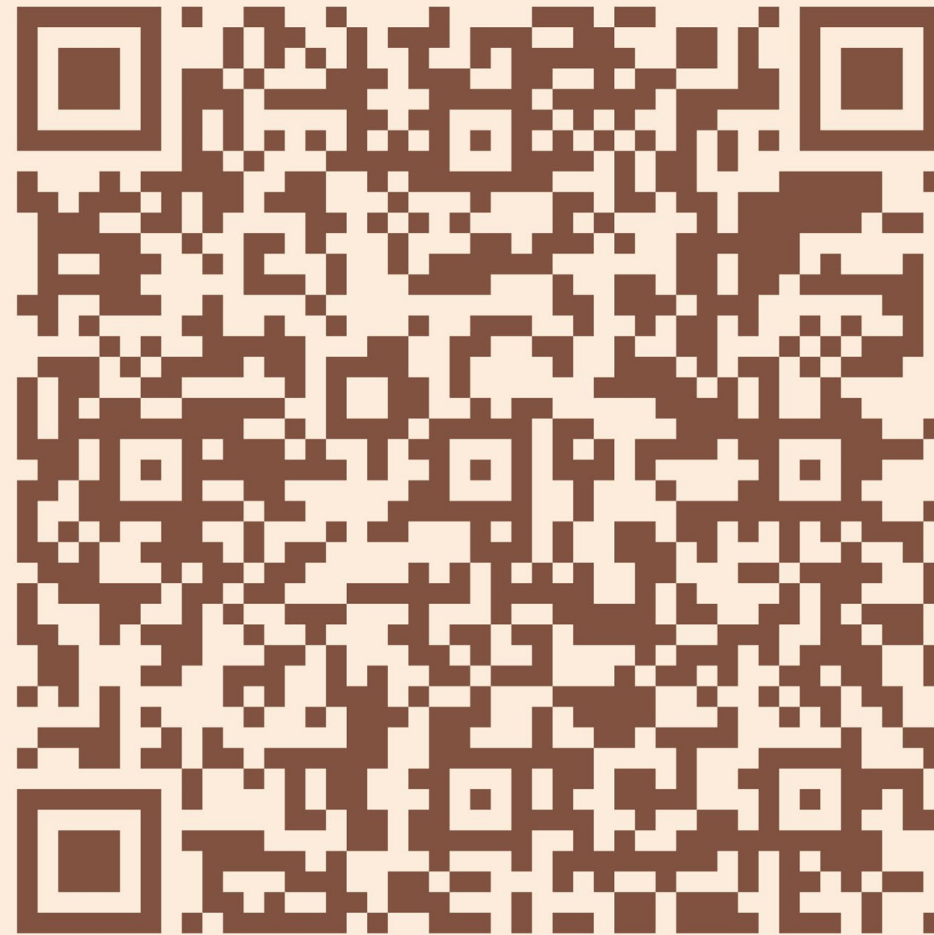
# Thank you!

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Jacob Gerding, President-Elect  
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**Please take a moment to  
complete the program survey.**



**SCAN ME!**



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