Ex Libris Association Webinar (Zoom)

- **Thank you, all, for joining me today, and thank you Deb Thomas for organizing this event.**

I have 45 minutes to cover our topic, which is *"A Disaster Planner Considers the Future for Libraries"*.

This is a big area to cover, and I'm sorry to dash through material that deserves more time, but if you'd like more information on specific points, feel free to ask me during the question period.

[Trigger warning: Old age can decrease diplomacy. Once, when dealing with a library that stored rare books in a basement, … Gravity … Gabriel Naude … No!]

As a disaster planner, I consider different kinds of risks. All of the following risks can affect libraries directly or indirectly:

• Natural (Riverine flooding, wildfires, severe weather, epidemics & pandemics)

• Human-caused (Human error, war)

• Technological (Systems failure, data loss, nuclear meltdown, dam failure, water management failure, accidental sprinkler release, power outage, loss of AI control)

• Proximity (Bodies of water, dry forests, firetraps in the neighbourhood)

• Security (Theft, workplace violence, hacking & Ransomware, amateur or professional)

• Enterprise (Lengthy closure of facilities, currency fluctuations, inflation, scarcity or loss of expertise)

We must consider the likelihood of all of these kinds of risks. The risk profile of every library is unique, and some risks on a library site will be more likely than others. Earthquakes are rare in Saskatchewan, but severe weather is a risk across the province.

What about the future for libraries? What risks should librarians consider so as to protect their people, collections, and buildings?

[Warning: Futurology is a mug's game, and accuracy in predictions can be hard to attain. What futurologists do is to take into account current trends and extrapolate what is most likely to happen in future.]

So:

• In libraries, *natural risks* such as rising temperatures and heat waves could lead to:

*Spikes in energy use, and higher energy costs
*Increasing deterioration of collections
* Challenging working conditions (OHS)
* Influxes of visitors who need "cooling centres"
* More flooding from precipitation
* More severe weather events, e.g. storms

MITIGATION MEASURES:

* Staff awareness for personal safety during heat waves
*First aid review for responses to heat stroke

* Drinking water made available in coolers

*Review of public spaces to get a sense of how they can be adapted to meet sudden influxes

* Maintenance of library HVAC systems, including regular inspections and upgrading as required

*Patron awareness programs for safety: information printed on fans …

*Identification of building vulnerabilities during storms: loose siding, possible roof leaks, inadequate drainage, and questionable power supply

• In libraries, human-caused risks could lead to:

* Ongoing and increasing data loss (Whoops factor!)
* Ongoing damage to buildings and collections
* Outbreak and waging of war

MITIGATION MEASURES:

*Regular, reliable, and backup data with tested post-disaster availability

*Building awareness orientation for all staff members

*Consideration of library activities before and during outbreak of war (common in the 1950s and 60s). Consult civil authorities … and local archivists

• In libraries, *technological risks* could lead to:

* More systems failures & data loss
* *Power failures and shortages, especially with increasing demand for electricity*
* Misuse of artificial intelligence (AI)—at library terminals; also the Internet of Things (IoT).

Mitigation Measures:

*Data backup
*Measures for on-site safety: flashlights

* Staff orientation for safety procedures during power failures
*Assessment for a library's risks from AI and the IoT. (These risks change quickly.)

• In libraries, *proximity risks* could lead to:

* Increasing criminal activity: hostile intrusions
* Workplace violence
* Increasing fire risks from nearby firetraps

MITIGATION MEASURES:

*Ask your staff: what bad behaviour do they see in your library?
*Neighbourhood walkabout: to identify increasing risk of criminal behaviour (needles?) and poorly maintained buildings—firetraps—and construction sites

• In libraries, *security risks* could lead to:

* Increasing levels of theft
* Workplace violence
* Staff attrition
* Bomb threats
* Hacking & Ransomware attacks, amateur and professional (NB the demand for the right amount of money)

MITIGATION MEASURES:

*Ask your staff: What do they see on site? Welcome input and show you care!
*Staff orientation and training programs to handle difficult patrons and bomb threats (depending on locally approved procedures)
*Review of local government procedures to handle hostile intrusions and Ransomware attacks

*Data backup; isolation of classified or confidential data

• In libraries, enterprise risks such as inflation and currency fluctuations could lead to:

* Loss of expertise & staff attrition
* Budget reductions
* Closures of facilities
* Cancelled or postponed projects

MITIGATION MEASURES:

*Maintain good morale by listening to staff members' concerns
*Maintain good relations with local government or host institutions; improve PR by showing that the library enhances local safety
*Keep in touch with your library's vendors, and ask for any available bargains and payment plans
*Develop draft budgets for possible funding reductions

I've given you a high-level summary of risk assessment and mitigation. Please note:

• Every library is different, and every library building and site has its unique risk profile, that is, the full list of the risks that prevail in that building and on that site. (Don't borrow somebody else's disaster plan!)

• People respond differently to risks. Some are prepared to take immediate action to mitigate risks; others might not care. (Chicken Little Syndrome: Be warned!)

• Libraries can mitigate risks on their own, without seeking permission from host institutions—that might not be concerned about prevailing risks.

• Tabletop exercises are a good way to increase risk awareness and mitigation measures. Brief exercises (< one hour) are more effective than longer ones.

At this point, are there any questions?