

LIBRARIES POST-COVID:

HOW CAN THEY COMMUNICATE THEIR VALUE AS KEY PLAYERS IN THIS NEW WORLD?

A conversation with Prof David Lankes, Director of the University of South Carolina School of Information Science.

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For public libraries, now that they remain physically closed, a key challenge right now is how to articulate their value.

How can they continue to communicate such value to policymakers, the public and practitioners? Can they leverage the gains they have made in understanding the strength and ability of their staff?

In a post-Covid world, can libraries find and manage extra funding and resources to meet the anticipated new needs?

5 calls to action and/or reflection:

- Library patrons must be energised to communicate the value of the library to policymakers. Library messaging and advocacy must be taken to the local level to encourage library users to go out and advocate to policymakers.
- Libraries need to move beyond transactional relationships. It's about the partnerships and creating relationships between patrons and staff. Building mutual relationships with the community where mutual protection is assured between libraries and users is vital and the future of the library.
- Libraries need to transcend their frameworks beyond the digital sphere. They need to be present in their communities and other occasions such as parks, beaches etc to reach people who don't come to the library by themselves. There might be a bigger need now and could have a bigger impact if the library expands their reach.
- Libraries must be a vessel of empathy, curiosity, and learning experiences for a community. Librarians can be the facilitators for this beyond the buildings.
- The value of the library is not in the building itself. Libraries must establish a strong agenda of the values they advocate for and communicate clearly to their community and policy makers.