All for One:
Planning for Consistency During Difficult Patron Interactions

Annie Alger, Reference Librarian
Elizabeth Jonkel, Assistant Director
MLA, Helena, MT, April 12, 2019
Unpredictable patrons make the day go faster!

- Confrontations that escalate
- Unprovoked violence or abusive behavior
- Public intoxication or substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Vandalism
- Emergency situations
But what about guinea pigs that wear pants?

(Note: policy TBD not IF, but WHEN a guinea pig shows up at the library with pants on...)
Conclusion:

The only commonality all these stories have is that there is no commonality.

Working with general public means you’ll always be surprised.

So if everything is unpredictable, how do you plan for consistency and unity in your response?
New Paradigm:

Whole Person Librarianship

- Theory that, in the vacuum of social services elsewhere in society, libraries will (and should?) take up responsibility by extending services beyond their mandate.
- Across Montana, social crises from cuts to mental health services, rising housing costs and increased use of intoxicants
- Libraries are a barometer of a community’s overall health

When library culture dictates always saying yes, how do we learn it’s okay to say no?
No Magic Bullet
But through deliberate planning and practice, you can prepare for disruption and develop a unified, consistent plan of action.
Missoula’s Experience

- Urban growth and accompanying problems
- Perception of disruption
- Frustrated staff and patrons
- An evolving response internally

Demographics (2011 census)
- Population of Montana = 998,199
- Missoula County = 110,138
- City of Missoula = 67,290

- Median age is 32.5 years
- Well-educated, diverse population
MISSOULA PUBLIC LIBRARY provides the best possible service that it can to the people of Missoula County.

- 8 branches in Missoula County
  - Main in Downtown, Seeley Lake, Swan Valley, Frenchtown, Big Sky High School, Lolo, Potomac & the Web on Wheels bus
- 60 full- and part-time employees
- Open 144 hours a week
  - 64 hours at main branch with average of 12,000+ visits by patrons each week
- Number of registered borrowers = 77,000
- Annual circulation for 2011 = 2,045,346
NOTE: The Crime Index refers to the rate of the 7 most serious crimes, per 100,000. The Crime Rate refers to all crime per 100,000.

From http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/measures/Social/ViolentCrime.htm:

- Overall crime rate refers to burglary, larceny, car theft, homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.
- In 1998, Missoula County’s overall crime rate was 5,621 per 100,000 people, compared to 4,799 in the state (Crime in Montana) and 4,616 nationally. Larceny accounts for 80 percent of Montana’s crimes.
- The majority of criminal activity affecting Missoula area residents are more likely to be offenses such as vandalism, traffic concerns, etc.
Emergency Services in Downtown Missoula

City Police: located 5 blocks from the main library

County Sheriff: located 4 blocks from the main library

Fire Department: located 4 blocks from the main library

The Missoula County 9-1-1 Center dispatches twelve local fire departments, five ambulance services, two air ambulances, the police and sheriff.
In addition, Missoula has the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) through the Poverello Centre.

Designed to target Missoula's chronically homeless and shelter resistant individuals in an effort to connect people with essential services necessary to move on with their lives.
The Question on all our minds...

How do we safely diffuse a crisis once it begins or, better yet, prevent incidents from occurring in the first place (without having to be Batgirl)?
1. Staff are knowledgeable about library policies and the law
2. Situation management is a job expectation for all staff
3. There is professional unity in the team and staff supports each other
4. Staff are consistent and objective in their response to difficult situations

So easy, right?!?!

Just kidding! Seriously, how is this even possible?

THE END.
First off...

- It’s your right to be safe at work!
- The public has an “expectation” of safety in public buildings, but what does that mean for you or your employees?
- A professional response is essential to controlling most situations.
The Crisis Prevention Institute Model
for responding to common patron/staff scenarios

The following is generated from information prepared by the CPI as part of its Prepare Training® program.
CPI can be reached at (800)787-5166 or rsolon@crisisprevention.com.
The CPI Model’s Three Common Levels of Patron Behavior

1. Anxious Level
   - The worried and/or frustrated patron. Signs are pacing, sighing, venting, fast talking, etc.
   - “Where’s my hold?” “Why didn’t you tell me this was overdue?” “I returned that item!” “That staff person was rude to me.”
   - The easiest level to deal with. Be supportive, acknowledge the patron and offer assistance. Use your customer service skills to handle the situation or seek help from colleagues. (L.A.S.T. – Listen, Apologize, Satisfy, Thank)

2. Defensive Level

3. Acting Out Level
The CPI Model’s Three Common Levels of Patron Behavior

1. Anxious Level

2. Defensive Level
   - The angry, stubborn or irrational patron. Signs are disrespect, threats, refusal to follow directions, challenging authority, raised voice or inappropriate language.
   - “Make me.” “You can’t tell me what to do.” “I don’t see any sign saying I can’t [look at porn/talk on my cell/play music loudly/take my pants off...]
   - A direct approach setting simple, clear, reasonable and enforceable directions that have consequences. Repeat yourself and do what you say you will do. (The “2+2=1” equation).
   - Don’t take it personally. Don’t give in. Treat it like an educational opportunity for the patron.

3. Acting Out Level
The CPI Model’s Three Common Levels of Patron Behavior

1. Anxious Level
2. Defensive Level
3. Acting Out Level

- The scary patron. Signs are implied or actual violence, physical threats, possibly armed, frightening behavior, potentially harmful
- “I’m gunna kill you, you bleeping bleep bleep bleep” “ARG! <Crash...! Bang...! Boom...!” “I’ll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!”
- Call 911!!! Follow emergency procedures.
Empowerment is your friend!

A strong, unified team is your best preparation for handling disruption

- Arm yourself with knowledge
- Consult and partner with other community stakeholders (police, 911 dispatch, neighbors/businesses)
- Missoula uses several tools to assist staff with managing difficult interactions.
  - The Law
  - MPL Policy
  - Code of Conduct
  - Interaction Reports
  - Log books
  - Concealed Weapons Policy
  - Crisis Intervention Decision Tree
The Law is your friend!

*Laws in your community are in place to protect you, your library, your staff, and your patrons*

- **MT 45-8-101. Disorderly conduct:**
  A person commits the offense of disorderly conduct if the person knowingly disturbs the peace by: (a) quarreling, challenging to fight, or fighting; (b) making loud or unusual noises; (c) using threatening, profane, or abusive language; ...creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by any act that serves no legitimate purpose;...etc.

- **MT 45-6-203. Criminal trespass to property:**
  A person commits the offense of criminal trespass to property if the person knowingly: ...(b) enters or remains unlawfully in or upon the premises of another.

- **MMC 9.26.020. Public Drinking:**
  Public drinking and public display and exhibition of beer, wine or liquor as defined in this chapter are prohibited, and it is unlawful for any person to engage in public drinking, public display or exhibition of beer or liquor within the city limits.

- **MMC 8.04.060. Public urination or defecation:**
  It is unlawful for any person to urinate or defecate in or upon any street, alley or public place except in restroom facilities. Any violation shall be deemed a health hazard and shall be charged as such.

- **MMC 9.24.010. Disturbing the peace:**
  A person commits a violation of this chapter if he knowingly commits one of the following acts:  A. Quarrelling, challenging to fight or fighting; B. Making loud or unusual noises; C. Using threatening, profane, obscene or abusive language;...etc.

- **Missoula County Policy 2013-01. Smoke-Free and Tobacco-Free Workplace:**
  ...to prevent smoke from entering a building through doorways, windows, or ventilation systems, smoking is not permitted within 25 feet of any government building.
Accounts Desk and Computer Lab

MPL public desk signage regarding disorderly conduct
Includes sections on:

- Library Security and Patron Behavior
- Patron Behavior
- Destruction or Theft of Library Materials or Property
- Staff Rights

*MPL employees have rights that should not put them in conflict with the rights of users:*

- The right to be treated politely.
- The right to work in a safe environment.
- The right to ask a patron to abide by policies of the library.
- The right to offer options when a patron’s request exceeds MPL’s resources.
Policy is your friend!

- Have clear policies about appropriate behavior in your library.
- Train your staff on what those policies are.
- Treat interventions as an educational moment:
  “I’m sure you weren’t aware that you must keep your pants on while in public.”
- Create clear signage and handouts to refer to.
Missoula Public Library Code of Conduct

In other words, this is a collective endeavor: “Help us keep the library clean, pleasant & safe so we all can enjoy it.”

MISSOULA PUBLIC LIBRARY RULES OF BEHAVIOR

We ask you to observe some simple guidelines so that Missoula Public Library is a welcoming, comfortable place for all the people who come to enjoy our services.

HELP KEEP THE LIBRARY CLEAN
1. Drinks and food are allowed everywhere in the library, but please no food in Web Alley. Please use a lid for drinks.
2. Smoking is allowed 25 feet from all entrances of the library.
3. Service animals are welcome but we ask that other pets not be brought inside.
4. Please wear shirts and shoes at all times in the library.

HELP KEEP THE LIBRARY A PLEASANT PLACE TO VISIT
1. Please keep noise to a minimum and refrain from excessive or disruptive noise. Cell phones are permitted in foyers and outside.
2. Please be respectful of other library patrons and staff. Disorderly conduct and/or disturbing the peace in such a way that disrupts other patrons’ library use or staff’s performance is not permitted in the library (see Missoula Municipal Code 9.24.010).

HELP KEEP THE LIBRARY SAFE
1. Viewing of obscene materials where minors are present is not permitted in the library.
2. For your safety, sleeping is not permitted anywhere in the library.
3. Please keep your personal items with you, not unattended or obstructing traffic.
4. No alcohol or drugs may be brought into the library.
5. Children younger than school age must be accompanied by a caregiver, guardian or parent while in the library.
MISSOULIA PUBLIC LIBRARY INTERACTION REPORT

An objective record of an event that staff and management can consult to stay informed or determine next steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>June 6 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time and place of incident:</td>
<td>12:15 pm, at Accounts desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of incident:</td>
<td>Patron [redacted] came to the front desk wanting to check out. Robert asked her if she had came money to pay her fine. She disputed the fine, payment history, and payment agreement. Mary heard a loud voice as she assisted a patron at the Reference desk and went to the Accounts desk to see if she could be of assistance. She saw a tall blonde patron who appeared to be angry at Robert. Mary asked her if she could become quieter so we could sort out the situation. [redacted] continued to speak loudly and angrily, insisting that because Robert was “stupid” and “harassing me,” he would not check out books to her. She also called Robert a variety of intelligence related insults such as thick, idiot, and dumb, as well as a bigot. Mary requested quietly to Sasa that he call the police, as the patron was continuing to create a disturbance and would not leave the library when asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>911 called?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the police arrived, Robert spoke with them about the disturbance. The police spoke with [redacted] outside the Main Street doors. She began yelling at them loudly enough to be heard inside the library at the Accounts Desk. The police informed the patron not to enter the library unless she could maintain civility and not be abusive toward staff. They encouraged us to call the police immediately if the patron returned and raised her voice. Mary then sent an email to staff letting them know briefly what the situation was, as they had been able to hear the disturbance and/or saw police in the building.
Montana State Law - Carrying concealed weapon in prohibited place

This is Montana, after all...

It's OK... Eve the Librarian uses a silencer.

MISSOULA PUBLIC LIBRARY
CONCEALED WEAPONS POLICY

As Missoula Public Library is a County building, no private citizen, including those with a concealed weapon permit, may bring a weapon onto the Library premises. (Montana State Code 45-8-328)

WEAPONS – CONCEALED OR NOT
Montana law allows people to carry concealed weapons if he or she has a valid Montana or out-of-state permit to do so.

Montana defines a concealed weapon as a handgun or a knife with a blade 4 or more inches in length that is wholly or partially covered by the clothing or wearing apparel of the person carrying or bearing the weapon.

Even with a concealed weapons permit, you may not carry a concealed weapon in the following places:
- buildings owned or leased by the federal, state or local government
- at or near financial institutions
- any place where alcoholic beverages are sold, dispensed and consumed

No one may purposefully or knowingly carry a concealed weapon while under the influence of an intoxicating substance.

Be sure to check local regulations, which may restrict carrying concealed weapons at public meetings, and in public parks and buildings. County sheriffs can provide information on where concealed weapons are prohibited in their counties.
Missoula
Public Library
Crisis Intervention
Decision Tree

A methodology for uncertain or reluctant staff to determine action

**Follow-up and Communication**
- Use chat broadcast or email colleagues with updates on situations.
- Complete a Patron Intervention Report.
- Debrief colleagues at shift change and at next morning’s standup.

**What is intolerable behavior for MPL’s purposes?**
- Intolerance of behavior cannot be interpreted to manage better than business procedures or beyond personal safety. In addition to recognizable criminal acts, Montana State Code 46-10-201, “Bullying-Intimidation” is defined as knowingly disrupting the peace by being unreasonable or fighting, making loud noises, using aggressive, profane or abusive language, or blocking people’s right of way.

**Crisis Intervention**

**Steps to manage patron interactions**

1. **Are you or others in danger?**
   - Yes: CALL 911 and inform your colleagues.
   - No: Move to next decision.

2. **Is the patron’s behavior intolerable?**
   - Yes: Manage the situation.
   - No: Ask do you need welfare or assistance?

3. **Follow-up and Communication**
   - After a patron interaction:
     - Use chat broadcast or email colleagues with updates on situations.
     - Complete a Patron Intervention Report.
     - Debrief colleagues at shift change and at next morning’s standup.

4. **Three-step behavior management**
   - Issue a first warning. Give them a choice to stop the behavior or leave.
   - If appropriate, repeat the warning. Ask if they need assistance.
   - State they have been warned twice and that you will now call for assistance unless they stop the behavior.

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**Know this first:**
- Be aware
- Be safe and ask for help
- Inform yourself
- Tell others what happened

**Recommended Behavior**
- Take a deep breath before approaching the patron.
- Be polite, friendly and solicitous. Introduce yourself. Try to get the patron’s name.
- Be clear about why you are talking to them.
- Keep your cool. Use a modulated, quiet tone of voice to keep the patron calm and yourself in control.
- Stay safe: put space or an object (e.g., table or book cart) between you and the patron.
- Carry a copy of the MPL Rules of Behavior with you to show the patron how they are violating our policies.

**Sample Dialog**
- Hello, my name is [Name] and I work here at the library. Would you tell me your name?
- Are you feeling okay? Is there anything I can do to help you?
- Do you need me to call someone to help you?
- Stewards, it seems you’re upset. Is there something you’d like to tell me?
- Let me see if I understand correctly. Is this an issue with the [Patron’s name]?
- If it involves the [Patron’s name] is inappropriate behavior for the library. If you want to stay here, you’ll have to stop [Patron’s name]. If your choice.

**Tips for Sleeping Patrons**
- Regard sleepers as if there is a health concern (e.g., diabetic coma, concussion).
- Do not touch the patron. Knock on a nearby surface.
- Inform the patron that sleeping in public is unsafe and therefore is not permitted.
- If they cannot wake up, then it is a welfare issue and you should call 911.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS PLACE!

I'M FINE, THANKS, AND YOU?

I DIDN'T ASK HOW YOU WERE!

IT'S TRUE, THE WEATHER IS OUTSTANDING TODAY.

YOU'RE PART OF THE INSANITY, AREN'T YOU?

THANKS, I DO TRY TO MAKE EVERYONE'S DAY MORE PLEASANT.

I'M AFRAID THEY'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING WRONG, AND THEY'RE DOING IT QUIETLY.

I SUGGEST YOU PRETEND YOU'RE WATCHING WEST SIDE STORY.

HOW ARE YOU TODAY? NOT HAPPY WITH ANY OF YOU!

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN CHANGE THAT!

I WON'T FALL FOR ANY OF YOUR LIBERAL BRAINWASHING.

THIS IS NOT THE LIBRARIAN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. I'LL GO GET YOU A COOKIE!