
Media Relations Policy

Purpose: The purpose of the policy is to ensure that accurate and timely information about the Merrimack Public Library is relayed to the public regarding the day-to-day programming, controversial, negative or other issues that may arise regarding the library or during an emergency situation.

Approach: By coordinating the message and being prepared, the library can use the media to help spread its message to the larger population. The library staff will make use of a variety of media to advance its message. When speaking to the public or media, the Library Director or designee or Library Board of Trustees spokesperson should clarify when their remarks reflect a personal opinion or represent an official position.

Library Spokesperson - In order to provide the most current and consistent information about the library, inquiries from news media will be directed to the Library Director or a designee. If these Library contact persons are unavailable, Library staff will take a message from the media and convey it to the Director or designee at the earliest opportunity.

When receiving requests for specific program information, the Director or designee may decide to put the media in contact with the Department Head whose department is responsible for the program. When appropriate, the Department Head may include select other staff in the communications. Individual Library staff may not speak to the media on behalf of the Library unless authorized to do so. Library staff must be aware that they are always seen as speaking from a position of authority even when they designate comments as opinions.

Trustee Spokesperson - The Chair of the Board is the spokesperson for the Library Board of Trustees. Individual Library Trustees may not speak to the public or media on behalf of the Library Board of Trustees unless authorized by the Board to do so.

Crisis Communication - The Library Director or designee is the only person authorized to release information on behalf of the Library when an emergency occurs or there is media interest in controversial or negative issues or incidences. This spokesperson will coordinate information and the release of information with the Town Manager's office, the Merrimack Police Department and Merrimack Fire and Rescue officials as required.

During and after an emergency situation, library employees, volunteers, board members:

- Will not respond to media or public information requests
- Will refer all public and media inquiries and information requests to the Library Director or Director's designate
- In the absence of the Library Director or Director's designate will refer all public and media inquiries and information requests to Merrimack Police Department or Merrimack Fire Rescue, or other on-scene agency spokesperson as appropriate
- Will not discuss or speculate on the cause, consequences, events, impact, or personnel involved with the situation
- Will not communicate about the emergency on social media
- Will not disseminate photos on social media