The SDSL School Library
Monthly Update

December 2026

Is Your School Library Ready for the Unexpected?

From water leaks and severe weather to power outages and unexpected building emergencies, disasters can disrupt library services and put collections, technology, and important records at risk. A little preparation now can make a big difference when something goes wrong. Disaster preparedness starts with knowing what you have, understanding what needs protection, and identifying a few practical steps you can take to help your school library recover more quickly. This month, we're looking at ways to make disaster preparedness part of everyday library operations.

School Library Services Cheat Sheet

Need a quick link to SDSL school library resources? The 2026–2027 School Library Services Cheat Sheet puts key contacts, websites, training opportunities, electronic resources, and resource guides all in one handy place. Keep it bookmarked, save a copy, or print it out and hang it by your circulation desk for easy reference throughout the school year!

Access the 2026–2027 Cheat Sheet

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Leadership. Innovation. Excellence.

SCHOOL LIBRARY RESOURCES

- SDSL CE Catalog
- SDSL Training Catalog
- School Library Services Handbook
- SDSL Electronic Resources
- Monthly Update Archives
- Guides for School Librarians
- PD Opportunities
- School Library Scoop
- School Library Pulse

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: START SMALL, BE READY

When we think about disaster preparedness, it's easy to picture major emergencies and complicated plans. But some of the most useful preparation happens during ordinary library days. Taking a few minutes to review procedures, document your collection, or identify potential risks can make a difference when the unexpected happens.

Start with these five steps:

1. Identify your library's biggest risks.
Think about the emergencies most likely to affect your building. Could a roof leak damage shelving? Are computers and other equipment vulnerable to power surges? Do you have materials stored near plumbing or in areas prone to flooding? Knowing your risks helps you decide where to focus first.

2. Protect your most important information.
Make sure essential records are backed up and accessible if you cannot get into the library. Consider your inventory, collection records, equipment information, emergency contacts, and copies of important procedures. Keep digital backups somewhere other than the library's physical location.

3. Document your space and collection.
Photos of library spaces, shelving, equipment, and valuable materials can be helpful for documenting damage and supporting recovery efforts. Keep records updated as your space and collection change.

4. Know who to contact and what to do.
Review your school's emergency procedures and identify the appropriate contacts for facilities concerns, technology issues, building emergencies, and collection damage. Make sure you know how to report a problem and who is responsible for making decisions during an emergency.

5. Make preparedness an ongoing habit.
Choose one small task to complete this month. Next month, choose another. Revisit your plans periodically, especially after changes to your space, staffing, technology, or school procedures.

Read more in SDSL's School Librarian's Guide to Disaster Preparedness.

SIRS DISCOVERER

Direct Link

A reference database for grades 3-8. It includes newspaper and magazine articles, nonfiction books, biographies, country reports, controversial issues, and curated web resources. It's perfect for supporting research, current-events learning, and early information-literacy skill development.

TIME SAVING TIPS

Discoverer's Lexile filter help you differentiate reading levels quickly.

Text-to-speech and built-in citation generator reduce barriers for struggling readers and streamline student projects.

Use K-12 Education Coursepack for teaching activities and handouts

DID YOU KNOW?

There are hundreds of downloadable NF books, supporting independent reading and cross-curricular exploration.

Country, state, and province pages include maps, flags, timelines, and facts that are ideal for geography or social studies units.

Controversial Issues include essential questions, viewpoints, visual-literacy activities, and critical-thinking prompts.

IDEAL FOR CLASSROOM USE

Activity 1: Source Type Sort and Compare
Purpose: Helps students understand different source types and how information changes depending on format. Students search a chosen topic (e.g., volcanoes, recycling, famous inventors) and collect:

- a magazine article
- a newspaper article
- a reference book entry
- an animal or country fact page (if relevant)

Students then create a 4-square chart comparing tone, depth, visuals, and vocabulary across formats. This builds early media-literacy and evaluation skills.

Activity 2: Biography Snapshot Challenge
Purpose: Uses SIRS Discoverer's biography collection to boost research and note-taking skills. Students pick a person from Discoverer's Famous People and locate the biography, timeline, and related articles. They create a "snapshot page" including: Who they were, Why they matter, Three key life events, One fun or unusual fact Perfect for history, ELA, or morning bell-ringer activities.

Activity 3: Headline Hunters
Purpose: Strengthens reading and summarizing skills using age-friendly news articles. Students browse SIRS Discoverer's Trending Topics or Editor's Picks content and select three articles. They rewrite each headline in their own words, summarize the article in 3-4 sentences, and identify one fact that surprised them. This encourages concise writing and comprehension.

Harrisburg High School Library

Librarian: Eve Langerock







At Harrisburg High School, librarian Eve Langerock has created a library that students clearly see as their own. With 25-40 students choosing to spend time there each period, the library has become a welcoming place to socialize, work, read, and connect. Eve's commitment to student interests is reflected in the collection, programming, and even the flags representing the countries and cultures connected to the school community. Her work also extends beyond the library walls, as she collaborates with teachers on curriculum needs and provides research support in classrooms. That commitment to students and the broader school community was recognized when Eve was named the 2025 Harrisburg School District Secondary Teacher of the Year.

A Library That Reflects Its Students

More than 35 flags representing students' countries of origin and home languages line the library walls. Combined with a growing collection that reflects students' interests and identities, these touches help create a space where students feel welcomed and represented.

Mission in Action

Harrisburg's library mission focuses on promoting reading, supporting the curriculum, and helping students become wise users of information. Eve puts that mission into practice by selecting books students want to read, working with teachers on curriculum needs, and bringing research instruction into classrooms.

Taking Research Beyond the Library

Eve regularly works with teachers and students in classrooms to support research projects. She helps students use databases and NoodleTools while developing the skills they need to find, evaluate, and use information effectively.

A Place To Connect

The library is more than a quiet place to work. Activities such as escape rooms and "Paint Your Partner" give students opportunities to participate, create, and build community. A flexible schedule allows the library to serve as both a social gathering space and a place for learning.