Five rules for managing uncertainty in a pandemic

This resource is an overview of an article published in *BMJ* titled "**Managing uncertainty in the covid-19 era**"[1] by Rutter, Wolpert, and Greenhalgh, which can help when discussing your institution's pandemic response.

Uncertainty is inevitable in pandemics, but simple rules can help decision-making

As the pandemic progresses, uncertainties continue to multiply for archives, libraries, and museums. COVID-19 is a complex problem in a complex system; uncontested facts tend to be elusive. Most decisions must be based on information that is flawed, uncertain, proximate, or sparse. By carefully evaluating how these imperfect responses unfold in messy, real-world settings, you can help to build the multifaceted evidence base needed to continue operating and serving your communities.
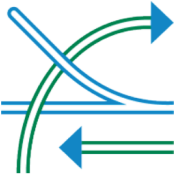

5 RULES TO HELP DECISION-MAKING

1 Most data will be flawed or incomplete. Be honest and transparent about this.

2 We may never have a "final answer" for many questions. Consider when to act: Do you wait for certainty or act on the evidence you have?

3 Acknowledge complexity, admit ignorance, and be open to exploring paradoxes.

4 Different people interpret data differently. Seek outside perspectives for solutions.

5 Observing real-world interventions can complement the findings of controlled trials and other forms of evidence.

REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) is a research partnership between OCLC, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Battelle.

1. H. Rutter, M. Wolpert, and T. Greenhalgh. 2020. "Managing uncertainty in the covid-19 era," *BMJ*. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3349.