ASPR TRACIE Technical Assistance

Request Receipt Date (by ASPR TRACIE): 17 September 2021
Response Date: 23 September 2021
Type of TA Request: Complex

Request:

The requestor asked for assistance with identifying resources related to the roles that public libraries can play in emergency response.

Response:

The ASPR TRACIE team conducted a search online and reached out to our ASPR TRACIE Subject Matter Expert (SME) cadre member for additional resources. Materials gathered are included in Section I of this document.

I.   Select Resources

NOTE: The National Library of Medicine's (NLM) Disaster Information Management Resource Center (DMRIC) had a [bibliography](#) of articles about the roles of librarians and libraries in disaster and emergency planning, response, mitigation, and recovery, from 2014 to 2020. This listing includes many different types of disasters, libraries, and roles. When possible, the full text is linked to for each article or presentation.

Braquet, D.M. (2010). [Library Experiences of Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans Flood Survivors.](#) LIBRES, 20(1): 1-23.

> The author interviewed and surveyed survivors about their library experiences post-disaster. Respondents indicated they used the library for internet access, information and technology assistance, mental escape, and refuge. They also discussed how the destruction and eventual rebuilding of community public libraries impacted their senses of loss and hope.

Chancellor, R. L. (2017). [Libraries as Pivotal Community Spaces in Times of Crisis](#). Urban Library Journal, 23 (1).

> The author shares two examples of how libraries in urban communities experiencing civil unrest and disturbances (Ferguson, MO and Baltimore, MD) supported their communities while still providing their usual services.

Donahue, A.E., and Featherstone, R.M. (2013). New Roles for Hospital Librarians: A Benchmarking Survey of Disaster Management Activities. Journal of the Medical Library Association. 101(4): 315-8.

Through the survey responses, the authors collected quantitative and qualitative evidence from hospital librarians about their roles in disaster management activities. With 40% of survey respondents indicating that they had played a role in disaster management in their hospitals, data suggested the existence of a subgroup of librarians who are developing disaster management experience in hospital librarianship.

Eberhart, G.M. (2017). Hurricane Harvey and Libraries. American Libraries.

The author briefly presents how the Harris County Public Library (TX) reopened for emergency relief purposes for area residents. Residents could come for assistance in completing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) forms, using computers or internet, charging cellphones, or taking shelter in the facility which provided air-conditioning.

Featherstone, R.M., Lyon, B.J., and Ruffin, A.B. (2008). Library Roles in Disaster Response: An Oral History Project by the National Library of Medicine. Journal of the Medical Library Association. 96(4): 343-50.

The authors conducted an oral history of librarians and identified multiple roles for libraries in disaster response emerged. The roles fit into eight categories: institutional supporters, collection managers, information disseminators, internal planners, community supporters, government partners, educators and trainers, and information community builders. Librarians—particularly health sciences librarians—made significant contributions to preparedness and recovery activities surrounding recent disasters.

Flaherty, M.G. (2016). Here, There and Everywhere: Disasters and Public Libraries. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

The author states that the U.S. FEMA includes libraries as an essential service during a disaster response. It identifies the role that libraries have played through natural disasters and social/civil unrest such as, providing information, internet access, meeting spaces, and access to restrooms. Author includes examples of public library roles during natural disasters in the US and internationally, and during times of civil unrest such as in Ferguson, MO and Baltimore, MD, and the mass shooting in Aurora, CO.

Hagar, C. (2013). Public Library Response to Natural Disasters: A "Whole Community Approach." San Jose State University, School of Information.

The author describes the multiple ways in which public libraries support communities to include directing stakeholders to trustworthy sources of information, providing community technology centers, and serving as a distribution center for emergency supplies.

Kaplan, SJ. (2021). Libraries' Assist Disaster Survivors with Information Needs and Refuge but Need to Amplify Their Role and What They Offer. Evidence Based Library & Information Practice. 16(2): 158-160.

This is a review of the 2010 article by D.M. Braquet, "Library experiences of Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans flood survivors," which was a survey of library patrons at a New Orleans public library. The author's findings included that the library is an important post-disaster location for information and technology assistance, Internet access, and a place to escape.

Love, C.B., Arnesen, S.J., and Phillips, S.J. (2013). National Library of Medicine Disaster Information Management Research Center: Establishment and growth, 2008-2010. Information Services & Use. 33(3-4): 273-298.

In 2008, the NLM established the DIMRC. NLM undertook substantial efforts to ensure that medical libraries have plans for the continuity of their operations, librarians are trained to understand their roles in preparedness and response, online disaster health information resources are available for many audiences and in multiple formats, and research is conducted on tools to enhance the exchange of critical information during and following disasters. This paper documented the history, goals, initiatives, and accomplishments of the Center.

Love, C.B., Arnesen, S.J., and Phillips, S.J., et al. (2014). National Library of Medicine Disaster Information Management Research Center: Achieving the Vision, 2010-2013. Information Services & Use. 34(1-2): 149-170.

From 2010 to 2013, the NLM DIMRC built its programs and services on the foundation laid in its starting years, 2008-2010. This paper describes the 2010-2013 goals and activities of DIMRC.

Meeks, R. (2017). Weathering the Storm: A Systematized Review of Public Library Disaster Literature. Dissertation.

This systematic review assessed the published library and information science literature to identify ways in which public libraries assist their communities before, during, and after hurricanes. Four themes were identified: physical needs, emotional or mental needs, logistical needs, and information needs.

Morgan, A.U., D'Alonzo, B.A., Dupuis, R, et al. (2018). Public Library Staff as Community Health Partners: Training Program Design and Evaluation. Health Promotion Practice. 19(3): 361-368.

The authors developed a case-based training curriculum to help library staff recognize, engage, and refer vulnerable patrons to appropriate resources. Topics addressed in the training that were selected based on findings from a prior community needs assessment included homelessness, mental health and substance use disorders, immigration, and trauma. Improving library staff capacity to address the health and social needs of their patrons can further establish public libraries as partners in improving population health.

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New Jersey State Library. (2012). Librarian's Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency Guidebook and Workbook.

> The New Jersey State Library created a toolkit to support libraries within the state during disasters. The document addresses the importance of public libraries to the community as they are often seen as "information first responders." Public libraries may be used for distribution of information by government organizations and keeping the public abreast to current events.

Patin, B. (2020). What is Essential?: Understanding Community Resilience and Public Libraries in the United States during Disasters. Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology. 57(1): e269.

> Public libraries are considered trusted pillars in their community, posing them to provide critical information in the face of extreme challenges. This work explores community resilience and how public libraries in the U.S., as FEMA-designated essential community organizations, enhance community resilience. However, this FEMA designation was made without a clear understanding of how libraries should support their communities, leading to confusion during the U.S.'s response to the COVID1-19 pandemic. The authors identified a gap between the perspectives of the librarians and disaster response agents and suggested methods for closing this gap.

Peet, L. (2014). Ferguson Library Provides Calm Refuge for a Torn Community. Library Journal. Ames Library News.

> Author shares how the Ferguson public library supported the town, including its teachers and students, when the schools were closed due to protests. In addition, the ABC News conducted a story on the library.

Rose, J. (2013) For Disaster Preparedness: Pack A Library Card? NPR Morning Edition.

> This article provides examples of how New York City public libraries helped with community recovery efforts after Hurricane Sandy for area residents.

Soylu, D., Medeni, T.D., Knezevic, R., and Knezevic, S. (2020). The Role of Libraries and Information Centers in Disaster Management. ResearchGate.

> The authors discuss the roles that libraries play during disasters by providing information and other resources and providing a source of shelter if needed.

Stricker, M. (2018). From Facilities to Trauma: Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency at Your Library.

> This presentation focused on library staff and how they can support post-disaster recovery and enhance community resiliency. It is based on the lessons learned and experiences of New Jersey public libraries. This webpage includes link to the presentation archive, slides, and other resources such as the Librarian's Disaster Planning

and Community Resiliency Guidebook and Workbook. This Guidebook was developed by the New Jersey State Library and is all hazards focused.

Stricker, M. (2019). Ports in a Storm: The Role of the Public Library in Times of Crisis. Collaborative Librarianship.

The author provides guidance on the role public libraries play in resiliency and post-disaster recovery.

Veil, S. R., and Bishop, B.W. (2014). Opportunities and Challenges for Public Libraries to Enhance Community Resilience. (Abstract only.) Risk Analysis 34(4): 721-34.

The authors identified opportunities and challenges for public libraries to fulfill their role as a FEMA-designated essential community organization and enhance community resilience. The results indicated there are several opportunities for libraries to enhance community resilience by offering technology resources and assistance; providing office, meeting, and community space; serving as the last redundant communication channel and a repository for community information and disaster narratives; and adapting or expanding services already offered to meet the changing needs of the community. However, libraries also face challenges in enhancing community resilience, including the temptation to overcommit library capacity and staff capability beyond the library mission and a lack of long-term disaster plans and collaboration with emergency managers and government officials.

Wheeler, A.J., Allen, R.W., Lawrence, K., et al. (2021). Can Public Spaces Effectively Be Used as Cleaner Indoor Air Shelters during Extreme Smoke Events? International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 18(8).

During extreme air pollution events, such as bushfires, public health agencies often recommend that vulnerable individuals visit a nearby public building with central air conditioning to reduce their exposure to smoke. However, there is limited evidence that these "cleaner indoor air shelters" reduce exposure or health risks. The authors quantified the impact of a "cleaner indoor air shelter" in a public library in Port Macquarie, NSW, Australia when concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM(2.5)) were elevated during a local peat fire and nearby bushfires. A carefully selected air-conditioned public building could be used as a cleaner indoor air shelter during episodes of elevated smoke emissions.

Whiteman, E. D., Dupuis, R., Morgan, A.U., et al. (2018). Public Libraries as Partners for Health. Preventing Chronic Disease. 15: E64.

The authors surveyed the Pennsylvania library directors to investigate staff interactions with library patrons to address social determinants of health. The authors found that library staff frequently interact with patrons around health and social concerns - well beyond those related to literacy and education - including help with employment, nutrition, exercise, and social welfare benefits. Many respondents had witnessed a drug overdose at the library in the past year.

Yelvington, A. (2020). Libraries are Crucial to Disaster Recovery, but the Coronavirus is Keeping them Closed. Urban Edge Blog, Rice University.

This article provides summary of how Houston, TX area public libraries are an important part of social infrastructure and their role during Hurricane Harvey. It also addresses how COVID-19 has impacted this role in communities with many closed to the public.

Young, E. (2018). The Role of Public Libraries in Disasters. New Visions for Public Affairs. (Volume 10).

The author addresses the role public libraries have in building a disaster resilient society through community support and in fostering access to critical information and resources.

Zach, L. (2011). What Do I Do in an Emergency? The Role of Public Libraries in Providing Information During Times of Crisis. Science & Technology Libraries. 30(4):404-413

The author provides an analysis of the role public libraries had in past events and addresses the value they have in providing information to the public through technology.

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