Librarian First Responders: Investigations of Public Librarians’ Health Information Services and Community Members’ Information Needs Following a Catastrophic Flood

Feili Tu-Keefner, MLIS, PhD
(pronounced like “FAY LEE”)
(feilitu@sc.edu)


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JB1Kud_r8wg

Outline

• Situation specific research
• Public librarians’ collaborations between health sciences librarians and professionals from other sectors
• Use of multiple channels and technology (including social media)
• Professional librarians’ required knowledge skills and competencies
Research Design: Situation-specific Case Research

• In 2015-2016
  • public librarians’ use of multiple channels and technology for information distribution and services
  • public libraries’ collaboration with multi-level agencies to facilitate emergency response and recovery

• In 2017
  • community members’ use of disaster information sources and evaluation of the information’s credibility

• In 2018-2019
  • role played by local public libraries in Houston, Texas
  • community members’ access to information during the catastrophic hurricane and flooding in the Houston metropolitan area
Framework

Public health experts recommend a framework for effective risk communication preparedness and implementation in dealing with pandemic influenza:

1. **Process** - use of multiple channels and technology for information distribution and services

2. **People** - use of community-first approaches for the provision of services

3. **Partners** - libraries’ collaboration with multi-level agencies to facilitate emergency response and recovery


#E4GDH
Methodology:
Study in 2015-2016

- Public Libraries’ Partnerships and Librarians’ Operations
  - Three focus-group meetings with public library administrators and librarians
- Public Libraries’ Partnerships with Other Agencies
  - An in-depth interview with a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) agent
Methodology: Study in 2017

- Community Members’ Information Access
- Disaster information sources the community members used
- How people shared information with others (for instance, social media such as Facebook, etc.)
  - A survey of adult community members (18 years or older)

Three sets of survey questionnaires in printed and in electronic formats were used.
Methodology: 2018-2019

• Public libraries serving as community catalysts to facilitate the building of community capacity and resources for emergency response and recovery
    – Five focus-group meetings with Houston Public Library’s administrators and librarians

• Community Members’ Information Access
  – A survey of adult community members (18 years or older) in the Houston Metropolitan area in Texas
    • To be conducted
Public Libraries’ Collaborations with Multiple Organizations and Their Legitimacy as Partners of Public Health Agencies

- Public libraries’ successful collaborations with private and public sectors, including public health agencies, show the magnitude of their involvement in facilitating emergency response and recovery before, during, and after the disasters.
  - Richland Library, Columbia, South Carolina
    - FEMA established disaster centers in Richland Library Main and its branches.
  - Georgetown County Library, Georgetown, South Carolina
    - The Library is partnering with the Georgetown County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and serves in the EOC’s public information officer section, in its communications center, and in its documentation area.
    - Maximize the Potential of Your Public Library: [https://icma.org/sites/default/files/302161_MaximizeYourPublicLibrary.pdf](https://icma.org/sites/default/files/302161_MaximizeYourPublicLibrary.pdf)
  - Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina -- John’s Island Regional Library
    - The Library served as a satellite administrative office for the local fire department.
  - Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas
    - The Library system is an integral part of the city’s emergency response and recovery team.
Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Recovery Resources

To help mitigate the impact of disasters on healthcare providers and their patients, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) has developed and oversees an emergency preparedness and response plan to help Network members maintain their information services in the event of a disaster.

410-706-2855 is the Emergency Assistance Number and will connect you to the Southeastern/Atlantic Regional Medical Library. Call this number whenever disaster strikes and your local resources/plans are unable to keep your core services available, so we can help implement the response plan!

#E4GDH  https://nnlm.gov/sea/guides/emergencyprepdisasterrecover
Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Recovery Resources

- **dPlan** is perfect for small and medium-sized institutions that do not have in-house preservation staff. dPlan is also valuable for large library systems or museum campuses that need to develop separate but related plans for multiple buildings, locations, or branches. (Northeast Document Conservation Center)

---

**dPlan** The Online Disaster-Planning Tool for Cultural and Civic Institutions

Before You Begin

- New User
- FAQ
- Contact NEDCC

Log In

---

This online disaster-planning template was prepared by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). The development of the template was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT).

---

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

- dPlan is a free online tool that simplifies the process of writing a disaster plan for your collections.
- It provides a comprehensive fill-in-the-blank template into which you enter information about your institution. dPlan generates a printed disaster plan specific to your institution.
- dPlan was developed to assist non-profit organizations that hold cultural collections, such as libraries, archives, historical societies, museums, town clerk offices, and others. We are sorry, but for-profit corporations cannot use dPlan at this time.
- dPlan was prepared by Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). This development of the template was funded by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

---

**General Tips for Using dPlan**

- Before signing up, explore the Demo but do not use the Demo to create your disaster plan since that data may be overwritten by others at any time.
- Find out if anyone else in your institution has created a dPlan account before you begin, to avoid duplication of work and confusion due to multiple accounts.
- Use only one dPlan account, even if your institution has multiple buildings. You can “clone” your original plan and modify it as needed for multiple facilities.
- Start with dPlan Lite, which creates a “quick reference” disaster response and recovery plan.
- Plan for multiple sessions of data entry. Print and use the Data Collection Forms to collect information offline before sessions.
- Use Plan Management to give additional users access to part or all of your plan. Delegating tasks can speed up data collection and data entry.

---

**Creating an Account**

Go to the New User page and enter the information requested. The login for your account must be a valid email address. We suggest using a general email address associated with your institution that does not change frequently. Keep a record of your login and password. Provide email addresses for the primary contact person and an alternate contact person for your dPlan account. All emails from NEDCC regarding your dPlan account will be sent to these email addresses.
Significant Technology Access:

**Internet, Websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, etc.**

The Internet was predominantly used during and after the disaster.

Social media served as main channels to provide real-time information services.

“... Our communications is very centralized. It really comes from the communications division [of the city of Houston] and they are the ones who did Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. All of the social media goes through them. We don’t send out locally. ...” [Library Administrator/Librarian Subject #4 in Houston Public Library]

On the Richland Library’s Facebook site, the library’s posts were shared 1,386 times, an average of 98 shares for each post. “…our [Facebook] posts reached a total of 109,882 people. They had 6,200 impressions per day …” [Library Administrator/Librarian Subject #7 in Richland Library]

“... on the library website, much of that information on each location page was updated pretty immediately after the storm occurred to let customers know that these were the impacted locations. ...” [Library Administrator/Librarian Subject #4 in Houston Public Library]
Community Members’ Uses of Technology and Social Media

The Internet was widely used during and after the disasters.

- Use of each social media site by survey participants (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Site</th>
<th>Primary Use (%)</th>
<th>Most Useful to Communicate (%)</th>
<th>Most Useful to Receive Information (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Sites (YouTube, Ustream, etc.)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image Sites (Flickr, Instagram, etc.)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Sites (Wordpress, Blogger.com, etc.)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answers</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#E4GDH
Community Members’ Information Access

The general public’s lack of skill in using technology to access information is a large problem.

“… we [FEMA agents] were able to help … One of them, I'm really proud of because I had to really fight to get her what she needed. Because there's always some interpretation in this stuff … we have a thin line of helping them write appeal letters. … I mean, if you don't know how to spell appeal, and you think that means beg-- it's a legal term-- … you don't even have to be illiterate to be overwhelmed by our letters-- they're very hard to read. … literacy was an issue. …” [FEMA Agent]
Target population for survey was adult public library users. A small response rate was expected.
Provision of Critical Information Services

• Public librarians were not fully prepared to provide sufficient essential disaster and health information for adult users online.
  – Not proactive in disseminating and promoting access to critical disaster information in English and other languages

  “… I wish we had health sciences librarians to help with [health] information needs … I worked with health sciences librarians [for these purposes] before in Texas… …” [Library Administrator/Librarian Subject #3]
Provision of Critical Information Services

• Public libraries and librarians:
  – connect with health sciences librarians in responding to the community members’ information needs
  – select and disseminate trustworthy digital health resources for adult users
  – provide health information and technology literacy training to the general public
  – promote the use of selected credible resources in multiple languages and services by the public libraries’ websites anytime, anywhere
  – deliver collaborative real-time health information services via online platforms
Hurricane Preparedness

State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR)
Disaster Assistance.gov
Find open Red Cross Shelters
FEMA Evacuee Hotel List - Listado de Hoteles de FEMA para Desalojados
National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) - How Do I File My Flood Claim?

http://houstonlibrary.org/learn-explore/hurricane-preparedness
Required Knowledge Skills and Competencies

• Change management/Leadership development
  – Collaborations with professionals from other sectors
  – Politically savvy
    • Working with local government agencies and local community members
  – Financial management
  – Planning of facilities
  – Communication and interpersonal skills

• Community involvement/Community engagement

• Emergency management

• Crisis communication, public relations, and public speaking

• Technology policies, applications, and management, including social media applications

• Government resources for disaster management

• Salvaging damaged collections

How library and information science education programs can do better

• Librarians’ Comments:
  – Not necessary to cover disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in the regular coursework
  – Essential to public librarians’ professional development: continuing education (CE)
Training Courses for the Disaster Information Specialist Program

One of the core competencies in disaster health is to be able to "communicate effectively with others in a disaster or public health emergency, including identifying authoritative sources for information and strategies for appropriate sharing of that information." (Source: National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health)

This page is a collection of resources on free training and education for professionals interested in identifying, using, and sharing disaster health information.

Continuing Education
MLA Disaster Information Specialization Certificate
  • Basic Level
  • Advanced Level
Basic Level Required Courses
Additional CE Options
Locating Additional Resources

Continuing Education
Some of these courses provide continuing education credit (CE) through the Medical Library Association (MLA). If you are taking a course for MLA CE credit, please register and complete the class through our free online registration system. There is a link to the registration system on the Introduction page of each course.

https://disasterinfo.nlm.nih.gov/training
Disaster Preparedness & Recovery

Librarian's Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency Guidebook and Workbook

National Preparedness Month takes place every September and is sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the US Department of Homeland Security. One goal of Homeland Security is to educate the public about how to prepare for emergencies, including natural disasters, mass casualties, biological and chemical threats, radiation emergencies, and terrorist attacks.

Would you be ready if there were an emergency? Would your library? Be prepared: assemble an emergency supply kit, make your emergency plans, stay informed, and get involved in helping your family, your library, and your community be ready for emergencies.

PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign by FEMA for action to increase community preparedness and resilience. With that goal in mind, the New Jersey State Library commissioned the Librarian's Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency Guidebook and Workbook to help libraries in New Jersey and across the country to be better prepared to accept the new mantle of responsibility being thrust on them as a safe haven in times of crises. First, these new resources will help make your library more resilient so that you can return to operations quickly. Second, we have provided guidance on how libraries can help speed the recovery of their community, and are key contributors to a resilient community.

For further information contact: Michele Stricker, Deputy State Librarian for Lifelong Learning at mstricker@njstatelib.org

- Librarian's Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency Guidebook (PDF)

https://www.njstatelib.org/services_for_libraries/resources/disaster_planning/
Questions? Comments?

Feili Tu-Keefner, MLIS, PhD
(pronounced like “FAY LEE”)
(feilitu@sc.edu)