



Libraries Catalyze Communities in Times of Crisis: A Participatory Workshop

Sponsored by

**Evidence for Global and Disaster Health SIG and
Health and Biosciences Libraries Section**

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Introductions

- IFLA Evidence for Global & Disaster Health SIG, sponsored by Health & Biosciences Libraries section
- Research into practice; our question today:
How can librarians provide critical community-first information services before, during, and after disasters?
- **Five speakers ... and we want to hear your voice!**
Relevance of recommendations to different regions / sectors
- Collection of resources, shared post-workshop



Today's Speakers



Feili Tu-Keefner
University of South
Carolina USA



Denise Lyons
Kentucky Department for
Libraries & Archives USA



Ola El-Zein
American University of Beirut
Lebanon



Edison Ricket
Sarawak State Library
Malaysia



Cindy Pierard
University of New Mexico
USA



First Projects and Background

- After 2015 flooding, an initial research team from University of South Carolina's School of Information Science began first study
 - Results produced two articles and several presentations on health information and technology access in libraries
 - Team became Dr. Feili Tu-Keefner, Denise Lyons, and April Hobbs
- Went to Houston, TX to meet with Houston Public Library Staff
 - Researched Hurricane Harvey's impact on library services, community engagement, and staff

Began with three situation-specific research studies to:

- Identify librarians' crisis leadership competencies and emotional intelligence levels at work in times of crisis
- Examine how these crisis leadership competencies can be integrated in the LIS curricula and professional development training opportunities
- Learn from others in times of crisis to create a culture of preparedness for libraries

Research Design for Studies 2015-2019

- **2015:**
 - 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
- **2017:**
 - Community members' use of disaster information sources and evaluation of the information's credibility
- **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

Methodology

2015-2016	2017	2018-2019
<p>Public Libraries' Partnerships and Librarians' Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 focus group meetings with librarians and administrators <p>Public Libraries' Partnerships with Other Agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-depth interview with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Agent	<p>Community Members' Information Access</p> <p>Disaster Information Sources the Community Used</p> <p>How People Shared Information (i.e. social media)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 sets of questionnaires were used for above	<p>Public libraries serving as community catalysts to facilitate the building of community capacity and resources for emergency response and recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 focus group meetings with Houston Public Library Director, administration, staff, and librarians

California (USA) Wildfire Research 2022



- Zoom focus groups held with representatives from Plumas County, Tehama County, Napa County (retired), Yolo County
- In person focus groups held with representatives of Mendocino, Lake, Napa, Sonoma, El Dorado, Placer, and Nevada Counties
- Zoom meetings and in-person meetings held with NorthNet staff and “Recovery Together” IMLS grant coordinators/participants

Five Core Tasks of Crisis Leadership

- 1. Sense Making:** Grasping Crises as They Unfold
- 2. Decision Making and Coordinating:** Shaping the Crisis Response
- 3. Meaning Making:** Constructing a Crisis Narrative
- 4. Ending a Crisis:** Managing Accountability
- 5. Learning and Changing:** From Crisis to Reform

“Leadership competencies determine the success or failure of crisis management efforts.”

Boin, Hart, Stern, and Sundelius

Emotional Intelligence at Work

Self-Awareness: The ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others

Self-Regulation: The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, the propensity to suspend judgment- to think before acting

Motivation: A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status, a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence

Empathy: The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people, skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions

Social Skill: Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, an ability to find common ground and build rapport

Leadership in a Crisis: Findings

Equity of Access



Needs addressed by libraries:

Computer
literacy

Functional
literacy

Information
literacy

Access to
internet and
technology

Language
access

Our First Two Country Examples:

- Ola El Zein, American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- Edison Ricket, Sarawak State Library, Malaysia

Recommendations

- Connect with health sciences librarians and social workers in responding to the community members' information needs
- 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
- Understand the library's role within the government structure (i.e. county) for clear communications and reduction of duplicate information/Develop partnerships before a crisis happens
- Support ongoing continuing education for staff and managers; specific areas included de-escalation, HR, self-care, and technology training

Top Tips

1. Establish partnerships with multiple organizations and government agencies, maintaining solid, long-term relationships to facilitate emergency response and recovery
2. Apply multiple channels (including social media platforms) and technology for information distribution and services
3. Prepare reliable, easy-to-understand resources in multiple languages to provide information services on site and remotely
4. Develop user-friendly training materials on how to use online information related to disasters and health
5. Better educate librarians for community engagement with the required knowledge and skills to recognize the importance of public libraries as community catalysts that can vitally aid in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery
6. Team up health sciences and public librarians to deliver real-time health information services via multiple channels; can also partner with social workers and mental health professionals for both community and staff

Graduate Work & Continuing Education

LIS Programs



Integrate these crisis leadership competencies and their skill sets into curriculum of University of South Carolina School of Information Science

- Created a new online course for the M.L.I.S program: Community Engagement & Services



Generate interest and support for creating more courses like Crisis Management or Emergency Planning into LIS curriculum

- Other MLIS programs already offering similar courses (i.e. University of North Carolina-Greensboro)
- A few library staff commented that more real world training in the library school program would have been helpful

CE/Professional Development



State Libraries offer professional development for librarians and library staff including grants to attend conferences, classes, and training



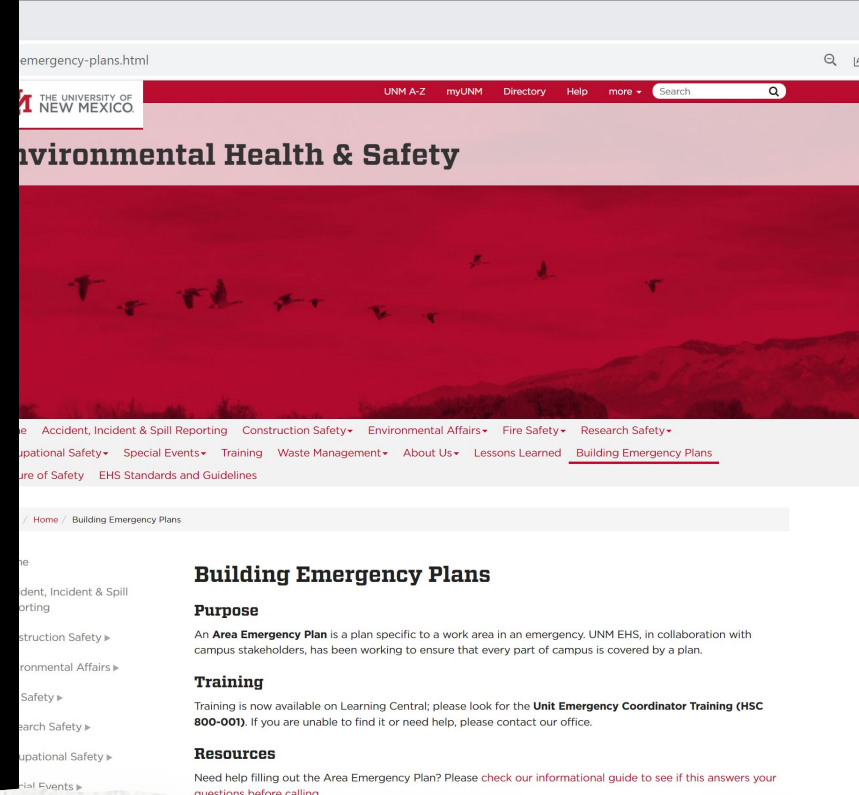
Encourage more participation in leadership activities such as library associations or leadership academies



State libraries have great resources for emergency preparedness for libraries continuing education (South Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, Kentucky)



Research team will continue to present at conferences and building a database of resources; will also continue to publish findings



Scaling Up Library Crisis Plans

The University of New Mexico

How can librarians provide critical community-first information services before, during, and after disasters?

- Questions and answers
- Identifying next steps

