Supporting Library Staff in Emergencies and Natural Disasters

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Methodology

Three situation-specific case research studies:

1. explore the role of public libraries in South Carolina and Texas during emergencies
2. identify librarians’ basic required competencies

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


Framework

Public Libraries’ Partnerships and Librarians’ Operations

• 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.

• Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina
  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.

Methodology

2015-2016

• Richland Library’s Partnerships and Librarians’ Operations
  - 3 focus group meetings with public library administrators and librarians

• Public Libraries’ Partnerships with Other Agencies
  - An in-depth interview with a Public Library; a Community Emergency Response Management Agency (FEMA) agent

2017

• Community Members’ Information Access
  - Disaster information sources the community members used

• How people shared information with others (e.g., social media, etc.)
  - Three sets of survey questionnaires were used.

2018-2019

Public Libraries serving as community catalysts to facilitate the building of community capacity and resources for emergency response and recovery

- 5 focus-group meetings with Houston Public Library’s administrators and librarians

Results

Successful Public Libraries’ Partnerships and Librarians’ Operations

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Recommendations

Public libraries and librarians:

- select and disseminate trustworthy digital health resources
- provide health information and technology literacy training to the general public
- promote public librarians’ use of disaster information resources prepared by the National Library of Medicine and CDC
- deliver collaborative real-time health information services through the use of social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter
- integrate competencies identified to enhance LIS curriculum and to develop professional CE

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Community Members’ USES of Technology and Social Media

The Internet was widely used during and after the disaster.

Use of each social media site by the participants (%)

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<th>Social Media Site</th>
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Influence of the Library’s Technology Resources after the Disaster

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