

Co-Constructing Disaster Response

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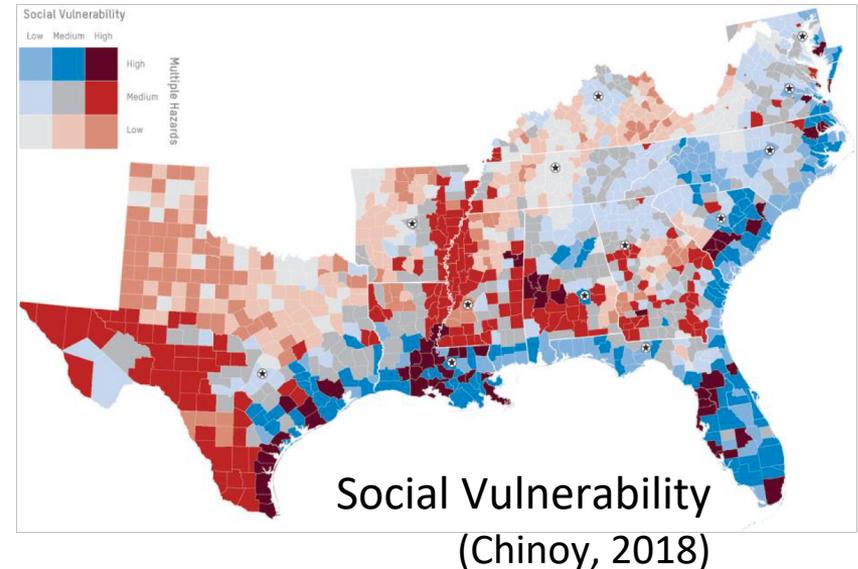
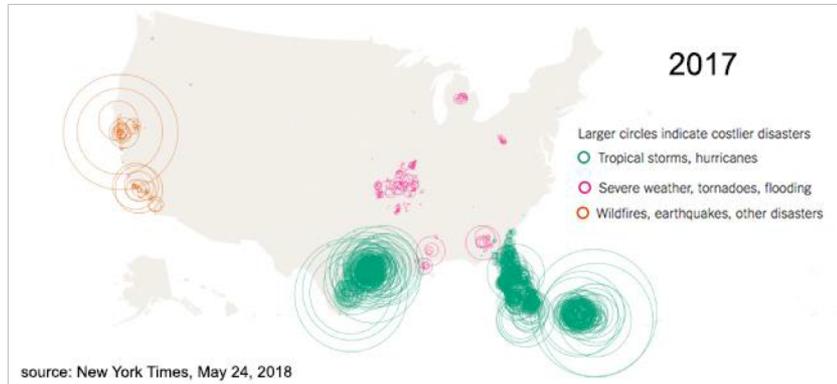
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Natural Disasters Increasing along the Gulf...Often Amid Vulnerable Populations

Disaster Location and Costs

(NYT, 2018)



Background: Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Michael, Flooding, other disasters...



*Rural
Libraries and
Disasters:
Investigating
Resiliency in
the Digital
Environment
and Beyond*

Premise:

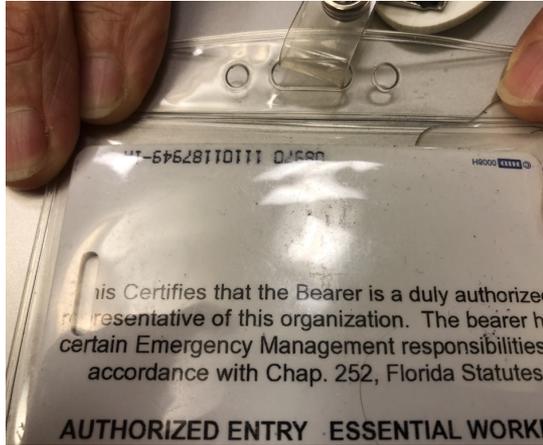
Libraries, especially smaller and rural libraries in less populated towns, play an outsize role in community resiliency.

*Rural
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• IMLS Grant RE-96-18-0127-18

- How did small and rural librarians respond to disaster events?
- How do librarians use ICTs during and after disaster events to interact with other organizations and institutions also assisting the community?
- What institutional practices contribute to libraries' resilience and interaction with their communities?

Official Framework...



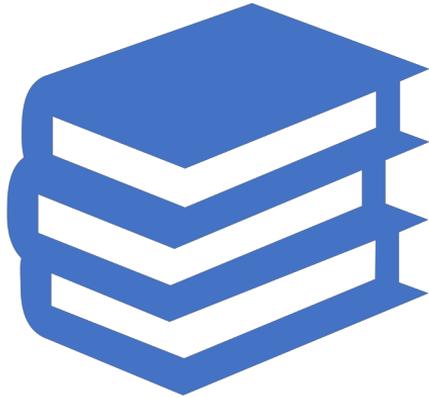
- * In Texas, libraries are public facilities often repurposed for disaster aid services by counties, towns



- * In many Florida counties, public librarians are Tier 1,2, or 3 First Responders.

- * School and public libraries in Florida are legally considered disaster shelters

What Do Public Librarians Have to Do With Natural Disasters? Our Literature Foundation



- Rural populations and libraries
 - Internet, mobile phones
 - Broader information needs
- Public librarians' varied roles in disaster planning & response
- *Publicness* raises issues of control, governance
- *Materiality* of place
- People rely on mobile & digital forms of communication during and after disasters
- Community resilience – libraries as social infrastructure (Klinenberg, 2018)



Method & Approach

- Grounded theory
- Conceptualize resilience as a communication process
- Interviews and surveys with librarians, community officials and aid organizations to investigate qualities of resilience
- Case studies using varied public library sites in Florida & Texas
- Examine phases & framings of resilience
- Create timelines & categories of responses to disasters

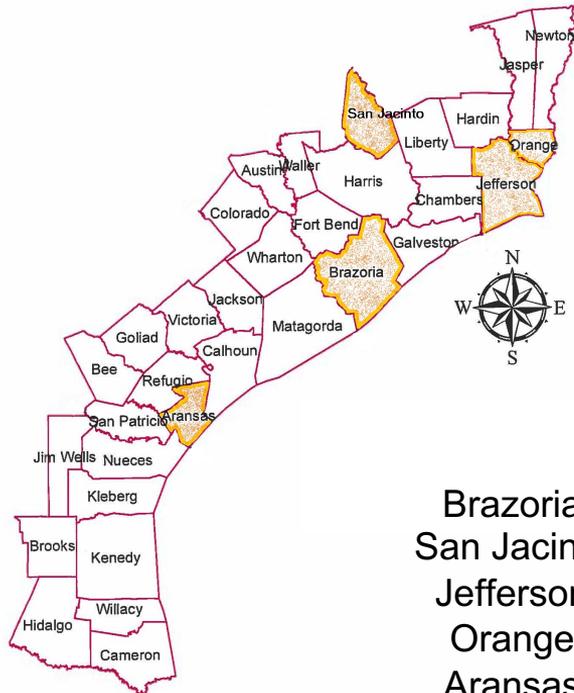
Florida Participants & Data



- State Library of Florida
- Public Library Directors
- Public Librarians
- County Officials
- Emergency Operation Centers
- Charitable Organizations (e.g., Hands and Hearts)

- Three Library Directors
 - 2 Collaborate
 - 1 Site Visit
- Bay County Site Visit & Focus Group
 - 10 Librarian Participants
- Calhoun County Site Visit & Focus Group
 - 6 Librarian Participants

Texas Participants & Data

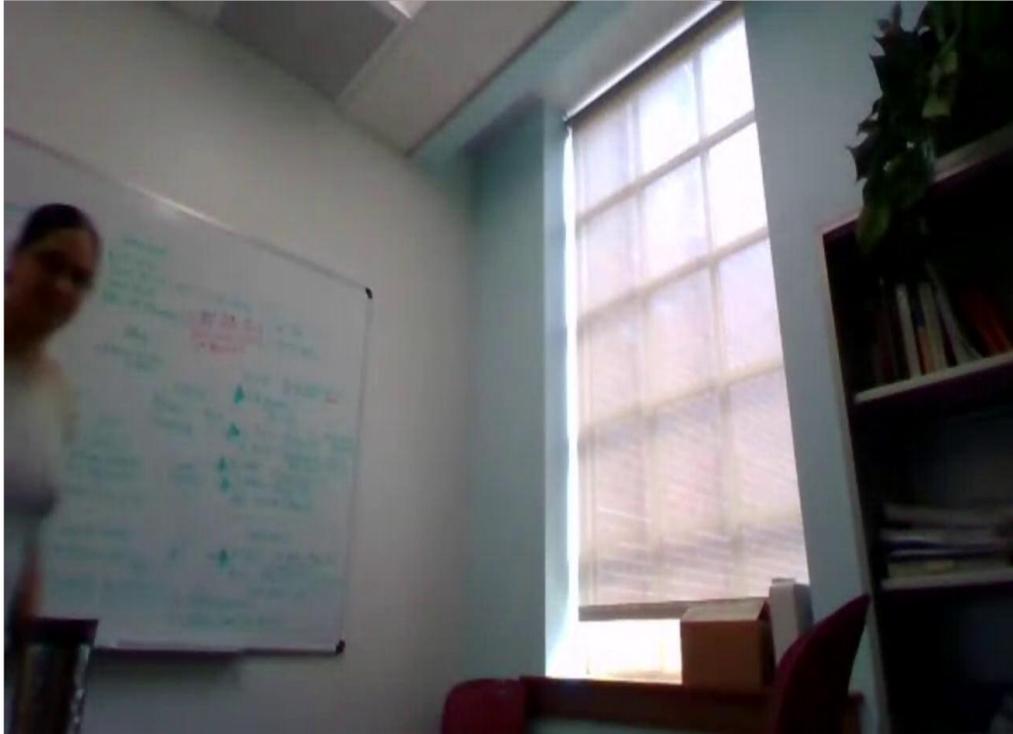


Brazoria County
San Jacinto County
Jefferson County
Orange County
Aransas County

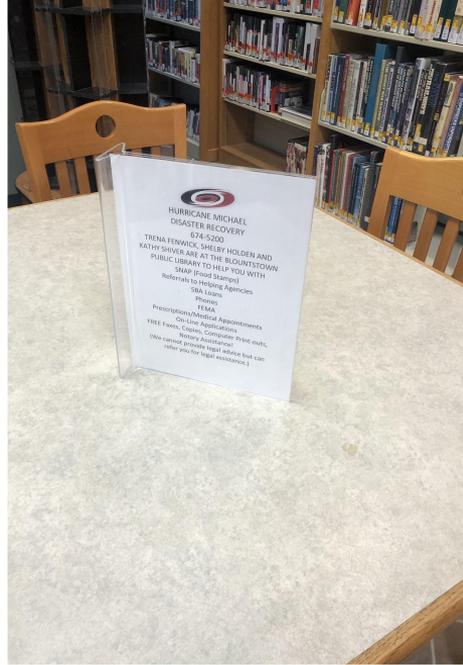
- Texas State Library
- Public Library Directors
- Public Librarians
- County Officials
- Emergency Operation Personnel
- Charitable Organizations (e.g., Hands and Hearts, United Way, Samaritan's Purse)

- 30 field visits
- 18 phone interviews
- 41 Librarians
- 9 Aid and recovery organizations
- City and County officials

Data Collection and Coding



- Interviews - Recorded and transcribed
- Coding using Dedoose



Calhoun County Site Visit



Aransas County Site Visit



Marie D. De Jesús/Houston Chronicle, via
Associated Press

The Texas
Petroleum
Chemical Plant
in Port Neches
experienced
two explosions
in 2019.

The public
library is
nearby.

Interview Protocol

Interview protocol - 48
interview questions for project
total.

We selected a specific set of
questions for each interview.

Types of Questions

- Preparations before
- Emergency services
- Additional resources
- Emergency information
- Libraries within communities: information roles (FEMA, social services, local government, local aid orgs.)
- Physical shelter and aid
- Communication within communities about disasters
- Assisting in cleaning up damage after the storm
- Roles in emotional and mental health support, as well as stress reduction during and after the storm

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

- NVivo
- Text

Heather Ogilvie, Outreach Librarian, Bay County Public Library
[Start: 00:00:42]
HO:
I'm Heather Ogilvie. I'm the Outreach librarian here at Bay County Public Library. I don't think a minute has gone past in the last however long it's been that I haven't been working on Hurricane Michael things. So it's kind of hard to even to know where to start. And many of the things that I do are covered by [redacted] se has talked about. I think. I started preparing for Hurricane Michael the year before with a three month climate change project that I did with NOAA. And I got a gr [redacted] es of community conversations about climate change. They did this with -- they did it at 50 libraries in the United States. So that in at least one in every state would be having this conversation, trying to raise awareness, and we were hoping to. And they loved Panama City because there's -- I think most people here still believe that climate change is a belief system rather than a science. So we were very excited about that. And actually almost to the day a year before the hurricane, we had our partner, NOAA climatologist, in the library talking to the group of people I had at the conversation. And he was saying how we have not had huge hurricane damage in this area in the history of Florida. Because Florida has been protected in a way by the peninsula itself. And the gulf has been cool enough so that the storms come up and at the last minute they are deflected one way or another, by our own state. And he said, but that has changed now. The gulf is much warmer, to a much deeper level. So the next major hurricane that you have, you can expect that it's going to come right straight up and hit Panama City head on. And we talked about the storm surge, which did not happen. But it was in my head for a year that we need to be prepared for 15 feet of water.

 Denise Gomez 9:41 AM Oct 16 [Resolve](#) 

Q1a

 Denise Gomez 9:42 AM Oct 16 [Resolve](#) 

Q1a

Data Analysis

- Created Codebook
- Dedoose



Themes in Preliminary Findings



Q1: How did libraries respond?

- PHASES...
 - Preparation/before
 - During
 - Social qualities
 - Material aspects
 - After
 - Continuing...embedding preparation

Preparation

- Get “portals” ready to take information
- Emergency kits; have materials on hand to deal with mold
- Ready the library
-
- Get stuff off floor, wrap computers, backups
- Have a protocol ready and known to all
- Make sure you have good communication with city/county
-
- Have inventory in order (for future insurance assessment) - have pictures of things in the library
- Get training you might want/need
- Establish a network of regional librarians to share ideas, status, etc.
- Check out generators???

- Figure out how people hear about things in the library...

During Disaster....

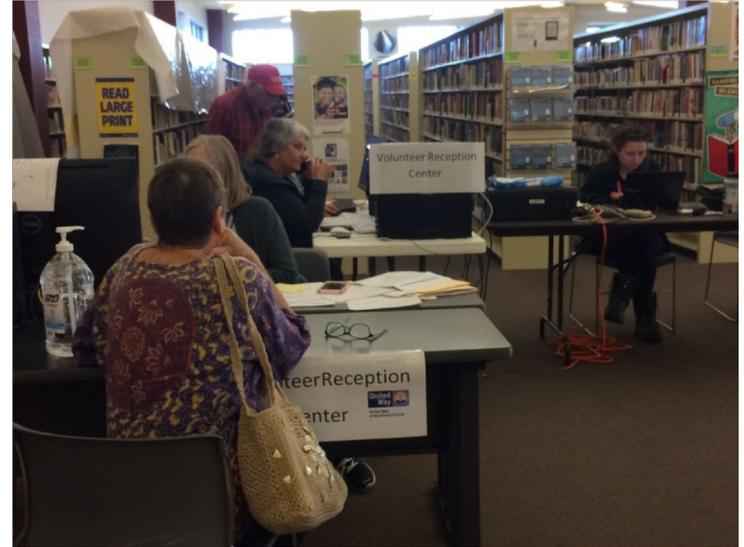
- Take care of yourself
- Possible volunteering or assignment with recovery efforts
- Some locations *require* library staff to help in city/county capacities

Balancing Roles

“My role was so different. I did a little bit of the social media of the library while I was gone but I was also balancing two jobs.”

- Community and Social Relations Librarian

- Challenge of maintaining and extending normal services and roles while learning and performing added recovery services and roles.
- Tracking and Reporting Librarians’ Work during this time
 - 214 Forms. FEMA



Volunteer Reception Center at Bay County Public Library

Q2: How do librarians use ICTs during and after disaster events? How do they interact with other organizations?

- Response & recovery phase involves computer use, faxing, scanning, printing
- In smaller systems, the library may be “the lowest on the totem pole” and therefore may lack power, phone, Internet for a while
- Status as “public facility” may mean library space and ICT capabilities are coopted
- Two sides to inter-organizational participation....

Manvel Library is a Safe Place as far as Social Services are concerned



Libraries and Librarians Responding: Disaster Relief and Resilience

Meeting Spaces:

"We get called almost every day at reference to try and find a place for people."

- Reference Librarian

- Community resource and recovery organizations occupy vital public library space during recovery
- Invisible Librarian Work
 - E.g., Canceling Pre-Existing Meeting Room Reservations

Libraries as Place



Libraries used for case management work and for advertising services

(flyer in Coastal Bend region library)

After Disasters - sample activities

- Waive fines
- Make sure printers, fax and scanners are up and can be used easily by people
- Contact lists to network with relief organizations
- Communicate with local city/county government
- Having a meeting room is really advantageous
- Lots of nonprofits will want to use library space – good marketing opportunity
- Write grants to replenish collection, get furniture
- Have a way to communicate with patrons that you are open

Figure out how to reach
people with news about
the library's resources!

More activities after disaster...esp. ICT-related

- Good communication with city/county for repair needs and procedures
- Download and complete FEMA forms and insurance claims
- Check news and updates about local conditions
- Get info about the status of homes or workplaces
- Be prepared to work with contractors
- Use social media in new ways
- Have flyers
- Material loans - wet vacs, tools, etc.
- Give computer literacy help
- website or fb so you can update frequently
- Listening to people - being “a bartender”
- New ways to engage community
- Set up services in new venues

After the Storm

Youth services librarians at Bay County Public Library quickly realized that children in the community needed to engage in the story of Hurricane Michael, rather than be protected from it:

“One of the little boys said, ‘Uh, oh the library's broke. The Library's broke too.’”

Bay County public librarians created this book display for children to learn more about storms.



After the Storm

The Shepherd TX librarians, their own library flooded, took materials to entertain children to the community shelter and conducted storytime to take children's minds off of their new homelessness.



[Rhonda Smith Brown](#) Thank you for your post. There are 2 shelters in Shepherd and one in Coldspring. The local citizens have donated all they can get their hands on. Kind of wondering if any outside help is ever going to come.



Q3: What institutional practices contribute to libraries' resilience and interaction with their communities?

- **Networking**
 - Librarians more connected within their towns seemed to be able to accomplish more
- **Structure:** example of Brazoria County
 - The head of county libraries (18 of them) has 'a seat at the table' of the key planning body for long term recovery
 - The County developed an app for disaster-related information one-stop-shopping for resource information. All library locations are on it.
 - Brazoria libraries loan tools and flood-recovery related materials

Addressing Mental Health: Community Disaster Recovery

- Many Librarians Reported Suffering from Compassion Fatigue
- Many Librarians Identified Need for Services of a Counselor or Therapist
- “Being a bartender” – you have to listen to people.



(iSchool graduate Khelsea Rantanen in center)

Supporters Needing Support

Our research of Hurricane Michael affected Florida Panhandle public librarians research has documented :

- As contractually obligated first responders, Florida Panhandle public librarians are on the community's front line during disasters:

"We survived only because we all helped each other."

- However, librarians report little or no emotional support training:

"Nothing prepares you to be one of the storm people."

- And highlights unique challenges of long-term community recovery:

"Things are not the same and they never will be ...not in my lifetime,"

- Though not formally trained to engage in empathetic services, librarians provide them without support for their own needs:

"I have survivor's guilt," and *"I try to cry only at home."*

- To date, the storm has led to over 100 deaths and at least \$25 billion in damage:

"Hurricane Michael not only caused physical damage...it has left scars on the hearts and minds of survivors" (WFSU, May 10, 2019).

Disaster Response as a System....

1. **Many entities –**

Relief orgs., response teams, city/county authorities, social services, etc.

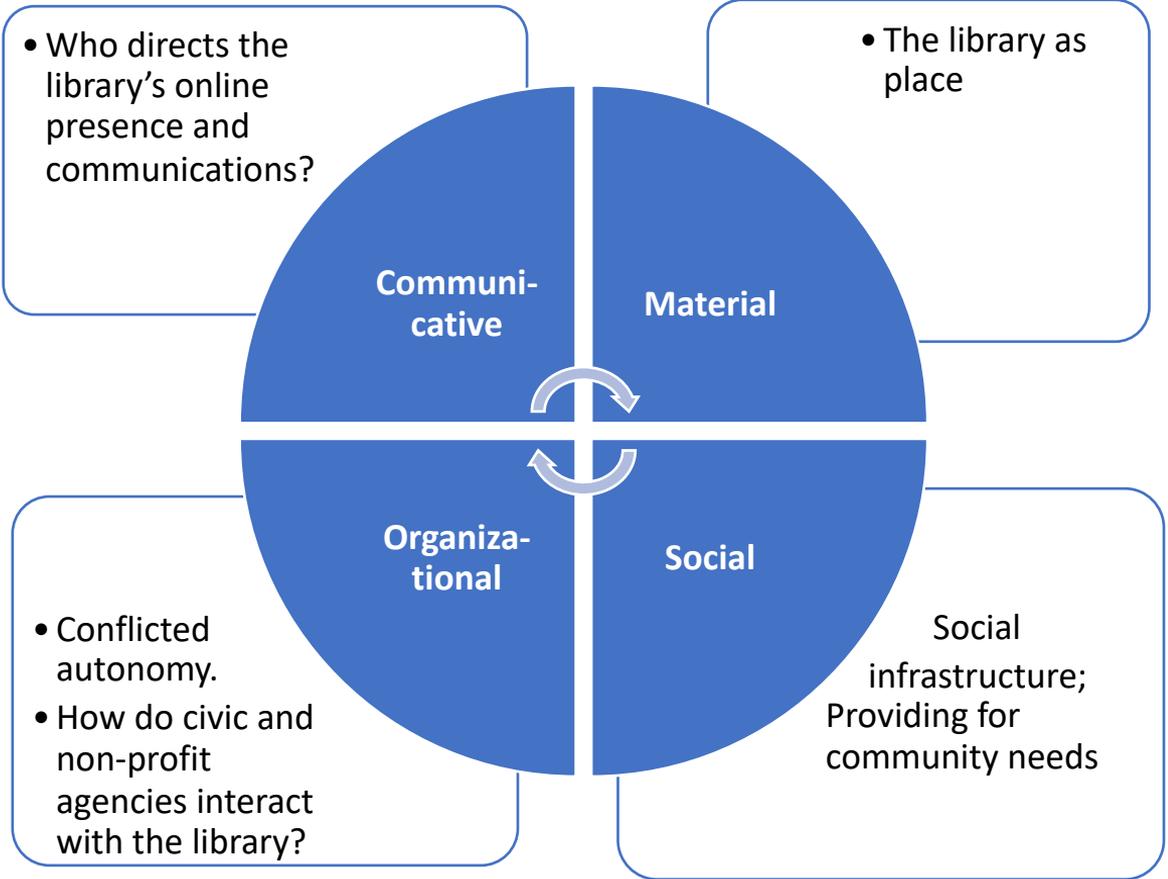
2. **Coordination**

Staff + volunteers + sources of electrical power/Internet connectivity = web of relationships

3. **Differences between small and large libraries**

Smaller libraries face different environment re: autonomy, resources, information environment and patron base

The small library as an infrastructure, within a system



Questions? Ideas?

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