

Research Design and Protocol

The research team utilizes a situation-specific case study approach to design a series of the following studies. The studies aim to investigate: 1) public librarians' use of multiple channels and technologies for information distribution and services; 2) public libraries' collaboration with various agencies to facilitate emergency response and recovery; and 3) community members' use of disaster information sources and their evaluation of the information's credibility before, during, and after various disasters. Below is a summary of the topics and locations of this series of studies:

Studies from 2015-2024: Focused on People, Partnerships, and Communications:

<u>South Carolina (2015-2017)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Focus group meetings</u>• <u>Survey</u>	Flooding, Hurricanes
<u>South Carolina (2017-2018)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Survey</u>	Community members' use of public library disaster information services after the Columbia flood and Hurricane Matthew
<u>Houston, TX (2018-2019)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Focus group meetings</u>	Hurricane (Harvey)
<u>Northern California (2022)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Focus group meetings</u>• <u>Interview</u>• <u>Informal discussions</u>	Wildfires
<u>Kentucky (2023)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Focus group meetings</u>• <u>Interviews</u>• <u>Informal discussions</u>	Tornadoes (West) Flooding/Mudslides (East)
<u>Southern California (2024)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Focus group meetings</u>• <u>Interviews</u>• <u>Informal discussions</u>	Multiple disasters, including floods, fire, extreme heat, earthquakes, etc.

Our goal is to examine whether public libraries in these locations acted as community catalysts, helping to build community capacity and resources for emergency response and recovery, as outlined by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (<https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/community-catalyst-report-january-2017.pdf>).

We are interested in the following:

I. Public libraries' services:

- 1) did public libraries partner with other agencies, including government and public health agencies, to provide situation-specific and community-first information services?

- a. If so, what are their partnering agencies?
 - b. If not, why not?
- 2) what types of disaster information services did the public libraries provide to the community?
- 3) did the public libraries provide technology access to the community?
 - a. If so, what types of technology?
 - b. If not, why not?
- 4) did public librarians use social media to provide information service?

II. Community members' perceptions:

- 1) the importance of local public libraries and their services to the communities;
- 2) whether or not the community members used the services of the local public libraries at this time;
- 3) which disaster information sources the community members used and their evaluation of the information's credibility;
- 4) how people shared information with others (for instance, social media such as Facebook, etc.).

Theoretical Framework

The design of this series of research is guided by a framework recommended by public health experts for addressing pandemic influenza in vulnerable populations (Vaughan and Tinker, 2009). The framework, which emphasizes effective health risk communication preparedness and implementation, provides guidelines for situation-specific communications that align with the goals of our research. The investigation focuses on three key dimensions: 1) process (including public librarians' use of multiple channels and technology for information distribution and services); 2) people (how libraries employed community-focused approaches for the provision of services and dissemination of trusted and credible information resources); and 3) partners (how libraries collaborated with multi-level agencies to facilitate the building of community capacity and resources for emergency response and recovery). Our research has identified effective collaborations between public libraries and public health agencies, showing the value of public libraries in facilitating emergency response and recovery during various disasters.

Methodology and Data Collection

Qualitative methodology has been used. The team visited several public libraries affected by the aforementioned disasters to conduct focus-group meetings and one-on-one interviews with library administrators and librarians, either in person or via Zoom. Photovoice and storytelling methods were also utilized to explore how library personnel managed the crises resulting from damage to their facilities while simultaneously renovating their libraries and providing essential community information services (Bruce et al., 2018; Coen, 2019; Gabrielsson et al., 2022; O'Donovan et al., 2019; Torris-Hedlund, 2019). The focus-group meetings and interviews were digitally recorded, with research team members also taking notes. The recordings were later transcribed for data analysis.

Focus Group Meetings with Public Library Administrators and Librarians

Purposive sampling is used to recruit library administrators and librarians as subjects from several locations specifically affected by the aforementioned disasters. The subjects are not limited to professional librarians who have earned a Master of Library and Information Sciences (MLIS) degree or the equivalent. A pool of potential subjects is identified based on their involvement in the library operations before, during, and after the disaster, after which they are formally invited to participate in this study. The participants, all of whom are adults aged 18 or older, include public library administrators, librarians, and staff members. Each session lasts approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

One-on-One Interviews with Public Library Administrators and Librarians

The research team also conducts one-on-one interviews with public library administrators and staff whose libraries were severely damaged or impacted by the disasters mentioned above. Photovoice and storytelling methods are used to explore how library personnel managed the challenges of dealing with the damage or loss of physical facilities, rebuilding their libraries, and continuing to provide essential community information services simultaneously. The participants, all of whom are adults aged 18 or older, include public library administrators, librarians, and staff members. Each session lasts approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

References

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