

State and Regional Library Support

There are a number of possible activities and issues that the state and regional libraries may wish to consider when seeking to assist local public libraries respond to hurricane threats. The issues include:

- **Forums for dialogue and joint action:** One challenge facing public libraries may be finding ways to share what hurricane experiences librarians know with those librarians working under hurricane threats. The experiences, roles, activities and tools, often created on the fly, are invaluable for better utilizing public libraries in community hurricane response in the future. The Information Institute's project website is one such effort.¹ State libraries and regionals may wish to develop mechanisms to facilitate such dialogue.
- **Increasing awareness:** Public librarians do not understand what others have done and what is possible regarding hurricane preparedness and response. Public library staff does not grasp the important role their institutions play. Often, public library managers do not know what other responders do, how they can help the library and how the library can help responders. Residents do not know what they can expect from their public library responders and how they might contribute to community hurricane response via their libraries. Programs for increasing such awareness among the state library agencies, regionals, and the librarians can be useful here.
- **Advocacy:** Local libraries cannot easily go to state and federal agencies for aid or to coordinate activity at those levels. Other responders' mandates may come from the federal or state level. This makes the playing field for obtaining resources unequal and all too often simply baffling – especially for the small and rural libraries. Local public libraries need regional, state and federal advocates to speak with appropriate officials and agencies, make the public library case for “essential service” status, obtain resources where possible, and cement and pre-coordinate partnerships where not.
- **Coordinate library mutual aid efforts:** Public libraries have always, informally, come to each others' aid. Forward looking library managers have begun to suspect that the level of assistance required, the speed of aid delivery and the need for pre-coordination in the absence of ready communication all may demand more formalized planning and statements of mutual aid. The Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN) membership's Regional Disaster Plan (RDP)² and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners COSTEP³ initiatives are among the first to address disaster mutual aid among external partners.

¹ <http://www.ii.fsu.edu/hurricanes/>

² SEFLIN. (2008 and ongoing). (DRAFT) Outline of regional disaster plan (RDP) for libraries in Southeast Florida. Retrieved January 30, 2009 from <http://www.seflin.org/docs/Basic%20Plan%20Outline.doc> SEFLIN Disaster Recovery Roles (approved by Board). Retrieved January 30, 2009 from <http://www.seflin.org/docs/SEFLIN%20Disaster%20Recovery%20Role.doc>

³ Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners COSTEP. Retrieved January 30, 2009 from <http://statewideplan.pbwiki.com/About+this+project>

- **Continuing education and training:** Local emergency management and many responders have systematic continuing disaster education programs. Public librarians in some locales regularly participate in them. But most do not know of these programs, let alone participate. Library associations, State Libraries and multi-type library cooperatives may need to work together to offer targeted community hurricane response training as well.
- **Communicate what resources are available:** Experienced hurricane responders say that all disasters are local even when hurricanes cut a wide swath across a state or the region. What they mean is that all external supporters wait for specific requests for aid before responding. Local responders have the best sense of what is needed, when. This is a good practice to adopt, particularly when local public libraries know, in advance, what is available from who, how obtained in a crisis. State libraries and regional library systems need to communicate clearly with local public libraries as to what resources and services are available before, during, and after such disasters.

Appendix 1 identifies Potential Areas of External Support for Hurricane Affected Public Libraries.



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Appendix 1. Potential Areas of State and Regional Library Support for Hurricane Affected Public Libraries	
General Needs	
Dialogue/Awareness among libraries	Provide opportunities for dialogue in this area across public libraries and across libraries of different type
Dialogue/Awareness – emergency management & responders	Provide opportunities for dialogue in this area with emergency management and other responders
CE & Training	To provide, obtain or coordinate relevant hurricane related CE/training for library staff and residents
Expert network	Develop & activate hurricane experienced librarians and other experts to assist local library managers at need.
Service Role: Ensure library continuity and restoration	
Aid	Brief Description
Architects, Building Engineers, Designers	To assess libraries prior and after storms and recommend mitigation, repair, etc.
Funding & loans	Especially short term funding to guarantee operations and repairs until long term solutions are found
IT - equipment, data backup & remote processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek funds and expert knowledge regarding server and other IT hardening - Coordinate arrangements for backup servers and other IT. - Coordinate temporary arrangement for backup of library data beyond that offered by vendors, etc. - Offer IT to remotely manage library IT processing should other options be unavailable or too costly.
Special collection digitalization & preservation	Address digitization/preservation of all special materials in hurricane prone libraries
Insurance	Develop model public library hurricane (flood, wind, other damage) insurance policy language using underwriting experts. Offer insurance underwriting expertise to review existing public library hurricane related insurance and to assist in claim preparation.



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	Educate library and local government communities as to library needs.
Donation Management	To manage coordination of offers of donations to local libraries, diplomatically rejecting those that are inappropriate and reliving local staff of this burden.
Temporary facilities & bookmobiles	Provide/rent temporary replacement library facilities
Mobile libraries (staff)	Pre-arrange the temporary availability and transport of bookmobiles from other libraries to the affected area. This may include staff if housing and food is also brought in.



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Potential Areas of State and Regional Library Support for Hurricane Affected Public Libraries	
Service Role: Ensure library continuity and restoration	
Aid	Brief Description
Regional/State Regional Planning & Coordination	Offer model local library disaster plans and training. Participate in the development of regional or statewide disaster plans similar to the effort underway by the SEFLIN membership.
Caching of facilities and preservation supplies	Identify the types of supplies needed in each of these areas during a hurricane emergency. Develop caches where appropriate. Develop mutual aid distribution from non-affected libraries as part of regional plans (above).
Storage	Identify and contract for temporary storage facilities to house library materials on a temporary basis for use before and after a hurricane.
Service Role: Extend normal library services in abnormal times	
Aid	Brief Description
Cache office and programming supplies	Identify the types of supplies needed in each of these areas during a hurricane emergency. Develop caches where appropriate. Develop mutual aid distribution from non-affected libraries as part of regional plans (above).
Identify emergency family programming ideas	What are good materials to help children cope? What are good programming ideas?
Provide emergency programs and entertainers where feasible	It must be possible for outside staff to get into the affected area safely and without affecting other responder and resident access
Service Role: Be a community communication hub	
Aid	Brief Description
Emergency communication equipment	Mobile voice and Internet communication devices, too expensive to be owned by many local libraries might be purchased and allocated locally on an emergency basis.



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Mobile communications	Provide temporary computer labs, laptops, copiers, phones and other IT to meet short term demand
Media/Public Information Office	Explore the feasibility of offloading the demands of local hurricane affected library media relations to an external support source.



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Potential Areas of State and Regional Library Support for Hurricane Affected Public Libraries	
Service Role: Offer E-Government service and support	
Aid	Brief Description
Advocacy - Federal & State	Represent library interests at these levels for funding, coordination, training, and information distribution.
- Emergency	Act contact and intermediary between local public library and other agencies or organizations.
Service Role: Be a community information hub	
Aid	Brief Description
Reference: emergency/remote/benefits/business recovery	Offer temporary remote (Ask A Librarian like) reference services where local reference is unavailable; temporarily supplement overextended local library reference service; offer temporary specialized reference services in such areas as home repair, hurricane benefits, insurance claims, etc.
Hurricane preparation materials	Identify, organize, disseminate (both print and web) the best of hurricane preparation materials of use to librarians, residents and responders
Hurricane recovery materials	Identify, organize, disseminate (both print and web) the best of hurricane recovery information of use to librarians, residents and responders
Service Role: Be a community organizer and meeting place	
Aid	Brief Description
Temporary office space	Pre-coordinate use of local library temporary office space with libraries and state and federal agencies.
External volunteers (if emergency management designates local library participation)	Pre-coordinate with local libraries, emergency management and volunteer organizations for how the local use of external volunteers will operate
Service Role: Support business recovery	
Aid	Brief Description
Identify state and national providers of emergency business recovery assistance.	Provide information about services to local libraries. Develop model plan for business recovery services



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Service Role: Serve as a point of distribution (POD)	
Aid	Brief Description
Locate emergency suppliers	Identify state & federal providers of emergency supplies and coordinate use of library space and staff skills with providers and emergency management.
Service Role: On Demand Services	
Monitoring of situation	Provide a central point for affected libraries to report status and needs.
On demand services	Agree to be the agent of last resort to meet unexpected local public library emergency needs.