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# Challenge for Libraries as Information Managers: Hurricane Preparedness and Response

## Introduction

The Information Institute completed a study that identified hurricane preparedness and response information management best practices for libraries; created a web portal to organize and provide access to a broad range of hurricane preparedness and response information useful to librarians and local communities; and provided training to libraries for how best to use this website and the various materials generated by the study.

## Importance

- Coordinates information management across emergency response groups.
- Improves the library and community infrastructure.
- Describes local and state politics in hurricane preparedness and response.
- Integrates library preparedness and response with the local community.
- Coordinates library response with other emergency management services.
- Assists state libraries in supporting libraries and their communities.
- Provides strategies that better prepare libraries to assist their communities.

## Research Questions

- How do libraries facilitate information management related to hurricane preparedness and response?
- What service roles have libraries assumed during hurricane events?
- What activities do libraries provide to prepare the community?
- How do libraries and government agencies interact before, during, and after disaster-related events?
- How do libraries and other governmental agencies leverage their resources during the response and recovery period?
- What are the best practices offered by the survivors of such events?

## Design

**Units of analysis:** Gulf Coast area libraries recently impacted by hurricanes.

**Sampling:** Purposive sample of over 150 experienced officials and librarians

**Data collection period:** August 2008 – July 2009.

**Method:** Multiple methods of collecting information, including:

- *Focus groups & interviews:* Exploratory questions and open-ended format
- *Telephone interviews:* Exploratory questions and open-ended format
- *Literature Analysis:* Documents, reports, papers, plans, etc.
- *Testimonials:* Narrated descriptions by experienced librarians and emergency management officials

## New Service Roles

Library Information Management Hurricane Preparedness and Response Service Roles	
Be a Community Information Hub	Be a Community Organizer & Meeting Place
Extend Normal Service in Abnormal Times	Provide Improvised On Demand Services
Aid Evacuees	Ensure Library Continuity & Restoration
Serve as a Point of Distribution (POD)	

## Key Findings

- Libraries must collaborate and coordinate with local agencies to build coalitions focused on disaster preparedness information management.
- Libraries need to become emergency responders, prepared to offer shelter, relief, communications, and emergency services.
- Libraries should evolve as vital links in the emergency response network in key roles communicating, distributing, and managing information.
- Libraries serve as command and control points, an important node in the disaster response network.



"Hurricane Preparedness and Response for Florida Public Libraries: Best Practices and Strategies," Florida Libraries (Spring 2009)

Symposium on State Libraries and Hurricane Preparedness and Response, FSU February 20, 2009. The webcast is available at <http://www.ii.fsu.edu/hurricanes/archive.html>



## Accomplishments

- Improved library information management related to community hurricane preparedness and response.
- Addressed key aspects of hurricane preparedness and response through web portal < <http://www.ii.fsu.edu/hurricanes/> >
  - Targeted to librarians' information needs.
  - Organized to access extensive, searchable collection of related information.
  - Focused on providing planning models, standards, and guidance.
- Offered policy recommendations for more integrated disaster coordination.
- Conducted multiple training and awareness sessions to jump start the *networked approach* to disaster preparedness information management, where libraries and agencies interact and collaborate.