



8 Mai 2026

Librarian First Responders: Transforming Public Services in the Wake of Natural Disasters

Dr. Feili Tu-Keefner | University of South Carolina

About Us



Dr. Feili Tu-Keefner



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Denise Lyons



Kentucky Department for
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April Hobbs



Network of the
National Library of Medicine

The Beginning

Flood tide

Researchers and former students recall harsh lessons from historic 2015 Midlands flood

While USC students were volunteering for flood relief efforts, the university's research community mobilized to gather time-sensitive flood data. The university's then-vice president for research Prakash Nagarkatti issued an emergency call for proposals and made available substantial internal funding for what would be **33 faculty-led research projects**.

Recovery & Resilience

The Value of Public Libraries During a Major Flood: What the 2015 Catastrophic Flooding in South Carolina has Taught Us

Samantha Kelly Hastings, Jingjing Liu and Feili Tu-Keefner, School of Library and Information Science

Introduction

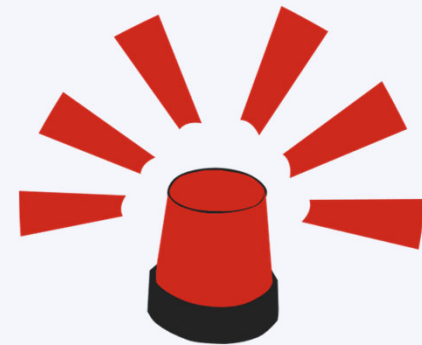
In October 2015, several counties in South Carolina experienced catastrophic flooding that caused severe damage, including loss of residential homes and other calamities. This study investigates public libraries' value to their communities, especially to vulnerable populations, and their legitimacy as partners of public health agencies during and after a disaster. The focus of the research includes various aspects of information, technology, and user support. A framework for communication preparedness and implementation recommended by public health experts is used to examine the role of public libraries during the catastrophic flooding (between October 4-10, 2015) in Richland County and Orangeburg County. The targeted public libraries are the Richland Library, the Orangeburg County Library, and the South Carolina State Library. We examine the situation-specific information dissemination, resources distributed and used, and services provided by public libraries and librarians, as well as the social media applications for communication during and after the disaster.

Awarded \$17,000

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/research/docs/sc_floods_project_summary_booklet.pdf

“Regarding the impact of hurricanes and other natural disasters, **readiness is the **key to resilience!**”**

**Dwight McInvaill, Library Director,
Georgetown County, South Carolina**

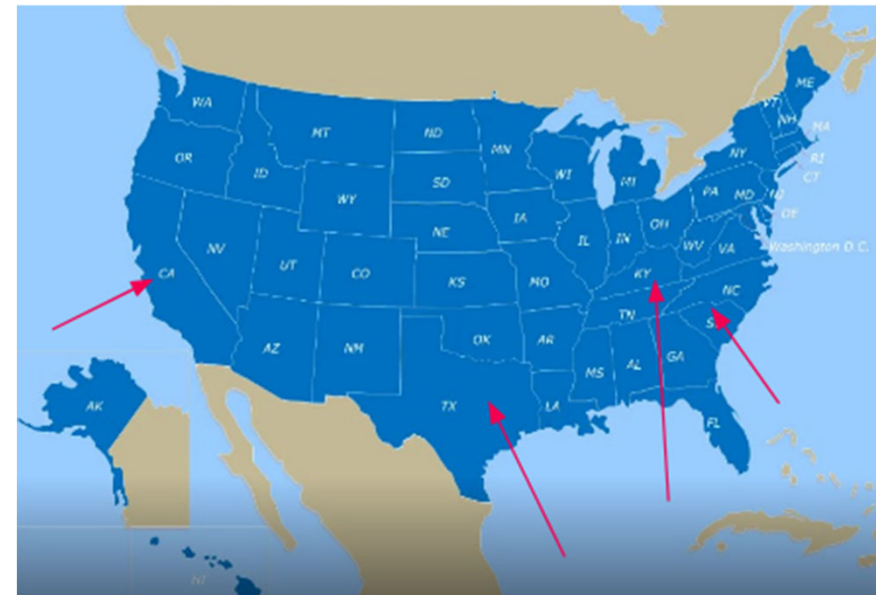


Research Locations

<p>South Carolina (2015-2017) Focus group meetings, Survey</p>	<p>Flooding, Hurricanes</p>
<p>South Carolina (2015-2017) Survey</p>	<p>Community members' use of public library disaster information services</p>
<p>Houston, Texas (2018-2019) Focus group meetings</p>	<p>Hurricane Harvey</p>
<p>Northern California (2022) Focus group meeting, Interview, Informal discussions</p>	<p>Wildfires</p>
<p>Kentucky (2023) Focus group meetings, Interview, Informal discussions</p>	<p>(West) Tornadoes (East) Flooding/Mudslides</p>
<p>Southern California (2024) Focus group meetings, Interview, Informal discussions</p>	<p>Multiple disasters including floods, fire, extreme heat, earthquakes, etc.</p>

Population (2025-26): SC 5.5m; Houston 2.4m (TX 31.7m); CA 39.5m, KY (4.6m)

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



Building a Culture of Preparedness



Learning from the “Recovery Together” project, NorthNet Library

System: <https://libraryrecovery.org>

“Organizations that fare best during a disaster are those that prepare ahead of time and train all staff members to take action. These organizations also create a culture of preparedness. They encourage shared responsibility and build preparedness activities into regular routines. Preparedness becomes a facet of ‘business as usual’ instead of a singular event or yearly exercise.”

Resource Repository

This website project was made possible with funding from the
NNLM Region 2 Emergency Preparedness Grant.

<https://preparedlibraries.org>

The screenshot displays the website's header with a logo on the left and a navigation menu containing 'Presentations', 'Publications', 'Studies', 'Media', 'Team', 'States', 'Resources', and a 'CONTACT' button. The main content area features a large image of volunteers in blue shirts packing boxes, with the text 'Library Disaster Preparedness Project' overlaid on the left. Below the image, a paragraph of text describes the research team's work. At the bottom, there are three white call-to-action boxes: 'Media' (with a photo icon), 'Resources' (with a gear icon), and 'Get in Touch' (with an envelope icon).

Library Disaster Preparedness Project

For nearly ten years, the research team of Dr. Feili Tu-Keefner, Denise Lyons, and April Hobbs have been studying libraries during disasters. There have been many examples of how libraries served their communities through response and recovery.

Media
Find videos and photos showcasing key moments from

Resources
Find a curated selection of resources to help organizations

Get in Touch
Please use the following link to get in touch with us.

Basic Required Competencies



Essential Competencies

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Disaster/Health Information Services

Technology & Information Literacy

Community Engagement & Outreach

Disaster Preparedness, Response, & Recovery

Communication & Advocacy

Library Collaborations with Public and Private Sectors

- Delivering effective disaster health information services in an ethical manner.
- Collaborating with health sciences information professionals to prepare health information resources and deliver these services
- Promoting the utilization of various resources in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery to enhance community resilience

Basic Required Competencies

- **Disaster/Health Information Services**
- **Technology and Information Literacy**
- **Community Engagement and Outreach**
- **Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery**
- **Communication and Advocacy**
- **Library Collaborations with Public and Private Sectors**
- **Leadership and Organizational Development**
- **Team and Staff Development**
- **Infrastructure Risk Management**
- **Information Design for Hazard Response**
- **Sector-Specific Communication Coordination**
- **Data Stewardship and Community Archiving for Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery**
- **Post-Disaster Analysis and Community Resilience**

Disaster/Health Information Services

- Deliver effective disaster health information services in an ethical manner.
- Collaborating with health sciences information professionals to prepare health information resources and deliver these services.
- Promoting the utilization of various resources in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery to enhance community resilience.



CFLA-FCAB Code of Ethics:
<https://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Code-of-ethics.pdf>

Code d'éthique de FCAB-CFLA:
<https://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/French-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Technology & Information Literacy

- **Facilitating technology access (including social media)**
- **Promoting information and technology literacies**
- **Developing infodemic management strategies to proactively counter mis/dis/malinformation through prebunking and debunking approaches**



Community Engagement & Outreach

- Developing community profiles and assessing local disaster information needs
- Advocating for the local communities the libraries serve
- Taking a leadership role in community engagement
- Demonstrating creativity and flexibility in delivering community-centered information services during and after a disaster



Communication & Advocacy

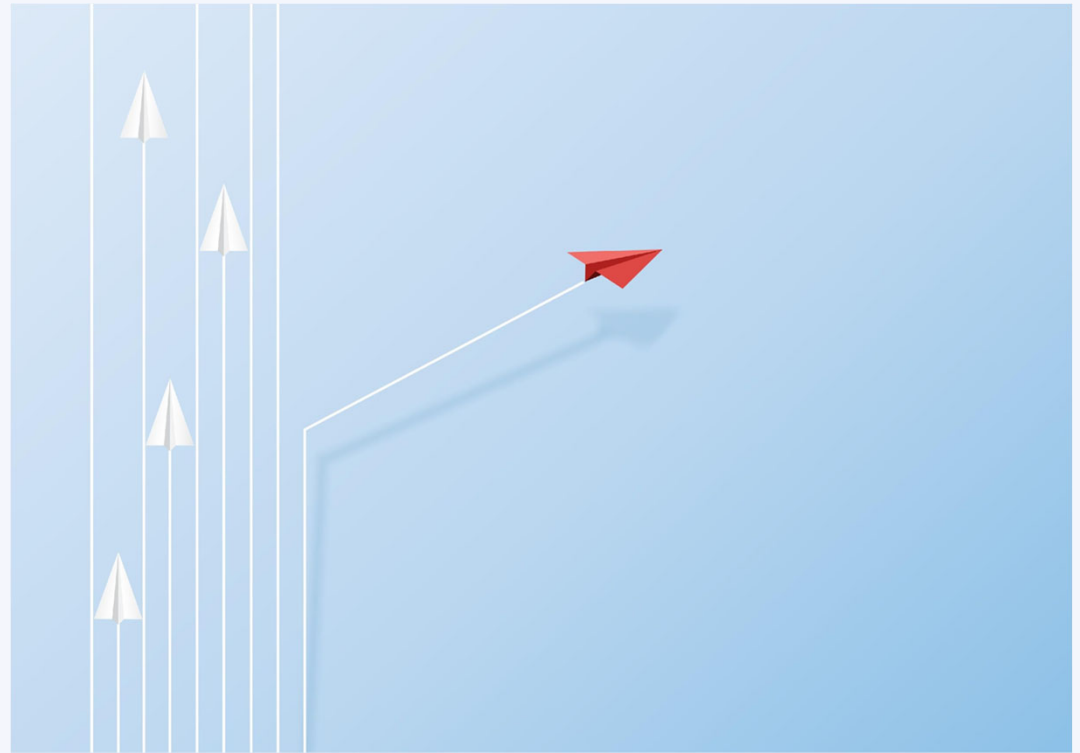
- Advocate for the sustainability of the library, including adequate funding
- Facilitating crisis communications, which includes public relations and public speaking



“... the library is the perfect place because it's a resource. All reality, it's a resource center ...”



Leadership in a Crisis: What We Found



Tu-Keefner, F., Hobbs, A., & Lyons, D. (2025) Libraries on the front lines: The imperative for disaster-ready information professionals. *Journal Library Administration*, 65(1), 79-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2024.2432230>

What Library Crisis Leaders Need

Two frameworks converge to strengthen performance and decision-making in crisis



CRISIS LEADERSHIP

Sense Making
Decision Making & Coordinating
Meaning Making
Ending a Crisis
Learning & Changing

+



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Self-Awareness
Self-Regulation
Motivation
Empathy
Social Skill

=

LIBRARY
CRISIS
LEADERS

Better performance. Better decisions. Stronger communities.

Developing Library Crisis Capacity



LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Identify and cultivate qualified candidates for crisis leadership
- Promote crisis leadership competencies among library staff

+



TEAM & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Facilitate team-building activities
- Provide professional development and training for library staff

=

**CRISIS-READY
WORKFORCE**

Prepared leaders. Prepared teams. Prepared libraries.

Self-Awareness and Sense-Making

Leadership Capacities Demonstrated by Librarian First Responders



01

Communication Readiness

Leaders prepare communication systems (both internal and external) in advance to ensure timely, accurate information during crises.



02

Assess Quickly, Stay Present

Librarian first responders monitor conditions in real time and reopen facilities as soon as it is safe to serve their communities.



03

Reframe the Library's Role

Leaders reframed libraries as people-centered institutions, ready to provide space, staff, and essential community support.

Learning, Changing, and Ending Crises

Leadership lessons from library crisis leaders



01

Build Preparedness Before the Next Crisis

Leaders emphasize the importance of establishing partnerships with community organizations in advance, clearly defining specific roles for volunteers, and educating users on basic preparedness.



02

Carry Lessons Forward Across Crises

Experience compounds: lessons from past disasters strengthen communication and service-continuity planning.



03

Evolve Services & Staff Roles

Crises have underscored the library's role as essential community infrastructure, prompting the development of new training pathways and the adoption of in-house social worker models.



Tu-Keefner, F., Hobbs, A., & Lyons, D. (2025) Libraries on the front lines: The imperative for disaster-ready information professionals. *Journal Library Administration*, 65(1), 79-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2024.2432230>

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Articles

Libraries on the Front Lines: The Imperative for Disaster-Ready Information Professionals

Feili Tu-Keefner , April Hobbs  & Denise Lyons 

Pages 79-99 | Published online: 09 Dec 2024

 Cite this article

 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2024.2432230>

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Abstract

Libraries, particularly local public libraries, have evolved into hubs for community-first services, extending beyond traditional roles. Library personnel are now expected to act as first responders and crisis leaders during times such as natural disasters. This report documents the critical crisis leadership qualifications required for library personnel, identified through comprehensive research from 2015 to 2023. Findings from these situation-specific case studies call attention to the community's needs for library services during emergencies, underscoring the requirement for LIS education to include disaster management. Continuing education (CE) is also critical in preparing information professionals for these essential roles.

Sample our Communication Studies Journals



>> [Sign in here](#) to start your access to the latest two volumes for 14 days

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Pei-Chun Lee
Public Library Qua
Published online: 2

Develop a Comprehensive Natural Disaster Policy

- Establish guidelines and protocols for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery

Conduct Community Needs Assessment

- Create a detailed community profile informing disaster planning and services

Integrate Resilience Hub Infrastructure into LIS Programs

- Support libraries to serve as resilience hubs and centers for disaster-related community support

Provide Staff Training in Emergency Services and Disaster Response

- Ensure library personnel are prepared to assist during emergencies through specialized training programs

Best Practices



Expand Lending Services

- Offer resources such as laptops, hotspots, and other essential technology for community use during disruptions

Develop a Disaster Recovery Resource Collection

- Collect resources on home building, wildfire-resistant landscaping, and other recovery-focused topics

Recommendations



Educate the Public on Personal Preparedness

- Encourage practices such as scanning important documents and storing critical information in multiple secure locations
- *"Survivors will tell you to prepare."*

Support Ongoing Professional Development for Staff and Managers

- Provide training in areas such as emergency services, de-escalation techniques, human resources, self-care, and technology

Recommendations

Establish Strategic Partnerships Before a Crisis Hits

- Identify systems and structures that offer flexibility and assess available resources to strengthen collaboration during emergencies

Understand the Library's Role Within Broader Context

- For example, understand the library's position in the broader framework to ensure clear communication channels and minimize information duplication



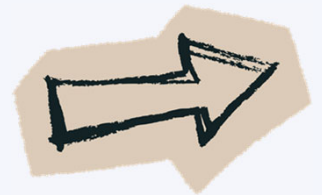
Featured Resource: dPlan

- **What is it?**
 - It is an online, emergency preparedness and response tool for arts and cultural organizations, regardless of size, scope, or discipline.
 - Using dPlan can help you to:
 - prevent or mitigate disasters
 - prepare for the most likely emergencies
 - respond quickly to minimize damage
 - recover effectively while continuing to provide services to your community
 - <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/disaster-assistance/dplan-artsready>
- **How to create an account:**
 - Select a Plan – Pocket Response Resource (FREE) OR Annual Plan (Paid)
 - Fill out the information
 - Organization, full name, email, job title, etc.
 - Confirm your email

Pocket Response Resource (PRR)

- You will download the PRR instructions.
 - **TRICK TO PRR: Less is more!**
 - **Fill out a separate PRR for each of your buildings and locations.**
 - **Consider the security of your document... where will you store it?**
- **What if my organization has multiple facilities/buildings on a campus/complex?**
 - **Staff from each facility must work together to complete items that are common across the organization**
 - **i.e., institutional contacts and responses**
 - **Tailor the remainder to specific locations**

NOW TO THE DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE PRR






Side A: Communications

Break It Down

- Institutional Contacts: ED, etc.
- Response Team: Team Leader, etc.
- Building Contacts: Facilities, etc.
- First Responders: Emergency Management, etc.
- Mutual Aid Partners
- Other Contacts
- Emergency Recovery Services: Freezer Storage, etc.

Template for Pocket Response Resource, released 6/30/2022, revised 4/29/2024.
SIDE A (Communications). Use this side for phone numbers for the individuals and organizations you are most likely to need to talk to in the first minutes and hours after an emergency occurs.

<p>[Organization Name] Pocket Response Resource Date revised:</p>	<p>RESPONSE TEAM Team Leader [name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email]</p>	<p>BUILDING CONTACTS Facilities / Building Manager [street address of building] [name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p>	<p>FIRST RESPONDERS Emergency 9-1-1 Ambulance / Emergency Medical [phone]</p>	<p>EMERGENCY RECOVERY SERVICES Building Recovery – Local company [name] [phone]</p>
<p>INSTITUTIONAL CONTACTS [link to your online ArtsReady or dPlan account] Main Emergency Management Office (if you have a parent organization) [office phone] / [email] / [home email] Executive Director [name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email]</p>	<p>Members [name] [Response Team role] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email] [name] [Response Team role] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email] [name] [Response Team role] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email]</p>	<p><i>Add additional buildings and separate facilities (including rentals) as needed. Include street address to reference when calling emergency services.</i> Electric [phone] Elevators [phone] Fire Suppression [phone] Gas [phone] Janitorial Services [name] [company name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p>	<p>City Emergency Management [phone] County Emergency Management [phone] Fire Department [phone] Health Department [phone] Police Department / Law Enforcement [phone] Red Cross [phone] State Office of Emergency Services [phone]</p>	<p>Building Recovery – National company [name] [phone] Collections Conservator [name] [phone] Data Recovery Service [name] [phone] Exterminator / Pest Control Service [name] [phone] FEMA Disaster Assistance 800-621-FEMA</p>
<p>Director of [department] [name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email] Communications and Public Relations Officer [name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email]</p>	<p>FREE SPACE <i>Use this space for additional instructions for immediate emergency response. This might include a staff phone tree; contact information for student and volunteer employees, frequent contractors, renters, etc.; or overflow from other columns.</i></p>	<p>Plumber [phone] Security [name] [company name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] Telephone [phone] Water – Fire Sprinklers [phone] Water – Potable [phone] Windows/Glass [phone]</p>	<p>MUTUAL AID PARTNERS ("BATTLE BUDDIES") Alternate facility(ies) for operations [name] [organization] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p>	<p>Freezer Storage [name] [phone] Insurance Contact / Agent [name] [company name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email] Structural Architect / Building Engineer [name] [phone]</p>
<p>Financial Services / Accountant [name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email] House Manager [name] [company name] [office phone] / [home phone] / [cell] / [email] / [home email] <i>Add contact information for additional departments such as collections, environmental/health services, IT, resident companies, tenants or long-term renters, visiting performers, etc.</i></p>			<p>OTHER CONTACTS Arts Council (local and/or state) Trade/professional associations Performing Arts Readiness Project www.performingartsreadiness.org; PAR@ivrasis.org NCAPER www.ncaper.org; mquinlanhayes@ncaper.org dPlan dplan.org; help@dplan.org National Heritage Responders 1-202-661-8068</p>	<p>Temporary Storage [name] [phone] <i>Add additional contact information for other needs related to your primary services.</i></p>

Side B: Actions

Break It Down

SIDE B (Actions). Use this side to provide step-by-step instructions for staff and affiliated personnel who will respond to a disaster affecting your own institution. Ideally, steps should already be defined in the organization/library/museum disaster plan. This abbreviated document is NOT intended to be a substitute for a comprehensive emergency plan. Instead, it should distill the most important actions to be taken in the first minutes and hours after an event occurs that affects collections, especially those that occur when staff members are away from their offices.

<p>Immediate Response and Checklist for Recovery</p> <hr/> <p>SITUATION REPORT</p> <p>Know these answers when speaking with First Responders and Insurance Agents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Closest cross-streets to emergency site -- Who is in charge? -- What is the safety status? -- What has happened and the cause? -- Are people injured? -- What are the hazards? -- Who discovered and reported the damage? -- What has been done so far? -- Can the staff handle the situation initially? -- Who is handling the media? <p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <p>DESIGNATED ASSEMBLY AREA: Describe where people should go following an evacuation.</p> <hr/> <p>AREAS OF REFUGE: Describe where people should go to shelter-in-place.</p>	<p>STEP 1: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE</p> <p>Notification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If appropriate, make Public Announcement for evacuation <i>Insert text for public announcement for (1) when an emergency interrupts your operations and patrons must leave and (2) when shelter-in-place is required.</i> ○ First Responders (contact info on other side) ○ Response Team Leader (contact info on other side) <p>Human Safety & Building Security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Address personal or medical emergencies ○ Ensure that all staff and visitors are safe and accounted for ○ Maintain security of building and property <p>Additional Notifications, as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institutional Contacts ○ Building Contacts & Utilities ○ If shared facility, contact neighbors, renters, landlord, etc. ○ Staff phone tree ○ Management/contact of guest artist or company 	<p>STEP 2: COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activate the Readiness/Disaster Plan's emergency response actions ○ Establish communication with appropriate local & regional emergency management ○ Contact your Communications and Public Relations Officer, if not already done ○ Post emergency information and instructions on the institutional website and through social media <p>ASSESSMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure through proper authorities that all hazards are cleared before entering building ○ Follow the instructions of your Response Team ○ Document damage with photos, videos, and notes ○ Assess damage to collections and assets, buildings, offices, and information systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What areas affected, in what way, and to what degree? ○ What types of materials are damaged? ○ Are critical information systems functional / safe? ○ Maintain security of assets ○ Stabilize the temperature and humidity at your facility ○ Complete the Incident Report form in your Readiness/Disaster Plan ○ Gather emergency response supplies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supply locations 	<p>OTHER</p> <p><i>Use this section for information about security alarm codes, locations of keys, utility shutoffs, access to loading docks, etc., or paste in additional instructions, e.g. for response to an active shooter, disruptive person, or earthquake. You may also list basic policies such as those addressing smoking/vaping, alcohol, firearms, recording/photography.</i></p> <p>FLOORPLAN</p> <p>You may want to insert your venue's floorplan here with the locations of emergency exits, emergency equipment, shelter-in-place area, audience and staff evacuation muster areas, and emergency shutoffs.</p>	<p>ASSETS PRIORITIES</p> <p><i>Using the full list in your ArtsReady/dPlan Readiness Plan, summarize here your priority collections and assets so that they will be taken care of and salvaged first. These may be according to format (photographs), use (costumes for a current production; critical office files), value (rare violin; computer server), etc. Include special instructions for handling and access.</i></p> <p>First priority:</p> <p>Second priority:</p>
--	--	--	--	--

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- Situation Report
- Designated Assembly Area
- Areas of Refuge
- Step 1: Immediate Response
 - Notification
 - Human Safety, etc.
- Step 2: Communication
- Assessment
- Floorplan
- Assets Priorities
 - First Priority, etc.

Top Ten Tips



<https://preparedlibraries.org/studies/top-ten-tips-regarding-advocacy-and-community-engagement/>

Top Ten Tips

Regarding Advocacy and Community Engagement

Adjust Text Size: A- A A+

To assist information professionals in developing strategies for community advocacy, engagement, and outreach, please rank the priorities of these ten tips and create a tailored list appropriate for specific information environments. Once completed, the ranked list can be saved as a PDF for download.

Top Ten Tips Regarding Advocacy and Community Engagement:

Provide education, training, and professional development opportunities

Believe that librarians must take a leadership role

Develop plans for disaster preparedness and recovery

Establish partnerships with organizations and agencies

Facilitate building of community capacity and resources

Disseminate trustworthy resources in multiple languages

Top 10 Tips Activity



<https://preparedlibraries.org/studies/top-ten-tips-regarding-advocacy-and-community-engagement/>

Use the QR code or URL to the left to access the Top 10 Tips page.

Rank the tips according to what you perceive is the most important to the least important.

Discuss among your group why you ranked them the way you did.

Thank you

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To request a copy of the PPT Slides:

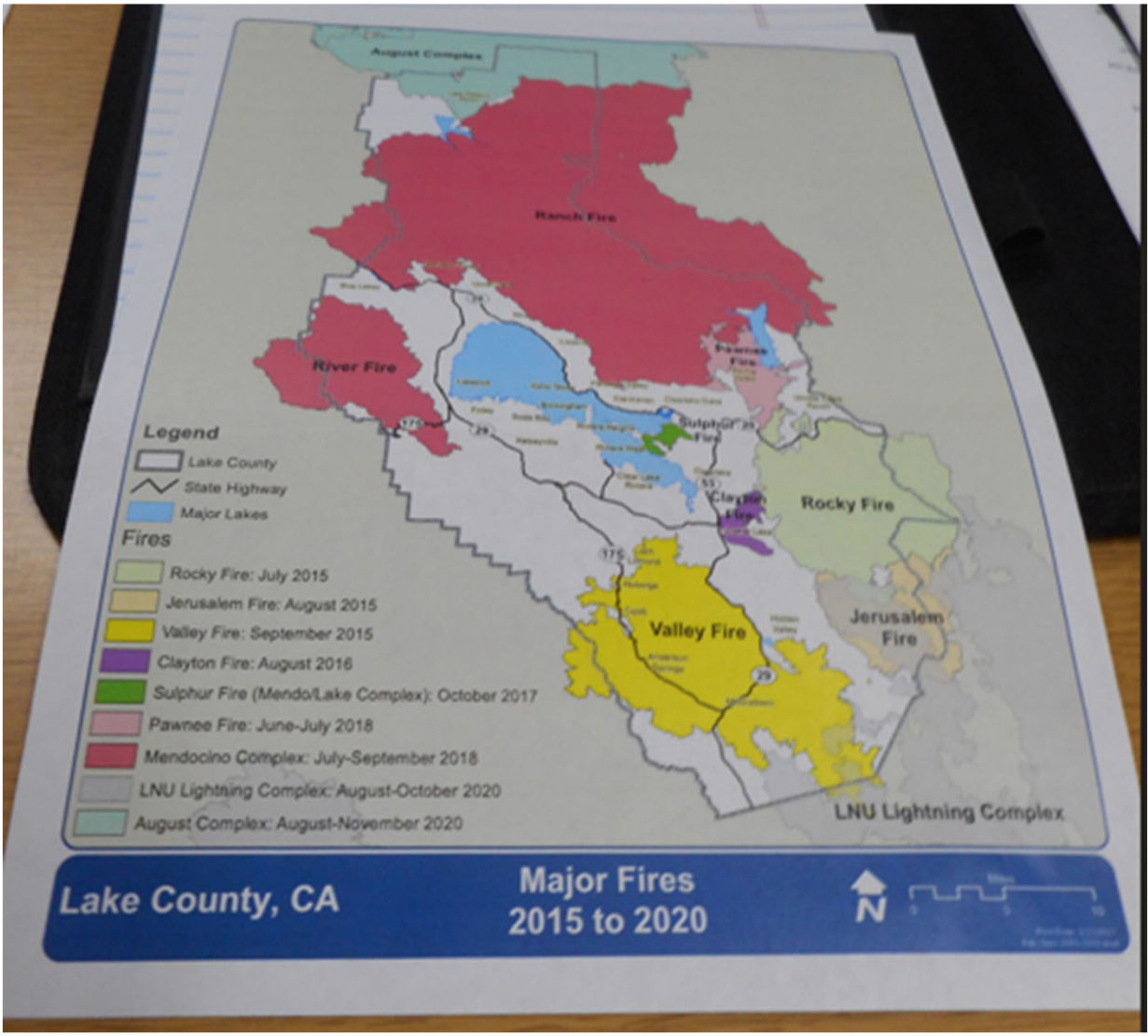


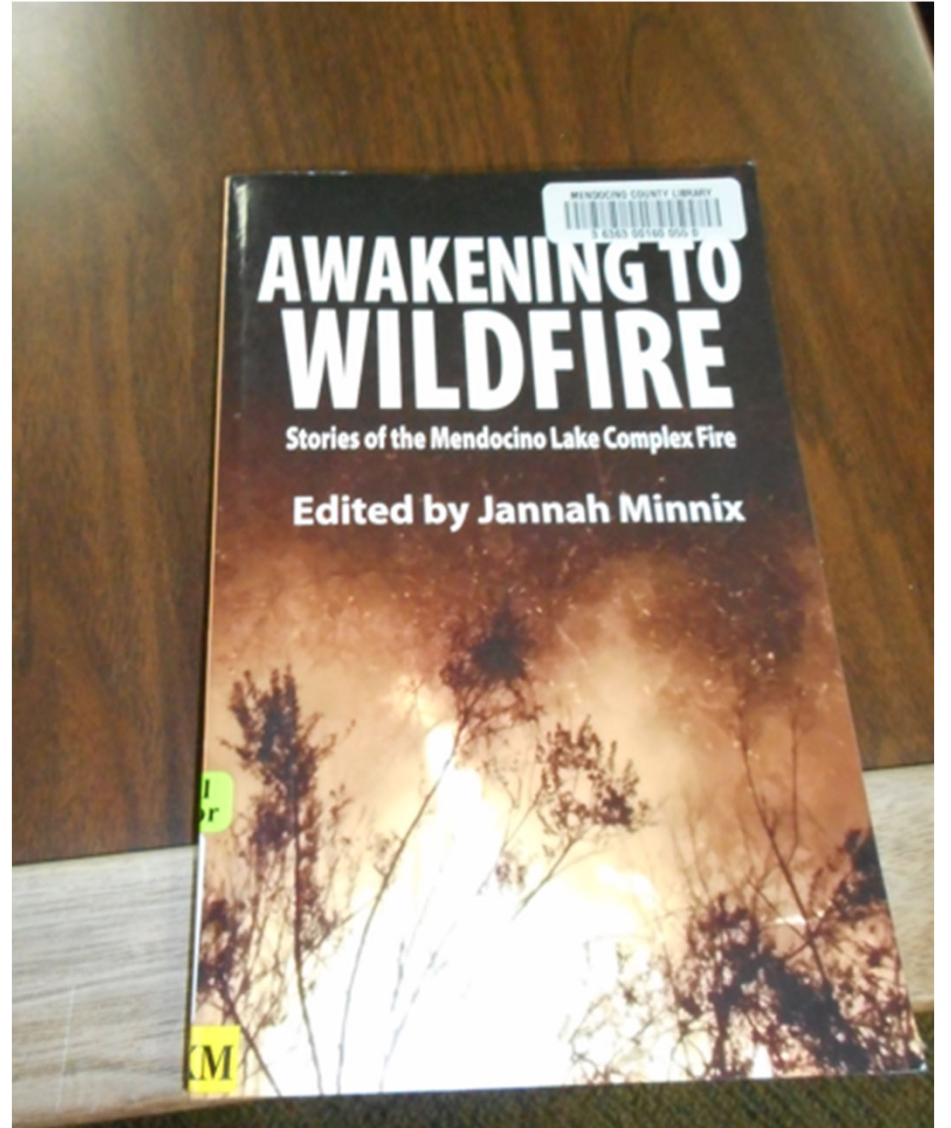
Acknowledgements

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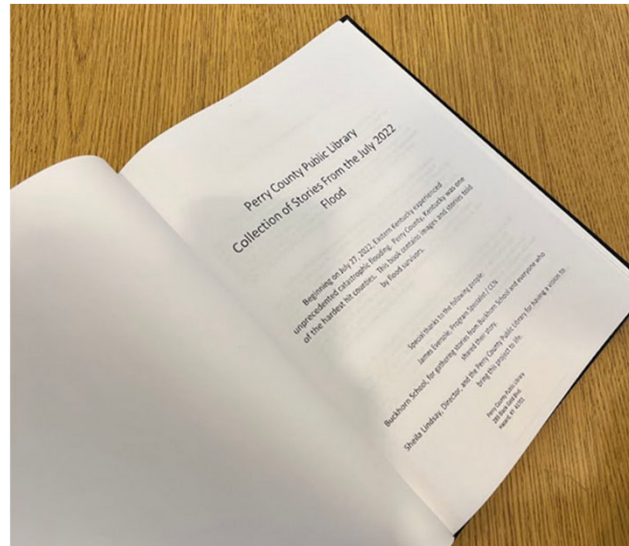


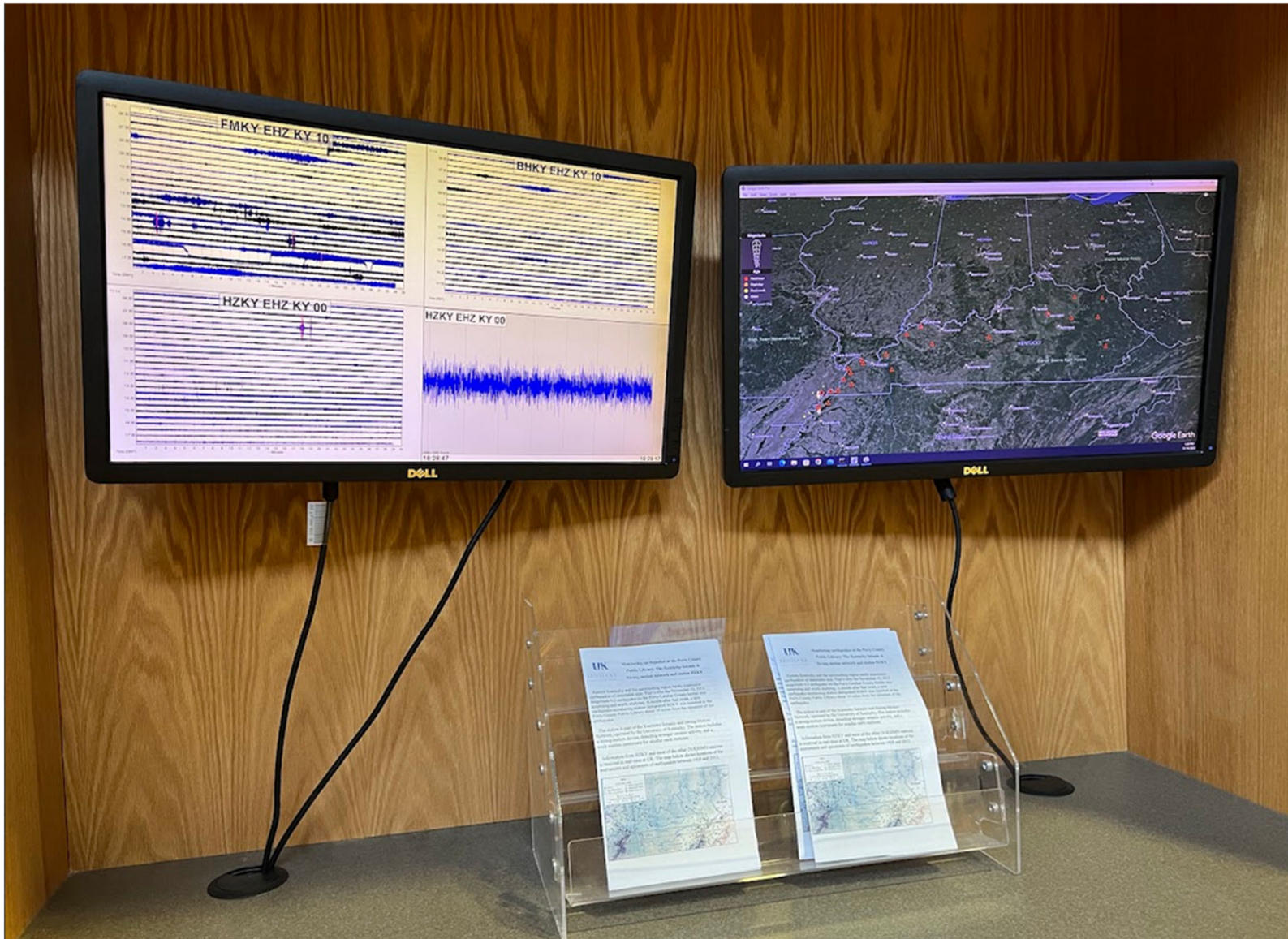




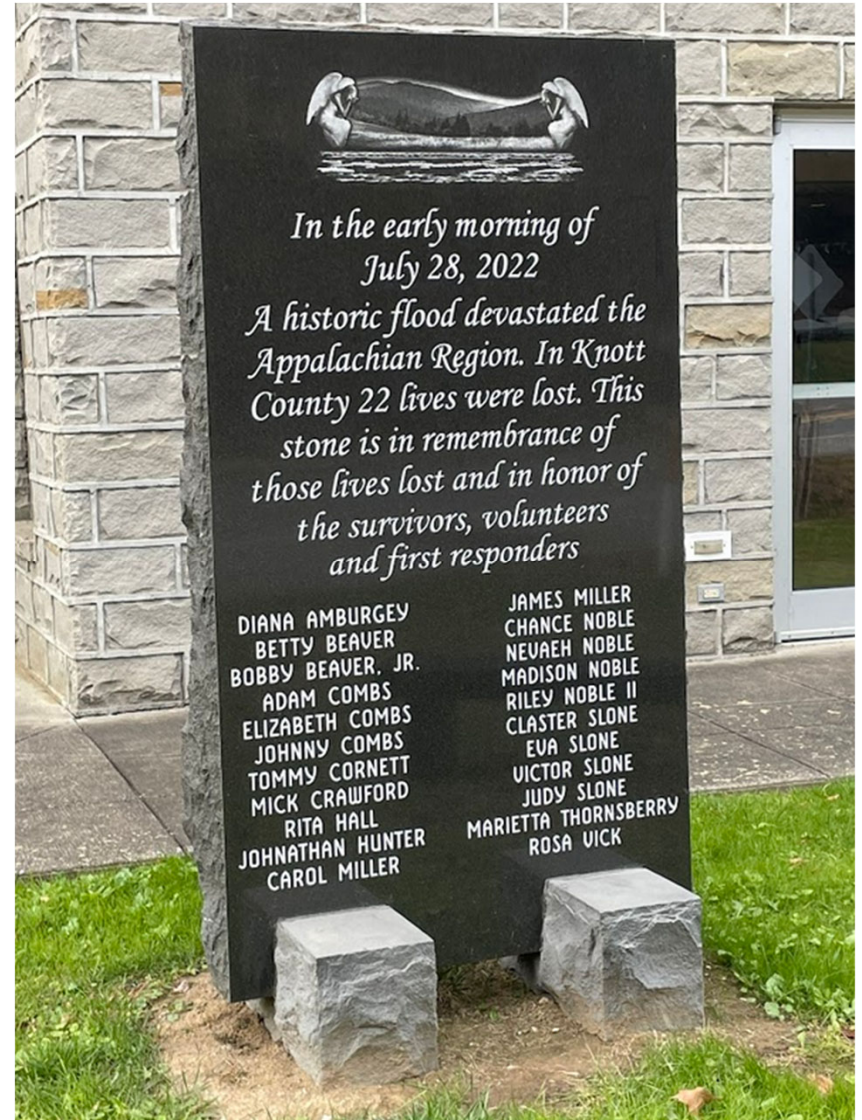
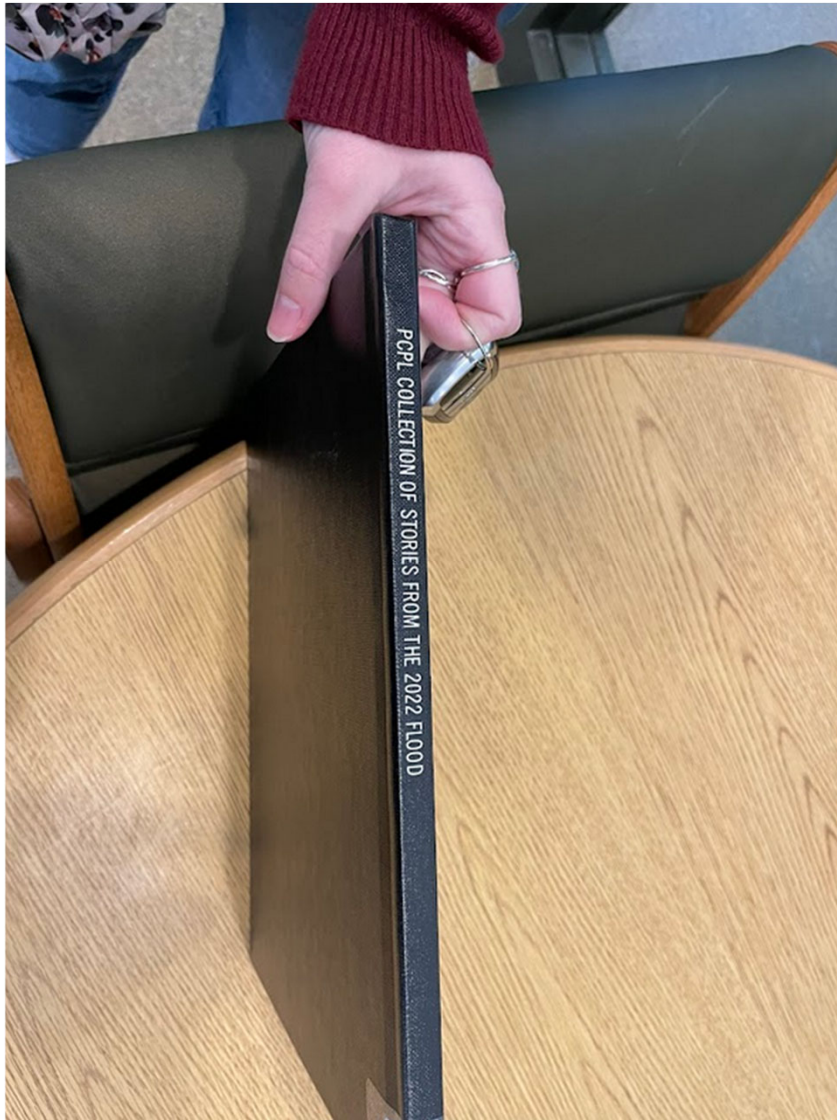
GRAVES COUNTY LIBRARY

MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY & FRIDAY 9 A.M. TO 8 P.M.
WEDNESDAY & SATURDAY 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M.













Central Library is **TEMPORARILY CLOSED.**
Get the latest information on the Central Library
Earthquake Retrofit and Building Repairs Project at
CityOfPasadena.net/Library/Central-Library-Earthquake-Retrofit
For library branch locations and hours go to
CityOfPasadena.net/Library/Branches
PASADENA
www.cityofpasadena.net

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