

# THE DISASTER PLANNING HANDBOOK

FOR LIBRARIES

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**Mary Grace Flaherty**

with Katherine R. Greene and Michelle Runyon

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# INTRODUCTION

Noah's ark was the first disaster emergency response vehicle.

—Earl Johnson

**IN 1980, THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF ITS KIND EVER FUND-**ed by the U.S. government to that date was published under the title *The Global 2000 Report to the President* (Barney 1980). Commissioned by President Jimmy Carter, it predicted that after the year 2000, climate change would be the greatest existential threat to the United States. This prediction was largely ignored for two decades, leaving many to wonder why we did not prepare and plan a little more assertively.

We live in a time when democracy is reportedly on the decline across the globe, and the U.S. intelligence community reports that for the next two decades, the gap between people's expectations and the ability of governments to fulfill them will grow both at home and abroad (Freedom House 2020; National Intelligence Council 2021).

As librarians, we work in organizations that can help to level the social playing field. The COVID-19 pandemic is yet another reminder that inequities, and the need for our services, are often magnified during and after natural and social crises. Given that both weather and socially driven crises are likely to increase in the decades to come, we should not repeat the process of failing to prepare for what is widely predicted to arise: more disasters. Yet, for librarians, this topic is far from being about gloom and doom! A large body of examples has arisen where library workers have provided spectacular and inspirational services during disasters. During disasters and emergency situations, our communities rely upon library services and support the most; and a large part of disaster planning consists of setting the stage for resilient approaches during these times.

According to the Disaster Information Management Resource Center of the U.S. National Library of Medicine, a disaster is “an occurrence such as a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, earthquake, drought, blizzard, pestilence, famine, fire, explosion, building collapse, transportation wreck, terrorist event, bioterrorist event, pandemic, power failure or other similar natural or man-made incident(s).” For as long as there have been humans (and even before that time), there have been disaster challenges in all shapes and sizes.

Over the past decades, we have witnessed stunning, escalating changes in weather-related emergencies as the climate becomes increasingly volatile, with longer storm seasons, rising tides, more frequent wildfires, and prolonged drought. Emergencies have not been limited to weather events, however. Structural and cultural inequities have culminated in social unrest and upheaval, which are part of the national landscape as well. More than any time in our history, community-building and community efforts will be vital to our survival as a species.

As information hubs and resource providers, it makes sense for libraries and library workers to be involved in community disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Most libraries provide their services without membership requirements and without charge. Whether in a university setting, urban center, or rural village, libraries serve the vital roles of information nexus and gathering centers, places where users can find support in a variety of ways. As became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, in some communities, and disproportionately in the poorest ones, libraries are the only option for high-speed internet access. During disaster recovery and response, this access can be a lifeline; it is vital for correspondence, and for submitting recovery claims and all types of forms.

In each chapter that follows, we address different aspects of dealing with disasters. We start in chapter 1 with a summary of the U.S. historical context, and how that context has shaped disaster management approaches today. We also outline the intersection of libraries with disaster response. In chapter 2 we discuss disaster planning, including conducting risk assessments, and we provide some ideas for program opportunities. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the human element in disasters, and describes the stages communities go through before, during, and after a disastrous event. This chapter also covers individual responses and ways to offer support, and touches upon trauma-informed service provision. Human-caused disasters, such as active shooters, bomb threats, civil unrest, arson, and the COVID-19 pandemic, are discussed here as well.

According to the National Weather Service, 98 percent of all presidentially declared disasters in the United States are weather related, so it is no surprise that the longest chapter in this book, chapter 4, is dedicated to natural disasters. In this chapter we have included various field reports from librarians across the United States who have shepherded their communities through an emergency situation, and come through the other side. Their experiences provide context and hope, and reiterate how important it is to plan for the unexpected. Because libraries are usually located in physical structures, chapter 5 is dedicated to the caretaking of facilities, and provides checklists and templates for the building considerations

to include in a disaster plan. Chapter 6 considers disaster preparedness in special libraries and archives, and chapter 7 provides fodder for future consideration and action, such as information literacy during disaster response, and roles for librarians in disaster preparedness and training.

As advocated in chapter 3, risk assessments are a natural part of the disaster planning process. To determine what subjects to include in this volume, we considered the most likely risks or disaster challenges a typical library in the United States might encounter. Thus, there are some subjects that have received less coverage than others, such as technological security challenges. While a breach in computer security or a ransomware attack can certainly be disastrous, this is a threat that will rapidly change shape and form, and is usually addressed on an organizational level by the information technology department. The responsibility for dealing with such challenges will often differ dramatically between organizations, so these types of security challenges fall more firmly in the specific domains of information technology and cybersecurity, and as such they are larger subjects to consider in and of themselves, and fall outside the purview of this volume. The tools we have included for crafting a disaster preparedness plan (e.g., the [fema.gov](https://www.fema.gov) website) do include resources and guidance on ensuring computer security, however.

Although the most consequential man-made disaster, war, has given us some of our most inspiring examples of librarians serving their communities, such as the chief librarian in Basra, Alia Baker, who saved 30,000 books from destruction during the Iraq War (Dewan 2003), a consideration of this topic is beyond the scope of this volume. And because so much of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery is supported by local, regional, and national institutions, this book has a heavy slant toward the U.S. experience.

Throughout this volume there are suggestions for tools, activities, and easy-to-adapt templates. Our hope is that no matter where your library or organization is in the disaster planning cycle, this book will make the process a bit less daunting and maybe even a bit enjoyable (see, for instance, the disaster board games in chapter 3 to kick things off).

Though disasters test us in unforeseen and unexpected ways, there are some bright spots to consider. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all sorts of lessons and has engendered numerous learning opportunities, such as better time management and priority-setting, increased self-sufficiency, and the mastery of new skills. In libraries across the United States and the globe, we have discovered and integrated new and innovative ways to offer resources and services. Even disasters can have silver linings.

On a final note for this introduction, during every presidential election cycle since I turned eighteen I received a postcard from my father (as long as he was alive), admonishing me to *Hope for the best, prepare for the worst*. (He appended *VOTE* to the adage.) It was not until I was in the midst of responding to record flooding as a public library director that I realized I have carried this advice throughout my professional life, and it is the perfect summary for disaster planning. My hope is that this book will help to make the planning and preparation processes smoother, and play some small role in helping to build more resilient libraries and communities.

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# Setting the Stage

Experience is a hard teacher; she gives the test first,  
the lesson afterward.

—*Vernon Law*

**DISASTERS, IN THEIR MANY VARIATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES, ARE AN INTEGRAL ELEMENT** of our shared human experience. Across the globe, we are struggling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a stark reminder of our human and organizational interconnectedness. As described by Oliver-Smith (1998), there’s mutuality between nature and culture; and while disasters are positioned in both our social and material spaces, they also exist in a space created by these intersections. Hence, to understand disasters, our approach should take into consideration the “web of relations that link society (the organization and relations among individual groups), environment (the network or linkages with the physical world in which people and groups are both constituting and constituted) and culture (the values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge that pertain to the organization and those relations)” (Oliver-Smith 1998, 186). While the aim of this chapter is not to discuss theoretical approaches to the understanding or study of disasters or the history of disaster response in the United States, it is important to recognize the complicated history and effects of disasters as our world becomes increasingly interconnected and complex.

This chapter continues with a discussion of historical precedents and legislation that have paved the way for the current emergency management landscape in the United States, and introduces the intersection of libraries and disaster management.

## The Role of the Federal Government

In the United States, the first example of the federal government’s involvement in local disaster relief occurred in 1803, when a congressional act was passed to



provide assistance to the town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire; the town had been devastated when fire ravaged it, and many businesses and homes were destroyed. The act temporarily suspended the “collection of bonds due by merchants . . . who have suffered by the late conflagration of that town” (New England Historical Society n.d.). The path forward from that time has been bumpy and entangled, in terms of legislation and support for disaster assistance. A century and half later, when Congress passed a nationwide disaster policy in 1950, there were already more than 128 different laws pertaining to disaster response on the books (Bittle 2020).

The history of disaster management in the United States has been built upon the integral involvement of the federal government, a seemingly haphazard process in which libraries had little to no involvement. In the 1930s, the Bureau of Public Roads and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation were given authority to make loans available for the reconstruction and repair of public facilities after disasters. During this same period, the Tennessee Valley Authority was created by congressional charter for electricity generation, flood control, and forest regeneration; and the Flood Control Act was passed. The act afforded more authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to design and construct flood control projects (Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, 2014).

The 1950s have been characterized as the Cold War era, with an increased emphasis on civil defense. The Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) was created, and many communities had a civil defense director. These directors have been described as the “first recognized face of emergency management in the U.S.” (FEMA 2014, 2). In 1958, the FCDA was merged with the Office of Defense Mobilization (whose mission was to mobilize resources in case of war) to form the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization.

With the 1960s came a number of major natural disasters (the Hebgen Lake earthquake in Montana, Hurricane Donna in Florida, Hurricane Carla in Texas). At this time, the newly installed Kennedy administration shifted gears with regard to emergency management and disaster response. President Kennedy created the Office of Emergency Planning within the White House to address natural disasters, while civil defense remained situated within the Department of Defense.

As the 1960s progressed, there were more earthquakes and hurricanes across the country. The pattern of passage of ad hoc legislation for disaster relief funds continued. However, when it became apparent that flood protection was cost-prohibitive and was not included in homeowners’ insurance policies, this prompted the passage of the Flood Insurance Act of 1968, which created the National Flood Insurance Program (FEMA 2014).

By the 1970s, there were at least five federal departments and agencies involved in emergency management, and “when one looked at the broad range of risks and potential disasters, it became apparent that more than 100 Federal agencies were involved in some aspect of risk and disaster management” (FEMA 2014, 4). This fragmented response indicates that at this time federal emergency management was not a high priority (Mener 2007), and the same fractured pattern permeated the state and local levels as well. The lack of a unified federal response agency led to calls by the National Governors Association for reform, and during this push the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant occurred, prompting further attention to the matter (FEMA 2014). Thus, in 1978 President Carter provided a plan that would consolidate efforts and establish an overarching federal agency for emergency management response, mitigation, and preparedness. Accordingly, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was created in 1978–79, with its director reporting directly to the president.

The establishment of FEMA did not remove the burden of disaster response from state and local agencies, however; federal monetary and logistical resources were meant to augment, not substitute for, local resources (Miskel 2006). For most disasters, the system of local governmental response, which leverages private-sector organizations, along with state and federal support, has worked well. Large and small private and nongovernmental organizations, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, faith-based organizations, and private individuals, have played a major role in supporting communities during disasters. Local and state governments have been and remain the central logistical support mechanism, however; they also provide support personnel through departments such as fire and police and emergency services. States can also call upon the National Guard for additional support as needed. State governors can request aid, relief, and reinforcement from the federal government when all local and state resources have been overwhelmed or exhausted. The governor’s request is reviewed by FEMA, and if approved, the next step is certification by the president. Once the president certifies that a major disaster has occurred, FEMA becomes involved and a “federal coordinating officer” is appointed to oversee all federal assistance in the designated area affected by the disaster. But though the federal government has sometimes been called in to provide coordination and personnel in disaster regions, for the most part, federal support has been secondary and has come in the form of post-facto financial reimbursements (Schneider 1995).

In the early and mid-1980s there just weren’t many major natural disasters, so FEMA’s directors placed the emphasis on national security issues, rather than

on natural disaster preparedness (FEMA 2014). But when it became apparent that natural disasters could have devastating consequences, and that preparedness efforts should reflect this reality, Congress passed a major reform of federal disaster policy. In the midst of this reform, though, the “promise of FEMA and its ability to support a national emergency management system remained in doubt” (FEMA 2014, 6). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of natural disasters (e.g., Hurricanes Andrew, Hugo, and Iniki, and the Loma Prieta earthquake) further demonstrated that FEMA’s response capability was limited.

New leadership was installed at the agency in the early 1990s, with the first director hired who had actual emergency management experience, James Lee Witt. Under Witt’s direction, the agency became more streamlined and was able to respond effectively to a number of consequential disasters, while its efforts expanded to include mitigation efforts before disasters strike.

With the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, FEMA folded addressing terrorism into its purview, a trajectory that gained momentum after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. With the appointment of Joe Allbaugh as FEMA director by President George W. Bush, the Office of National Preparedness was re-created with a new mission, which was to focus on terrorism response. In 2002 the Homeland Security Act was signed into law; this was a major governmental reorganization that created the Department of Homeland Security. The act consolidated 22 different federal agencies (including FEMA) with 170,000 employees into a single new department with a cabinet-level secretary (Kettl 2004). The intent was to streamline interdepartmental cooperation and improve national security.

Throughout these decades, libraries of all types were still largely viewed as mere materials repositories. While they may have provided a range of services and programs, their chief role was to provide access to and storage for books and other print materials. During crises, the emphasis was on protecting the libraries’ collections and providing general information to the public. Libraries’ role as community service hubs was not yet fully recognized or exploited at this time.

When Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana in 2005, it became apparent that the unwieldy, highly bureaucratic Department of Homeland Security was not the model of interagency cooperation and communication that had been envisioned when it was created. The federal government’s response to Hurricane Katrina was beset by failures, including the fact that there was no adequate process or system for providing rapid, accurate damage assessment (Mener 2007). While state and local authorities were (and are) charged with providing these assessments, there

was no backup mechanism in place for providing the information when those authorities were completely overwhelmed.

Figure 1.1 shows the timeline of major federal involvement in disaster relief in the United States from 1803 to 2005, beginning with the Portsmouth, NH, flood and ending with Hurricane Katrina. We chose to end with 2005 and Hurricane Katrina because the catastrophic consequences of that event served as a national wake-up call for all organizations and institutions with regard to emergency preparedness. However, at that same time FEMA explicitly stated that “libraries are not essential services” (National Library of Medicine 2019), and thus failed to recognize the role that libraries could play in disaster response and recovery.

The history of governmental involvement in emergency management has been a complicated and complex one. As stated earlier, most disaster preparedness and response activities occur at the local and state levels. And though the federal government’s involvement in the response and recovery process has not always been ideal, in extreme circumstances (of which we are seeing more and more) it does provide significant support.

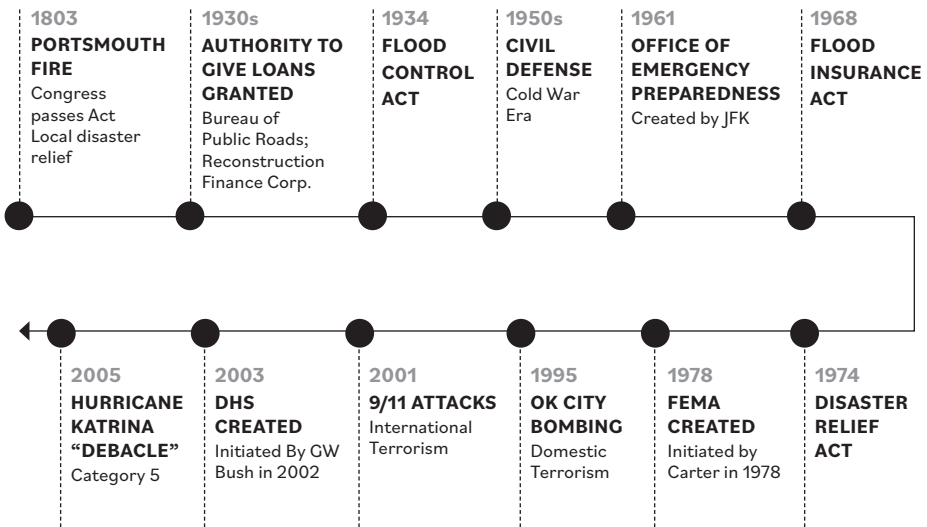


FIGURE 1.1  
**Abbreviated timeline of U.S. federal involvement in emergency management from 1803 to 2005**

Source: Based on FEMA’s “Introduction to Emergency Management”

For libraries, this history has several implications. The federal government's response mechanisms, which were very fragmented in the last century, were consolidated in 1979 under the newly created Federal Emergency Management Agency, which in turn has been re-formed with a very broad mandate, ranging from natural disasters to disease outbreaks to terrorist attacks. Because FEMA is a bureaucracy that provides expertise and funds rather than an organization with access to water pumps and sandbags, it tends to provide financial aid after the response to a disaster, for repairs of existing damage and improvements that will mitigate future risks.

As discussed in more detail in the chapters that follow, the reimbursement process implies the need for meticulous record-keeping of costs and activities during and after a crisis. This is due in large part to the nature of the bureaucratic procedures in the wake of a disaster; the disbursement of recovery funds will be assessed by individuals far removed from the crisis, and often months later. In contrast, funds from the county and from local philanthropies and organizations will probably be awarded because individuals will have witnessed the disaster and appreciated what the organization went through, and how it functioned before the crisis. This chapter continues with an overview of the role of libraries in the United States with regard to disaster planning and response.

## **Recent History: U.S. Libraries and Disaster Planning**

To understand the relationship between libraries and emergency management, one should consider (1) how information professionals engage in disaster management for library and archival facilities and holdings, and (2) how information professionals support the broader community's recovery in the aftermath of a disaster. While these functions can overlap substantially, it is important to remember that they are distinct, and certain measures may privilege one function over another.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina became a major flash point for libraries to reconsider their approaches to disaster planning. In New Orleans, Tulane University's libraries struggled with disaster response during Katrina, in part due to the limited communication capacity of the university; this limitation had not been accounted for prior to the crisis. The libraries' disaster plan also did not anticipate that emergency services across the entire city would be compromised (Corrigan 2008). The library holdings in the basement of Tulane's Howard-Tilton Memorial Library sustained significant water damage. Moreover, the library staff were not able to view and assess the damage until several days after the storm hit Tulane's

campus (Topper 2011). Since that time, some libraries have taken measures to delineate multiple lines of communication in their disaster plans in order to minimize struggling with the same difficulties. While Tulane did receive FEMA funding to restore its library facilities, the university still had to pursue other funding sources to support the remodeling and reconstruction of those facilities damaged in the hurricane. These financial struggles in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (which also occurred in 2005) had various long-term impacts for the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library and other libraries of all types in the New Orleans area (Diamond 2006; Topper 2011).

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (PL 100-707, signed into law November 23, 1988; amending the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, PL 93-288) delineates the federal government’s response to natural disasters. Under the Stafford Act, the U.S. president may issue federal disaster declarations; these declarations open up potential federal funding and aid for states and local governments that are responding to a given disaster. As described earlier, the governor of the state, or states, affected by the disaster must request that the president issue a federal disaster declaration (FEMA 2011). The Stafford Act was originally enacted into law in 1988, with amendments since then. Under Section 403 of the Stafford Act, FEMA may “provide Federal assistance to meet immediate threats to life and property resulting from a crisis” (FEMA 2019, 30).

In January 2011, the Stafford Act was amended to state that libraries fulfill an “essential community function” (FEMA 2019). Thus, they are eligible for temporary relocation and other federal disaster benefits. This designation—an “essential community function”—remains both practically and symbolically important because it recognizes the vital role that libraries can play in disaster response and recovery, and thus signified a major shift in philosophy over the six-year period from 2005 to 2011. According to the National Library of Medicine (2019), the following steps led to the resultant amended Stafford Act:

1. Individuals who were affected by disasters flocked to unaffected public libraries for help.
2. Librarians in states affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reacted negatively to FEMA’s denial of “temporary facilities” status for libraries.
3. The chief officers of state library agencies, the American Library Association (ALA), many librarians, and their supporters worked for changes to the Stafford Act.
4. U.S. Senator Jack Reed worked on behalf of libraries.

So, while civil defense directors may have been the “face” of emergency response in the 1950s, now that recognition may go to local library directors as well.

In 2017, Hurricane Maria became another point at which cultural heritage professionals reevaluated their disaster planning and response. Widespread lack of power and access to clean water across Puerto Rico made recovery for the island’s libraries incredibly challenging (Davila Gonzalez 2018). The ALA partnered with REFORMA to create the Adopt a Library Program, which matched donors with libraries in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that had suffered severe damage from Hurricane Maria (Tobin 2018). The ALA had previously created an Adopt a Library Program to support libraries damaged during Hurricane Katrina (American Library Association n.d.).

## **Intersection of Libraries and Disaster Planning**

Libraries, within their organization, school, town, city, or state, interact with disaster planning processes in two ways. First, it should be clear within the library itself, and in the larger sectors such as the town or city, what is required to protect the library’s assets during a disaster. Secondly, the role that the library will play for the community during a disaster should also be determined. If the library’s primary role at that time is to provide internet access for the public, this will necessitate a specific series of actions and measures. If the library’s primary role is to provide an emergency organizational center through the use of its meeting rooms, or to provide a tornado shelter in its basement, these call for a different planning and response process.

Building both formal and informal relationships with emergency personnel ahead of time can lead to smoother responses during a disaster and a faster turnaround time when the library can begin offering its services again. In a 2018 assessment, the New England region of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) found that 60 percent of respondents did have existing relationships with local emergency responders or other similar community partners (Carnes 2018). Cross-trainings between emergency responders and information professionals can foster these ties organically. Working with community partners is discussed further in subsequent chapters.

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) is a primary resource and has been in the forefront of disaster planning for U.S. libraries. Though the website was suspended in April 2020, the NLM’s Disaster Information Management Research

Center (DIMRC) still has resources for the general public, emergency responders, and information professionals to use in all stages in the disaster management cycle. The NLM has also developed a variety of tools to aid in disaster response, such as mobile apps (discussed in chapter 2) and a template for a Memorandum of Understanding that is provided at the end of this book, in the appendix.

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) can be an effective way for libraries to mutually support one another and for government entities to commit to providing mutual aid during an emergency. Having and maintaining an active MOU with another institution can speed up response and recovery from a disaster. MOUs outline the conditions of aid, such as what material or financial support can be mutually provided, and under what conditions such aid would be made available. MOUs can be crucial under circumstances in which local, state, or federal government aid is lacking or slow to be provided. The Southeastern/Atlantic region of the NNLM endorsed a Model Memorandum of Understanding (see the “Appendix”) that can guide libraries in creating their own MOUs (Brewer and Reich 2005). Keep in mind that MOUs have to follow organizational procedures and requirements. The Environmental Protection Agency Library’s “Disaster Response and Continuity of Operations Procedures,” for example, states that libraries which provide support to those in the EPA National Library Network through MOUs should abide by the EPA Library’s Continuity of Operations procedures (Dunkin 2016).

Libraries also have access to professional networks, regional consortia, and state libraries that may serve as sources of aid and support during disaster response and recovery. The California State Library issued \$200,000 in one-time grant funding to the fifteen hardest-hit local public libraries during the 2017 wild-fire season (Lynch 2017). As of 2020, the Society of American Archivists offers up to \$5,000 in funding to U.S. archives or special collections whose archival holdings are damaged or at risk (Society of American Archivists n.d.).

The American Institute for Conservation and Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (AIC-FAIC) offers training and consultation support to those interested in the emergency management of cultural heritage materials. Their “national heritage responders” deploy to areas affected by disasters and are available for remote consultations regarding the treatment of damaged items. These national heritage responders are conservators, archivists, and other cultural heritage professionals who are trained in how to salvage and minimize damage to cultural artifacts in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

The Heritage Emergency National Task Force consists of fifty-eight non-profit organizations and government entities that collaborate to support disaster



management for libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions. The Task Force developed the Heritage Emergency and Response Training (HEART) to train emergency management professionals alongside cultural heritage professionals. These trainings not only guide how the professions should work together, but also foster bonds between local emergency responders and cultural heritage institutions (McKay 2018).

## **Intersection of Libraries and Disaster Response**

While library workers collaborate with and support emergency responders during disaster response, they also support the general public's recovery. As organizations, libraries are well positioned for this task, given their proximal geographic location and the fact that they are generally trusted as resource providers within their communities. Libraries have often acted as information and research hubs for disaster response and as gathering places for the victims of natural disasters (Brobst, Mandel, and McClure 2012).

Internet access is a crucial feature of the services offered in libraries after a disaster, especially since many FEMA disaster assistance and some insurance claim forms are only available online now. Librarians may also help patrons and emergency responders complete insurance claims, federal or state disaster assistance forms, and other forms necessary for recovery. Librarians are instrumental in aiding patrons as they examine various options to receive disaster recovery support. The New Jersey State Library's *The Librarian's Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency Guidebook* (2013) identifies librarians as "Information 1st Responders," given the fact that they provide authoritative and truthful information to government officials, first responders, and other essential parties to help with disaster response and recovery. Now that digital resources and processes have become essential in disaster response, it is also worth highlighting the fact that librarians also support disaster recovery through their continual efforts to promote and bolster digital literacy among their patrons.

## **International Agencies**

Though the emphasis of this chapter has been on U.S. domestic disaster management agencies, it would be remiss not to mention, albeit briefly, the multitude of international agencies involved in disaster management, including both governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Among the global agencies whose missions address emergency disaster management in some way are many United

Nations (UN) agencies, such as UNICEF (the UN Children’s Fund), the UNEP (UN Environmental Programme Disasters and Conflicts sub-programme), the UNDRR (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction), the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), UN-Water, and the World Health Organization (WHO) with its regional offices, such as PAHO (Pan American Health Organization – Regional Office for the Americas of WHO). The International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross, Direct Relief International, Medecins sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders), and the Salvation Army are a few more examples of agencies that work in emergency situations across the globe.

This chapter has provided a brief historical overview of emergency management in the United States and laid the groundwork for a discussion of how libraries have emerged as essential partners in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

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