Disaster Information Specialist Activities:

Bethesda Medical Libraries Emergency Preparedness Partnership &

Promotion of the Disaster Information Specialist Project

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# Structured Abstract

## OBJECTIVE

The first objective of this project was to gather qualitative information on the Bethesda Medical Libraries Emergency Preparedness Partnership (BMLEPP). This information may serve as an example to be added to the National Network of Medical Libraries (NN/LM) Emergency Preparedness & Response Toolkit: Library Disaster Stories. The second objective was to promote the Disaster Information Specialist Project.

## METHODS

Interviews with every member library of the BMLEPP became the primary method for collecting information. The questions for the interviews were based on those created by Robin Featherstone for her work collecting the stories of libraries that had experienced disasters for the Library Disaster Stories website. Relevant staff members from each library were identified, contacted through e-mail, and a time to physically visit each BMLEPP library and perform the interview was arranged. The five questions were discussed at every interview, after which the notes were transcribed and sent back to the interviewee for any revisions or additions.

The monthly Disaster Information Specialist Project meetings and the corresponding listserv were also important to the project. These two venues served as the primary places for gathering information on how to further promote the Disaster Information Specialist Project.

## RESULTS

A total of six interviews were conducted with seven staff members at the five partner libraries. Two interviews were conducted at the National Naval Medical Center’s Stitt Library – the first with library volunteer and disaster management researcher Dr. Jack Schmidt and the second with Tahirih Fusscas, Reference Librarian. The interview at the James A. Zimble Learning Resource Center, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) was conducted with both Alison Rollins (Reference and Instructional Librarian) and Linda Spitzer (Head of Reference and Interlibrary Loan) in the room. One staff member was interviewed at each of the remaining three partner libraries: Brittany Haliani, Director of the Medical Library at Suburban Hospital; Alicia Livinski, Biomedical Librarian at the National Institutes of Health Library; and Cindy Love, Technical Information Specialist at the Disaster Information Management Research Center, Specialized Information Services Division, National Library of Medicine.

As a result of discussions at the monthly meetings and on the listserv, a “no-host dinner” was organized during the Special Libraries Association (SLA) annual conference in Washington, DC. A total of 12 librarians, including individuals from non-medical libraries who were previously unaware of the Disaster Information Specialist Project and NLM’s work in emergency preparedness and response, attended. The SLA Emergency Preparedness & Recovery Advisory Council also met during the conference and briefly discussed the partnership, the Information Specialist Project, and the listserv.

## CONCLUSION

The information gathered though the interviews supports the conclusion that the stories of the BMLEPP partner libraries may be useful to other libraries interested in forming similar groups and would be appropriate on the NN/LM Toolkit website. The interviews revealed that the BMLEPP provides a specific example of a local partnership that developed through grassroots organization for the benefit of all members (specific benefits include NLM funding and increasing networking both between and within the libraries’ institutions). The interviews also revealed that librarians at all the partner libraries had gone through disaster-related training. The training ranged from Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) to training in disaster information tools. This observation suggests that taking some kind of training may benefit librarians interested in the field of disaster information, and that even small steps such as being exposed to relevant vocabulary is useful.

In addition, the activities at the SLA annual conference were successful in that additional librarians were exposed to NLM’s work, consequently joined the listserv and expressed interest in participating in the project. However, more work needs to be done to continue to bring librarians involved in disaster planning, response, and recovery together. Communication with all library groups (such as the American Libraries Association) to determine what is out there and what is still needed is important.

# Introduction

As long as libraries have existed, they have had to deal with disasters of all types, man-made and natural. Recently, however, libraries’ roles in disaster planning, response, and recovery have been thrown into the spotlight due to their actions and use during recent, well-documented disasters like Hurricane Katrina and September 11th. At the National Library of Medicine, the Disaster Information Management Research Center (DIMRC) has been established and “is tasked with the effective collection, organization, and dissemination of health information for natural, accidental, or deliberate disasters.”[[1]](#footnote-1) DIMRC oversees numerous projects that support this mission, including the Disaster Information Specialist Pilot Project (DISP). This project is exploring the roles librarians can play in providing information to their communities during all phases of disaster management (planning, response, recovery), and is providing resources, managing a listserv for all interested librarians (not only medical librarians), looking at the potential for a national training curriculum, documenting libraries’ disaster experiences, and encouraging library partnerships[[2]](#footnote-2).

One of the ways in which NLM/DIMRC/DISP are encouraging these partnerships is by being involved in just such a partnership locally. The Bethesda Medical Libraries Emergency Preparedness Partnership (BMLEPP) provides NLM and its partners with several benefits, but it also provides other libraries around the country and the world with a successful example.

BMLEPP was the product of what might be labeled grassroots development; three other projects led to the partnership through fortuitous circumstances. First, the Bethesda Hospitals Emergency Preparedness Partnership was created in 2004 in response to the potential for huge patient surges if an attack should happen in the DC area. NIH, the National Naval Medical Center, and Suburban Hospital were the three organizations involved. Two initiatives were perhaps more visible at NLM, however: the Disaster Info Specialist Pilot Project and the National Network of Medical Libraries’ (NN/LM) “buddy system.” This second project matched up Regional Medical Libraries (RMLs) to coordinate and provide backup services for each other if necessary, and with its success, brainstorming began on the potential of more local partnerships. As a result, and partially through the already existing BHEPP and DISP networks, the librarians at several of the future BMLEPP locations began to communicate, and it was realized that a local buddy system might be beneficial. The libraries that currently make up the partnership are: DIMRC (NLM), Stitt Library (National Naval Medical Center), NIH Library, Suburban Hospital Library, and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences Learning Resource Center. The first Memorandum of Understanding between the partners was launched February 14th, 2008[[3]](#footnote-3).

## Objectives

This project consisted of two objectives that were basically separate mini projects. However, both are steps towards increasing the visibility of NLM’s work in disaster-related information and helping provide libraries of any type around the country (and world) with disaster resources (and examples) for their own work related to the topic. The first objective was to gather qualitative information on the Bethesda Medical Libraries Emergency Preparedness Partnership through interviews. The second objective was to generally promote the Disaster Information Specialist Project, with an emphasis on reaching non-medical librarians.

The motivation behind the first objective is the potential for BMLEPP’s stories to be added to NN/LM Emergency Preparedness & Response Toolkit: Library Disaster Stories[[4]](#footnote-4). Adding these stories to the website would make referencing the BMLEPP example much easier for libraries who are interested in forming similar alliances. The second objective was motivated by the fact that the Special Libraries Association Annual Conference was to be held in Washington, DC, providing NLM a local opportunity to reach out to other types of librarians.

# Methodology

The interview component of the project was straightforward. Relevant staff members of each library were identified and contacted via e-mail. A time was arranged to physically visit each BMLEPP library (also known as the “Five Medical Libraries Within Walking Distance”) to conduct the interview. The same five questions were discussed at every interview; notes were taken during the discussions, transcribed, and sent back to the interviewee for any revisions or additions. The questions themselves were based on previous Associate Fellow Robin Featherstone’s, and came from her work collecting the stories of libraries that had experienced disasters for the Library Disaster Stories website.

**Interview questions:**

1. How did you get involved with this partnership?
2. How would the library/librarians in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?
3. How have the library and/or its services changes as a result of joining this partnership?
4. What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians and libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?
5. What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?

The methodology for the second objective mainly involved attendance at the monthly DISP meetings and participation in the corresponding listerserv. These two venues served as the primary places for gathering information on how to promote the project as well as the primary forum for publicizing and generating interest in the relevant SLA events. These two places were also used to identify key players for assistance with the project.

# Results

By the end of the project, six interviews were conducted with seven staff members at the five partner libraries. Two interviews were conducted at the National Naval Medical Center’s Stitt Library – the first with library volunteer and disaster management researcher Dr. Jack Schmidt and the second with Tahirih Fusscas, Reference Librarian. The interview at the James A. Zimble Learning Resource Center, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) was conducted with both Alison Rollins (Reference and Instructional Librarian) and Linda Spitzer (Head of Reference and Interlibrary Loan) in the room. One staff member was interviewed at each of the remaining three partner libraries: Brittany Haliani, Director of the Medical Library at Suburban Hospital; Alicia Livinski, Biomedical Librarian at the National Institutes of Health Library; and Cindy Love, Technical Information Specialist at the Disaster Information Management Research Center, Specialized Information Services Division, National Library of Medicine. All five of the libraries were accessed by walking from NLM, confirming the as appropriate the “walking distance” title.

For each of the five questions asked at the interviews, a trend emerged. The first question on how the sites got involved with the partnership consistently indicated that grassroots-type organization was the main factor, and often specifically through contact with one person (Cindy Love at NLM). The responses to question two, on how each library would respond in an emergency had no consistent answers across the partners; they could be as varied as playing the same role the library plays in a non-emergency (USUHS) to handing out blankets (Suburban Hospital). Two responses to the third question on the partnership’s benefits were common: three of the five partners listed networking both between and within their institutions, and four of the five indicated the NLM funding was a benefit. The trend for the fourth question on the general roles of libraries/librarians in emergencies was the same as that for the second question: the responses were varied and ranged from supporting public information departments (NIH Library) to providing information post-event (Naval). Finally, the main result from the fifth question was the fact that at all the locations, the librarian had participated in some type of training related to emergency management, although the specific responses were again varied and ranged from conferences to related FEMA courses.

The results from the DISP promotion were associated with the Special Libraries Association Annual Conference. First, a no-host dinner was organized for SLA attendees and local librarians (who did not necessarily attend the conference) as a networking opportunity. At final count, 12 people were in attendance, including representatives from the National Academies (DC), the NSW Fire Service (Australia), and the Lorillard Tobacco Company (North Carolina).



**SLA No-Host Dinner (clockwise from left): Unidentified, Bill Anger (Miriam Hospital, Rhode Island), Matthew Von Hendy (National Academies, DC), Elizabeth Norton (SIS/NLM, Bethesda), Prue Lofay (NSW Rural Fire Service, Australia), Mary Lane (Lorillard Tobacco Company, North Carolina), Tahirih Fusscas (National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda), Amy Donahue (NLM, Bethesda), Alison Rollins (USUHS, Bethesda), Stephanie Publicker (SIS/NLM, Bethesda), Cindy Love (SIS/NLM, Bethesda), Alicia Livinski (NIH Library, Bethesda)**

In addition to the dinner, the DISP was discussed at the SLA Emergency Preparedness and Response Advisory Council (EPRAC) meeting. The listserv and other NLM work related to emergencies and disasters were also discussed at this meeting to update the SLA council members on NLM activities.

# Discussion

The responses to the interviews were collected to provide other libraries interested in forming similar partnerships with an example, as mentioned in the objectives. The interviews should be read in their entirety to get the full picture. The responses are not meant to be generalized to apply to any future partnerships, but as BMLEPP consists of several different types of libraries, they do demonstrate the many different roles libraries and librarians can play within a partnership of this type and in response to emergency planning and situations.

The result from the first question, that this partnership was formed from a grassroots effort, may provide some support for librarians who would like to undertake a similar project without having a large amount of organization and/or institutional support. The wide range of responses to the other questions regarding what each library would do in an emergency situation, what roles librarians should play, and the specific types of training the relevant staff has had provides explicit starting points for other libraries. But perhaps more importantly, the varied responses also hopefully send the message that librarians can choose to be involved in emergency planning/preparedness/recovery at whatever level the individual and the organization is comfortable with.

The other extremely important result from this project that other libraries may find helpful when they begin to solicit support for their own partnerships is the fact that there were definitely direct benefits to being a part of this group. First, although it may not be obvious how this would work in other groups, there was the specific and not surprising mention of funding from every organization involved except NLM (who was providing the funding). The funding was used to expand collections and pay for training. One suggestion as to how other partnerships may be able to gain a similar benefit would be to share resources. Perhaps one library in a partnership could purchase a relevant journal, and another could buy a few important books. Then the Memorandum of Understanding between those institutions would simply indicate who has what. Similarly, if one person from one of a partnership’s libraries has the opportunity to go to a conference, perhaps a meeting or a mini-conference can be planned upon that individual’s return for an exchange of ideas and a report of relevant information.

The other benefit from BMLEPP that was mentioned frequently is perhaps more surprising: increased networking and visibility **within** the partners’ institutions. Increased networking between the five partner libraries was expected, and was also mentioned (including by Stitt Library volunteer Dr. Schmidt, who brought up library visits), but how one library’s involvement with an inter-library partnership could increase its visibility within a home, non-library institution was unforeseen and could be extremely important. In fact, unlike funding, this particular benefit could hopefully be easily recreated in new partnerships. In the case of the BMLEPP partnership, the two hospital libraries in particular noted that they were able to connect with emergency groups at a higher, institutional level. Tahirih Fusscas noted that participation in BMLEPP led to “[t]apping into the emergency oversite office” at the Naval Medical Center, and Brittany Halaini listed “working with the Emergency Preparedness group within the hospital” as a benefit. It seems that being part of a partnership such as BMLEPP gives libraries some leverage in reaching out to upper management in their institutions, which is especially important when libraries need to prove their worth and demonstrate return on investment.

Concerning the SLA component of this project, it was determined from the results of the dinner and the EPRAC meeting attendance that different types of librarians are indeed interested in the disaster/emergency preparedness, planning, and response, and specifically in the DISP and what it might mean for their libraries. The members of the EPRAC board seemed particularly interested in two areas that overlap to some degree with DISP: providing resources and promoting disaster planning to all interested librarians (which might include someone from everyone library in an ideal situation, since disasters can hit anywhere and cover a wide range of types of events). There was also clearly interest in networking and working together to ensure that the wheel is not being reinvented.

However, with hindsight, some improvements to the promotional part of this project could be made for next time in terms of timing. First of all, the no-host dinner was added to the SLA program fairly close to the actual conference, so it is quite possible people were not made aware of it in time to come (12 people in attendance was a fairly low number, especially since only three of those were new to the Disaster Info Specialist Project/listserv). Also, it is probably fair to say that more could have been done to promote the actual event in terms of articulating its purpose. It may be possible next year to garner more attention for a similar dinner as the location of the SLA conference will be New Orleans, and the Hurricane Katrina disaster is still affecting large numbers of people (and libraries) there. It may even be appropriate to find a speaker or two from different types of libraries to discuss their experiences and moderate conversation over dinner.

## Author Reflections

As part of the discussion, I would like to take some time to reflect on my personal experiences working on this project. The whole thing was a wonderful experience. I had the privilege of speaking with the seven interviewees, and I personally benefitted from making the connections and hearing time and again to contact them again with any questions in the future. This benefit was to some degree expected, although I did not necessarily expect everyone to be so welcoming and friendly! However, I was not expecting the surprising inspiration I discovered from uncovering how the BMLEPP worked. I became, and remain, excited and motivated to be involved in a similar partnership myself.

My involvement in the promotion of the Disaster Info Specialist Project during SLA also resulted in making connections, especially with the librarians who came to dinner and with Dr. Lisl Zach, who graciously helped get the dinner onto the SLA schedule and set aside some time during the EPRAC meeting for an update on the DISP for the rest of the Council (given by Alison Rollins of USUHS and myself somewhat on the spot, which was a good experience in and of itself in being prepared). Similarly to the motivation mentioned above to become involved in a partnership, the EPRAC meeting within the context of the whole SLA Conference motivated me to become more professionally involved, and I am now actively looking for opportunities to help the board and to continue to promote the DISP and BMLEPP-type partnerships within this large organization that serves so many different types of libraries.

# Recommendations

Although this particular project is complete, there are additional steps that can be taken. First of all, the individual interviews should be added to the NN/LM Disaster Stories website. The interviews were successfully conducted based on the same questions used for the libraries that experienced actual disasters, so they should fit in with minimal editing. Confirmation should be obtained from all the BMLEPP participants/interviewees prior to public posting, however. By making these experiences public, it should be emphasized, it may become easier for similar partnerships to form by example.

Additionally, as funding was so often cited as a benefit, NLM may want to consider providing similar small, one-time funding for start-up partnerships around the country. Even a small amount of money can help libraries purchase relevant collection items or send a staff member to a related conference, which in turn may make the library’s home institution (or board, or system, in the case of public libraries) take notice to continue funding or provide some other level of support. NLM may also consider some type of recognition for these types of partnerships, which may also attract the attention of the libraries’ relevant supporting institutions if funding is not possible (or even if it is).

Finally, NLM should continue to work with other organizations including SLA and ALA to promote the Disaster Information Specialist Project and the disaster planning and preparedness partnerships that fall within it. There was noticeable interest at SLA, and it is in everyone’s best interests to make sure that all libraries (including NLM) know what else is happening in this area in order to make the best use of limited funds and resources. One way NLM could do this easily is to continue to have an NLM representative(s) at these meetings to answer questions as well as to take notes.

By initiating DIMRC, DISP, BMLEPP, and this project, NLM has taken strong steps in the field of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. These suggested next steps are ways to keep the momentum going.

# Acknowledgements

This project could not have been undertaken without the help of numerous people. Special thanks are due to the project leader, Cindy Love, for her support and flexibility. Her enthusiasm and guidance were certainly big factors in the level of personal enjoyment I took from doing this work. In addition, the bulk of this project comes from the interviews, which were the result of the wonderful hospitality and responsiveness of the interviewees: Dr. Schmidt, Tahirih, Alison, Linda, Alicia, Brittany, and Cindy again. This project simply would not have existed without them. I would also like to thank the people involved with the Disaster Information Specialist Project and the listserve, especially Stacey Arneson and Elizabeth Norton. Dr. Lisl Zach also deserves many thanks from the promotional side of the project, and her own work in librarians’ roles in disaster planning will certainly inform the field and provide context for this project. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the people involved with the Associate Fellowship Program: Kathel Dunn, Jason Broadway, Becky Lyon, Sheldon Kotzin, Dr. Lindberg, Betsy Humphreys, and my three fellow Associates.

# Appendix – Interview Transcripts

## Interview w/ Dr. Jack Schmidt 5/8/2009

1. **How did you get involved in this partnership?**

* Tahirih is the lead. Dr. Schmidt had prepared a terrorist attack (biological, chemical, nuclear) resource guide that’s on the Stitt website (intranet).
* Dr. Schmidt speculated that involvement happened because Tahirih had worked at NIH and knew Dr. Phillips. They were probably invited because of that connection.

1. **How would the library/librarians in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?**

* They participated in the inter-agency disaster drill in October. Dr. Schmidt’s opinion was that it was a farce because the agent was known beforehand. He also felt that WISER was kind of useless during the drill as it didn’t actually identify sarin (it narrowed it down to 12 agents, but there was no color because it was a gas which apparently caused difficulties).

1. **How have the library and/or its services changed as a result of joining this partnership?**

* They are much more aware of what is happening outside of NNMC.
* More e-mail
* When disaster came on the waves, they asked questions about scope (?)
* They’ve received visits from the other partner libraries & NLM, which has lead to new ideas.

1. **What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians and libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?**

* As a point of information only. Library could put out table and provide information at intervals (potential exercise).

1. **What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?**

* [Dr. Schmidt was not asked this question as Cindy requested it be asked later.]

## Interview w/ Tahirih Fusscas 6/12/2009

1. **How did you get involved with this partnership?**

* Tahirih had worked with Cindy previously at NLM.
* In Oct. of 2007, NLM was presenting on WISER and how libraries could participate during the CMAX Training Day, where NLM had a booth.
* Soon after, Cindy invited Tahirih & Stitt Library to join the Bethesda Medical Libraries Emergency Preparedness Partnership. Tahirih was at the first meeting of the group.
* Dr. Schmidt presented his terrorism bibliography (created before partnership from personal interest) at one of the early meetings.
* Naval has its own emergency preparedness group, with whom Stitt Library is in touch (so each knows about the other). Mr. Gillette is part of this group.

1. **How would the library/librarians in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?**

* Command issues guidelines (library is adjunct to the hospital); clinicians have defined roles. Library doesn’t have a clear, articulated role (but it is a goal that’s being worked on).
* At CMAX, Tahirih had a spot at the NLM table with Stacey, which increased visibility. They were between NLM and the Montgomery County emergency group. At the table, information was shared on Stitt and partnership, and 500 library user guides were distributed. They also helped NLM pass out information (MedlinePlus, etc.).
* CMAX was a mandatory training day (4,000 people had to go through the conference and get stamps at the booths, including NLM’s).
* Tahirih and some staff made themselves available
* In the future, would like to be involved in actual drill, finding info for other staff and emergency responders (both Tahirih and Dr. Jack Schmidt have had the WISER training).
* Would like to see Stitt become the point of contact immediately after disasters/emergencies for follow-up information (such as counseling info, post-even care, next steps).
* Looked at 9/11 library stories, was inspired by usage post-event. There were all kinds of questions such as finding calming music, and the libraries came up with lists of resources.

1. **How have the library and/or its services changed as a result of joining this partnership?**

* Increased visibility (higher ups like Mr. Gillette now know of library’s existence).
* NLM funding (although it hasn’t come through the Navy side of the IAG)
* Tapping into the emergency oversite office (Mr Gillette?), making sure they know of library’s existence & offer them help. This is important networking that is helped by being in an interagency partnership.
* Collection now includes more disaster material, including duplicates so that there’s both a reference and a circulating collection.
* More information is now on the intranet site: internet sites, tools on site (“do you want to know more” widget)
* Potential, at suggestion of Dr. Phillips, for non-traditional things to happen in the library, using the space during a disaster.

1. **What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians & libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?**

* As mentioned earlier, there are certainly roles during all three phases.
* [Providing resources and tools beforehand, making sure the collection meets needs (both online & offline), potentially being an information resource during an emergency/disaster, using the library space, and **being the point of contact and an information resource post-disaster**.] \*my synopsis of above comments\*

1. **What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?**

* Tahirih has gone through the WISER training.
* Also participated in Library of Congress’s “Safety Net,” to integrate efforts of the different COOPs. Signed charter last June, which indicates that Stitt has agreed to help other members with emergencies.
* Would like to take FEMA training eventually (free).
* Has NLM funding for training, but the money hasn’t come through yet.
* Also interested in training offered at USUHS, but hasn’t fit into schedule.
* No proposals for other specific training; there’s a lot out there!

Final thought:

There’s a concern with overlapping efforts between different groups, like NN/LM, Safety Net, the partnership. How can they be combined? Work with a higher body, like the CDC?

## Interview w/ Alison Rollins & Linda Spitzer 6/24/2009

1. **How did you get involved in this partnership?**
   * Cindy Love organized and got everyone together at an original big meeting.
   * The formal partnership was decided at this meeting, although it eventually morphed into two separate entities: a local and a national group.
   * Began around Nov. 2007.
   * Kevin Riley, Associate Director of USUHS’s Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine was involved.
   * The hospital partnership was already in place, and the hospital library partnership was loosely related.
2. **How would the library/librarians** **in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?**
   * It would actually be business as usual if there were a local emergency (making sure to provide the same services as always without interruption).
   * Students at USUHS could be mobilized, however.
3. **How has the library and/or its services changed as a result of joining this partnership?**
   * There has been a little more emphasis on WISER.
   * The interagency agreement hasn’t been signed officially, because of the bureaucracy involved, but they are still considered members of the partnership.
   * Funding.
   * USUHS already had a strength in emergency medicine (so collection didn’t need to change).
4. **What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians & libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?**
   * Planning: perhaps answering questions, looking at laws, exploring ethical questions. But need to balance that type of work with your organization’s culture.
   * Perhaps providing technological tools that can be used to provide non-stop information, to be ready beforehand and keep things up and running.
   * Filling in for other libraries and getting info to them.
   * Learning more about potential user needs, to get people what’s necessary (ignoring the bureaucracy if necessary; ex. someone in Afghanistan needs something, don’t try to figure out if this library is supposed to serve him, just do it!)
   * Anticipate needs.
   * No perceived role outside of the library (as a librarian), we would be in the way. Training as an emergency responder is an individual choice, and in that role you’re no longer acting as a librarian.
   * Librarian should be in place to provide information, keeping up with how that info needs to be communicated (for example, Twitter, RSS), but often just by phone. (I.e., same role, just a different “subject” perhaps during an emergency).
   * Librarians are very good at finding the right information at the right time; those skills are valuable.
   * Organize and make accessible disaster info; UHUHS is designing a prototype disaster database (with the partnership funding).
   * Keep track of “lessons learned” and give support to other libraries.
   * Maintain and improve resources for next time.
5. **What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?**
   * Alison had done some of the FEMA disaster response training.
   * Linda tries to stay informed by reading the literature, but there’s not a lot out there.
   * Interviews with faculty, nurses, doctors, etc. have been the most educational: learning what resources they want and hearing their stories (information like the use of grey literature, technology and access issues, “one size doesn’t fit all”).
   * Alison also took a class on emergency medicine, but unfortunately it hasn’t been offered again because the book is out of date (the authors have all been deployed and can’t update it). Included information on health aspects that may not be obvious, such as vitamin D deficiency.
   * Military Librarian meeting

## Interview with Brittany Haliani 6/26/2009

1. **How did you get involved in this partnership?**

* It was a natural progression from the hospital partnership between Suburban Hospital, Naval, and the NIH Clinical Center already existed.

1. **How would the library/librarians in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?**

* Suburban Hospital has specific roles for department directors. As director of the library, Brittany’s role is to report to the command center, than do anything needed as told (e.g., distributing supplies)
* During CMAX, she worked with the Emergency Department as an information provider using WISER.
* Roles can change, and people fill in as needed!

1. **How has the library and/or its services changed as a result of joining this partnership?**

* There is funding, but it hasn’t been received yet.
* Will be able to strengthen collection once the funding is received.
* Relationships and networking with people within Suburban have grown as a result, for example, working with the Emergency Preparedness group within the hospital.

1. **What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians and libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?**

* Dissemination of information; it makes sense for librarians to be involved in organization’s response.
* Brittany has two roles: librarian as separate from a hospital director, and both have responsibilities.
* Preparation cannot factor in all of human nature and this should be acknowledged.
* Libraries/librarians also have a big role in making sure there is access to needed information (an IT role) in recovery.
* Brittany also plays a clinical information role (and sees this as a need during disaster recovery). Patient and family education is also part of this.
* Note: the clinical role is different from the other members; Suburban is the only non-government library in the partnership

1. **What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?**

* Brittany participated in the recent Biomedical Informatics survey course at Woods Hole. It was centered around disasters and was very helpful.
* She also keeps up on the literature, attends meetings, and participates in various groups (including those within Suburban).
* Has a need to keep the collection up to date.
* The clinical people are thinking about patients, with the exception of the Emergency Department and the basically full-time staff in the Emergency Preparedness group. Possibly some awareness training for these other groups.

## Interview w/ Alicia Livinski 7/8/2009

1. **How did you get involved with this partnership?**

* NLM began talking with HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response (ASPR) staff and found out that the NIH Library had already been providing services to ASPR. Steve Phillips, Stacey Arnesen & Cindy Love then approached the NIH Library about participating in the Disaster Information Specialist pilot project. The Bethesda medical library partnership came out of this pilot project and the BHEPP that NLM, NNMC and Suburban Hospital were already members of. In other words, because of discussions about the role library services could play with ASPR, the fact that a colleague of Alicia’s was already providing services to other offices under the Office of the Secretary, and Cindy Love and NLM’s interest and work on DIMRC and the disaster information specialist, the NIH Library and Alicia (who also has a public health degree) got involved.

1. **How would the library/librarians in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?**

* In context of the partnership: it depends on what happens and what’s needed, as well as who it happens to. Generally, the response at the NIH Library would be to fill in as needed, and would involve Alicia, library leadership making decisions, probably the IT department, and electronic/resources collections staff.

1. **How have the library and/or its services changed as a result of joining this partnership?**

* The funding that resulted from the partnership has been put towards strengthening the NIH Library’s collection of disaster-related materials: at least two databases, numerous books (the collection was previously not as strong in this area), and a handful of journals. Without the funding, the opportunity to purchase these materials would not have existed (the two databases would definitely not have been acquired). The funding also allowed Alicia to travel to relevant conferences, which was invaluable to learning about disaster/emergency preparedness.

1. **What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians and libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?**

* It depends on the situation, the people, the library, the community, etc. These factors will dictate what can be done. A motivated person [within a library] could do more. One opportunity for libraries is to work with public affairs/information departments, providing the up-to-date, accurate information they need to get out to the public and fact-checking. Providing information to emergency responders as needed is also a possibility. Libraries also should be working on getting power back up at their sites first (if necessary), as access to information and crucial forms is a high priority. The library itself is often a community meeting place as well. Librarians may be involved directly in response if they have skills that are needed, but librarians’ and libraries’ primary involvement will be more in planning beforehand and rebuilding after in terms of “what do we need to know” and supporting long-term recovery.

1. **What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?**

* Alicia took the FEMA National Incident Management System (NIMS) training, and recommends the 700 and 100 courses. These courses are very important and should perhaps even be a requirement.
* American Red Cross training, even in CPR, may also be helpful depending on how far a library/librarianwants to get into response.
* Conferences on emergency management and planning are very helpful, for learning the lingo, seeing what’s important, trends, identifying “who’s who” etc. This is especially true for larger libraries, at the federal, state and big university levels.
* Public librarians and others could probably look online and find relevant audio and slides from the major conferences.
* The disaster listserv is excellent, but it needs more participation from more people. Conversations would be good; the forum is a good one for providing encouragement but no pressure.
* Meetings at library national conferences are good for those who can attend, but a summary of events afterwards would be very useful for those who can’t.
* The same is also true for the monthly meetings; it would be very helpful to have those summarized or even recorded for those who can’t make it and posted somewhere for accessing later that is either open to anyone or password protected

## Interview w/ Cindy Love 7/9/2009

1. **How did you get involved in this partnership?**

* SIS started the Disaster Info Specialist pilot project, and key people met a couple times. Around the same time, the NN/LM was forming its “buddy system,” which provided inspiration. Cindy started contacting the libraries involved with the Disaster Info Specialist project to form a similar system/partnership. She had to find contacts at Suburban Hospital and the National Naval Medical Center, since they weren’t originally involved in the specialist project.

1. **How would the library/librarians in your location respond in an emergency? Would there be unusual/non-traditional roles?**

* Cindy’s position in the NLM Disaster Information Management Research Center (DIMRC) is already non-traditional. The partnership is really for the benefit of everyone else – NLM has its own plan. DIMRC will help with communication and play a role as facilitator, but it’s unclear exactly what DIMRC would do if there was a disaster. They’re still feeling their way along.

1. **How have the library and/or its services changed as a result of joining this partnership?**

* They’ve become considerably more aware of the other libraries. Networking has been a big plus. Cindy has to think nationally, but it’s nice to act locally, and to be a part of something. The partnership also provides a model, and allows for experimenting that might apply nationally. But the local awareness is big. It’s very important for NLM to hear from people actually doing library work; “authentic voices,” and helps with efforts to avoid coming up with things in a vacuum and improving relationships. Additionally, they provide the Bethesda Hospital Partnership person with services.

1. **What, in your opinion, are the roles of librarians & libraries in general in disaster planning, response, and recovery?**

* If you’re in the disaster, you’re going to play some kind of role, gracefully or not. That role is personality and interest driven, but it would be nice to see it become institutionally-driven. It should be part of what librarians do (potentially taught in library school). It’s a big world as to what role librarians can play in disaster information. From running a library in that subject to doing a small exhibit to something like Alicia’s role [as disaster informatician] at ASPR. Cindy would like to give all these people/projects a professional home. The partnership itself hasn’t been tested, but other places have, and they’ve become more geared towards playing a role (for example, libraries in hurricane-prone areas readying 50 laptops for patron use).

1. **What training have you participated in? What training would you like to see?**

* Cindy has gone through the community response team training. Volunteering with a local group is very valuable. CERT training also keeps her up to date on new opportunities every month. She’s gone to emergency preparedness, public health, and other meetings. She’s done the FEMA NIMS and the ICS training online. She’s also monitoring 40 different listservs and she’s done extensive reading of them. Would like to do Red Cross disaster training, for which there’s no charge (there is a charge for CPR classes and the like). She stated she could personally use disaster management training to learn professionals’ perspectives. For librarians, she’d like to see national certifications programs and online training, for all librarians and information specialists, that gives background on disaster planning in this country and to give local context. There would be a set of basics, with perhaps specialized training with a few more hours for medical and law librarians, and personalized for type (engineering, architectural, etc.), preferably all online. There could be a “super certificate” if a librarian took all of the training possible. But time is a factor, and she’d like to keep it to 10 hours.

*Note from Cindy on #5: “Here’s more on one item, the program in #5 is CERT, which stands for Community Emergency Response Team. There are many around the country (it’s a national program) and I’ve met several librarians from other places who have taken the training in their region. Examples – Dan Wilson who does the Emergency Preparedness Toolkit site and Deb Halsted who literally wrote the book, “Disaster Planning: How to do it manual for librarians.” Also 4 DIMRC staff are CERT members. We actually counted today and we’re over 70 listservs, rss feeds, newsletters, etc. monitored for the DISASTR site. Elizabeth Norton does most of that now.”*

1. From <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/dimrc/overviewdimrc.html> (accessed 8/13/2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From the NLM Update at the MLA 2009 Annual Conference: <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/dimrc/mla_update_dimrc_2009.ppt> (accessed 8/13/2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See <http://nnlm.gov/webreports/ep/uploads/2007/12/bmlepp-mou-2008-final.doc> (accessed 8/17/2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <http://nnlm.gov/ep/lessons-learnedstories-told/> (accessed 8/13/2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)