HURRICANE/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE BY UTILIZING FLORIDA PUBLIC LIBRARIES:
INTERIM REPORT (August 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009)

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BY UTILIZING FLORIDA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

In August 2008, the Information Use Management and Policy Institute (Information Institute) of Florida State University began work on the grant entitled *Improving Florida Public Libraries Hurricane/Disaster Preparedness and Response*. The grant is funded by the Florida Catastrophic Storm Risk Management Center (http://www.stormrisk.org) and began August 8, 2008. The original end date for the project was July 31, 2009. The Information Institute received additional funding and performance extensions, which allow project activities to be conducted through August 6, 2010. This report provides an overview of activities completed and in progress from August 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009 and includes planned activities for the remainder of the performance period (January 1, 2010 – August 6, 2010).

Overall, the goal of this project is to work with public librarians to assist the residents of the state of Florida in preparing for, and responding to, hurricanes. Objectives to meet this goal include:

- Identify and describe the various plans, services, and activities in which public libraries have engaged for hurricane preparedness and response;
- Meet with various local and state officials to better understand local and situational factors that may affect the success with which public libraries can provide hurricane preparedness and responses;
- Assess how libraries can best provide hurricane preparedness and response services, in light of local conditions, as well as the available skills and capacities at the library;
- Conduct six training sessions for public librarians and local officials to describe the project's findings and educate participants about how they can best enhance their skills and services for hurricane preparedness and response; and
- Disseminate materials - which take a very practical and feasible approach, using electronic and print formats, resources, guidelines, recommendations, and best practices - describing the manner in which public libraries can be effective participants in hurricane preparedness and response.

These objectives continue to guide the study team's efforts with this project.

Study Design

The study team designed the original project in four phases: planning, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of findings and products. For this reporting period (August 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009), the study team developed and began implementation of a plan for evaluating the hurricane web portal. Additional activities were initiated to continue to market and promote the hurricane project. A major focus of these activities was the statewide conference held in conjunction with the Florida Library Directors' Meeting on October 8, 2009. This quarter also saw the initiation of efforts to develop a library emergency communication infrastructure model and the continuation of activities that assess the effectiveness of the training efforts that have included workshops, formal trainings sessions, and presentations at conferences and professional association meetings.

5th Quarter Activities Overview

During this reporting period, there were major efforts initiated to market the project further and to make the project resources more available and valuable to the library community. These activities further extend the objectives that include the dissemination of project findings and recommendations. The dissemination activities, while focused primarily on the Florida public library community, are being extended to the Gulf Coast region and beyond. Further, these expanding activities enable the project to incorporate better library roles with the greater emergency response networks that include emergency management organizations, disaster response agencies, and the academic research community. Table 1 (below) provides the status of 5th quarter activities.

Table 1. Summary of August 1 - December 31, 2009 Project Activities	
Activity	**Discussion**
Evaluate the project web portal.	A website evaluation plan was issued on September 29, 2009, and implementation of that plan is underway with completion of data collection expected by January 31, 2010. A copy of the evaluation plan is available upon request. A final report that presents the analysis of findings will be provided by March 31, 2010.
Update and expand project web portal content	Based on the training and website assessment efforts, the project team launched new efforts to update, revise, and expand project web portal content to include more booklets and interactive templates for public librarians, residents, and evacuees. This task will continue in conjunction with the ongoing field evaluation and usability assessment.
Continue marketing and promotional efforts	The primary task of developing and implementing a marketing plan was completed during the 4th quarter (July 15, 2009) and is available upon request. Ongoing marketing and promotional activities have included articles published in blogs and listservs, and included an internationally telecast Webinar (web based seminar).
Conduct a statewide conference to promote the project and web portal	A statewide conference was held in conjunction with the Florida Library Directors' Meeting (October 8, 2009). The activities include a formal presentation of the hurricane project and website, along with an informal reception that afforded the opportunity to assess the use of the website and next steps to extend and sustain the project.
Explore additional public library disaster roles	The study team developed and specified seven hurricane/disaster preparedness service roles for public libraries. As a result of the field review and other input from Florida residents, these service roles are being refined and better specified. This task will be finalized after completing the website usability study and project evaluation/field review.
Develop a library emergency communication infrastructure module	Initial meetings with SERT and other key emergency management leaders and library within Florida have indicated strong support for this module. The Institute will begin to develop a draft module that can be critiqued and refined before completion by the end of the contract period (August 6, 2010).
Integrate public libraries into local emergency management	The study team identified opportunities and activities to encourage public library participation in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) online training and explored the feasibility of selected public libraries serving as FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers. Also, the team met with the Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT) on October 14, 2009 to develop practical strategies, such as a possible new module, , "Get to Know Your EOC," that will be explored and developed.
Integrate public libraries into local emergency management	The study team identified opportunities and activities to encourage public library participation in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) online training and explored the feasibility of selected public libraries serving as FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers. Also, the team met with the Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT).

Table 1. Summary of August 1 – December 31, 2009 Project Activities (continued)	
Activity	**Discussion**
Provide advice for regional library disaster planning	The project team continued to work with the Southeast Florida regional multi-type library cooperative SEFLIN to develop a disaster plan that will be finalized during the next quarter. SEFLIN's current restructuring has put this project on hold in the short term, but the project team will continue to work with SEFLIN to develop the plan further and to integrate experiences from this effort into the website as a module to assist other regional library hurricane planning efforts.
Conduct supplemental training	The project team conducted trainings at select locations throughout the state in order to update librarians, emergency managers, and community officials on project activities and the web portal with a focus on opportunities promoting joint planning among emergency managers and public library directors. Trainings included an informational session that was part of the statewide hurricane conference (October 8, 2009), an OCLC webinar that provided broad exposure to a diverse, international audience of library leaders (October 21, 2009), and training sessions in South Florida as part of the project field review.
Conduct a formal assessment of training efforts	The study team continues to assess formally the various training activities (i.e., workshops, training sessions, conference demonstrations) and presentations at professional association meetings. These training activities are ongoing, with a final report issued by the end of the contract period to include summary details.
Investigate ongoing external funding	The project team has been laying groundwork to obtain future funding from NOAA, FEMA, and other federal agencies; state library agencies of the Gulf Coast; Lyrasis; the American Library Association, and others. Other efforts have included submission of a proposal to National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)'s Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) that includes support for broadband disaster/emergency planning for Florida public libraries. The Institute has obtained funding from the State Library & Archives of Florida that will further expand the content of the Hurricane Preparedness website into disaster/emergency planning as part of library service roles related to Electronic Government (E-Government).

Highlights of August 1 – December 31, 2009 Activities

During the 1st and 2nd quarters of the project, the study team collected and assembled information from those hurricane-affected public libraries that had made significant contributions to their communities' response to hurricanes. During the 3rd quarter, the study team began to present the findings of that research and introduced the project web portal. Fourth quarter activities focused on efforts to market and promote the project and the web portal. During the current reporting period, the efforts concentrated on the developing a plan to evaluate the web portal, to hold a statewide conference, and to continue to market and promote the project.

Project Evaluation Plan

On September 29, 2009, a formal project evaluation plan was developed, entitled *Hurricane/Disaster Preparedness and Response by Utilizing Florida Public Libraries: Final Quarter Evaluation Plan (August 1 – December 31, 2009)*. The plan is available upon request. The plan details the evaluative efforts that include:

- *Initial needs assessment*: Interviews, focus groups, and surveys with public library staff, state library agency staff, and local/state emergency preparation and response personnel

to determine public library service roles related to hurricane/disaster response and recovery identify initial hurricane/disaster response and recovery web portal content;

- *Formative evaluation*: Ongoing usability, functionality, and accessibility testing of successive versions of the project web portal; and
- *Use and usefulness web portal assessments*: Conducted at the end of project training sessions with public library staff members and state library staff during the spring of 2009.

Detailed results of the project's formative evaluation efforts are presented in each of the project's quarterly reports.

The final evaluation plan includes formative evaluations and an overall summative evaluation of the project, specifically: 1) assessments of the use and usefulness of the project's web portal; 2) final usability, functionality, and accessibility testing of the project's web portal; and 3) project and web portal evaluation data collected at the October 8, 2009 Florida Public Library Directors' Meeting. Upon completion of the formative assessments, the study team will conduct a final summative evaluation that will determine the degree to which project activities conducted from August 2008 – August 2010 meet the project's initial goal and objectives.

Statewide Conference

On October 8, 2009, Dr. Charles McClure made a presentation to the Florida Public Library Directors' Conference held in Tallahassee about the Public Library Hurricane Preparedness and Recovery Project and the project's web portal. The conference included over 100 library directors from across the state of Florida, as well as officials from the State Library & Archives of Florida and the Florida Legislature. The formal presentation covered the scope and intent of the project, as well as a discussion of the findings and their impact on the library community. The presentation by Dr. McClure and the accompanying reception afforded the opportunity to disseminate information about the project, assess the value this project has provided to the Florida library community, and solicit feedback and suggestions towards improving the web portal design and content.

Project Marketing Efforts

During the current reporting period, the project team continued efforts to further market and promote the research project and to build awareness of the web portal. Major efforts to build awareness of the project included additional media publicity and the use of listserv announcements to promote the project and inform the library community on issues related to hurricane preparedness. Key activities have included:

- *Webinar through OCLC's WebJunction (October 21, 2009)*: Introduction of the project web portal, overview of the identified service roles, and discussion of ongoing project activities, interactions between the Institute presented and webinar attendees through real-time polls and chat, and discussion focusing on additional disasters the portal could address (e.g., H1N1, fires, and tornados) and success stories from participants' libraries.;

- *Professional library blogs and listservs*: Dissemination of project information and updates to a broad spectrum of the library community throughout Florida and the Gulf Coast region, as well as nationally and internationally. As this quarter coincided with the peak of hurricane season, blog and listserv articles were issued to provide a reminder to librarians of the information and resources available from the web portal.
- *Upcoming presentations*: The project team will present the project and web portal at the Louisiana and Texas Library Associations' annual meetings in the spring 2010.
- *Statewide Conference*: The Institute's presentation to the Florida Public Library Directors' Conference held in Tallahassee included a formal briefing on the Hurricane Preparedness and Recovery Project and the project's web portal. The impact of that presentation was strengthened by providing informational brochures and project summaries. Also during the statewide conference activities, the Information Institute distributed over 50 copies of the promotional flyer to be displayed in Florida public libraries.
- *Professional Journals:* The American Libraries Direct newsletter (June 10, 2009) published "FSU Aids Public Libraries with Hurricane Preparedness." The article promoted how the new web portal can helps libraries assist their communities to prepare for and recover from hurricanes and other severe storms.
- *Internet Public Library:* The Internet Public Library is a library oriented public service organization and a learning/teaching environment founded at the University of Michigan School of Information and hosted by Drexel University's College of Information Science & Technology. This online reference service has added an active hyperlink, including descriptive narrative that links to the hurricane project web portal.
- *Florida Division of Emergency Management (SERT):* The Institute has been working closely with local and state emergency management officials to further promote the website project. One major outcome of those meetings is the placement of a hyperlink on the Florida SERT website that links to the hurricane web portal.

Feedback continues to be positive for the media publicity, with reports indicating that the listserv and blog venues continue to be effective means for reaching the broader library community.

Next Steps

During the final reporting period (January 1 – August 6, 2010), key project activities include the establishment of a library emergency communication infrastructure module, evaluation of the web portal, and pursuit of opportunities to further develop the project. These project activities will include the following:

- *Marketing and promotion*: Planning and coordination activities will continue towards disseminating information about the project and web portal, including formal presentations of the project and web portal at the Texas Library Association conference (April 2010) and Louisiana Library Association conference (March 2010);
- *Continuous evaluation*: The project team will complete additional research on the needs and activities of Florida public libraries related to hurricane response, conduct usability testing of the project web portal, and implement and complete the hurricane portal evaluation plan;

- *Establishing a library emergency communication infrastructure module*: The project team will add a module to the project website (cross listed in the Safe Haven and Information Hub roles sections) that outlines requirements and resources available to ensure a public library's ability to communicate throughout a hurricane emergency and to offer communication facilities to residents;
- *Training assessment*: The project team will continue to evaluate the feedback obtained from the prior training sessions with the goal of further improving the project web portal; and
- *Update content:* The Institute remains committed to assuring that the web portal content remains current and relevant through ongoing efforts to find opportunities to extend the scope and depth of resources started by this project.

Table 2 outlines the expected tasks for the planned and projected activities for the remainder of the performance period (January 1 – August 6, 2010). Efforts for this period will focus on completing the evaluation of the web portal, updating the content and resources provided within the web portal, and the development of a library emergency communication infrastructure module.

Table 2. Planned and Projected Activities (January 1, 2010 – August 6, 2010)	
Web portal evaluation	Continue the website evaluation program, integrating feedback and suggestions as web portal improvements.
Library emergency management module	Develop a library emergency communication infrastructure module providing information on building stronger collaborative and cooperative relationships between library and emergency management agencies. The Institute has received strong support for this module from local SERT teams, other local emergency management agencies, and Florida library directors. The project team will complete the user assessment phase and develop module, to include the collection of user feedback and performing an evaluation of the utility of the module. Feedback from user contact will be incorporated into subsequent refinements and improvements during this period.
Conduct and assess training	Continue to seek out and engage in training activities as workshop sessions, conferences, and meetings that will serve to promote awareness of the project and the web portal. Conduct ongoing formal assessments of all training efforts.
Publications for marketing and promotional efforts	Prepare an invited article for the *Bulletin of the American Society of Information Science and Technology* on libraries and disaster response. Also, continue the publication and dissemination of external support roles in aid of local public library disaster response, as well as the module *Integrating Public Libraries into Local Emergency Response*. Continue to seek opportunities to promote and market the project to all stakeholder groups and interested parties.
Networking	Conduct ongoing collaboration with key library and emergency personnel leadership to improve the utilization of Florida public libraries in disaster response and preparedness.
Project web portal	This timeframe will see the further development of the web portal as a principal way to disseminate project products.
SEFLIN planning	The study team will continue to advise the SEFLIN planning team in their development of their *SEFLIN Regional Disaster Recovery Plan*. SEFLIN has temporarily suspended activities pending the hiring of a new executive director.
Sustainability	The study team will be actively pursuing external funding sources to continue updating and improving the web portal beyond August 2010.

Each of these next step activities, as identified in Table 2, is underway with significant progress already made. These activities will make a major contribution to the objectives of promoting the hurricane project and adding value to the web portal. The study team continues to

make steady and substantial progress in meeting the project's goals and remains on schedule to complete the project in the time allotted. There are no outstanding issues or problems identified at this time.

Summary

For the past five months (August 1 – December 31, 2009), the study team continued with extensive effort to build awareness and promote the project using venues that included media, print, conferences, and professional association meetings. Efforts to improve awareness and use of the web portal included presentation of an internationally viewed Webinar and the conducting of a statewide conference that included a formal briefing on the web portal to an assembly of over 100 Florida library directors. Future activities will build on this work to ensure that the website continues to be as relevant as possible to users, that resources and information are current, the website continues to be better known, and various avenues for additional external funding are explored.