Interconnected:
How Public Libraries as Essential Information Infrastructures Enhance Community Resilience

In this three-year **Community Catalyst** Early Career Development project, Dr. Beth Patin from the Syracuse University School of Information Studies requests $279,805 from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program for a **research in service to practice** investigation into how public libraries enhance community resilience by supporting the adaptive capacities of communities throughout disasters. SU will cost share $129,697 in PI academic salary and fringe and graduate tuition support.

Statement of Broad Need Research about the roles of public libraries during disasters is limited. We know libraries are playing critical roles in their communities in the aftermath of disasters, but little research examines the roles public libraries play across different disaster types. Unfortunately, much of the existing research focuses primarily on medical, special, or corporate libraries. The body of research focusing on public libraries often focuses on a specific disaster such as a hurricane in Florida. Different disasters types require different plans and responses, and it is essential to expand what is known about the role of public libraries during disasters. Public libraries have critical roles to play after disasters with the federal *Robert T. Stafford Act of 2011* naming public libraries as Essential Community Organizations, requiring libraries to support and serve their communities after a declared disaster. Despite this classification, public libraries remain unprepared to implement flexible and comprehensive disaster response plans oriented around community resilience. Community resilience is a measure of how well communities can adapt to threats and vulnerabilities. *Adaptive capacity* is the ability of a system to adjust, change, moderate the effects, and cope with a disturbance. Previous research has identified four interconnecting capacities of a community affecting its overall resilience: *Economic Development; Social Capital; Community Competence; and Information and Communication*. Additionally, many library directors admit to having minimal disaster plans, mostly focusing on preserving library materials in smaller-scale events such as water damage, fires, or active shooter drills. More research is needed to understand the critical elements of a comprehensive disaster plan to provide library services to communities in need and ensure all stakeholders' safety. Public libraries need to think beyond preservation and consider the critical roles they can play, enhancing community resilience.

This investigation will address the following questions:
   (1) What roles have public libraries previously played throughout disasters?
   (2) How have public libraries supported adaptive capacities throughout disasters?
   (3) What are the critical elements of a flexible and comprehensive disaster management plan?
   (4) What are the best practices for libraries to collaborate across sectors to enhance community resilience?

Project Design & Timeline This qualitative community catalyst project will take place for three years in three cumulative phases. The PI's body of research demonstrates how community resilience's theoretical framework is a suitable framework for understanding how public libraries support their communities after disasters. This project also builds on the PI's previous research. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed her school library, motivating her to think about how libraries serve their communities during extreme events. This personal experience led to research on resilient information infrastructures, the role of public libraries in Chile after their earthquake and tsunami in 2010, public libraries and community resilience, and the LIS response to Covid and the 2020 protests.

The outcomes of this project are:
   (1) Identify roles for public libraries in disaster management;
   (2) Identify ways public libraries support adaptive capacities throughout disasters;
   (3) Create and evaluate a toolkit to help library communities create flexible and comprehensive disaster management plans, including a plan to connect and collaborate across sectors.

Timeline	Objectives
Year One	Recruit Ph.D. Student Hire a Master's Student-Faculty Assistant Identify stakeholders for the advisory board Collect items for content analysis for library roles Collect items for content analysis for adaptive capacities Collect library disaster management plans
Year Two	Conduct content analysis for library roles, adaptive capacities, and disaster plans Convene advisory board for collaboration on the design of the toolkit Create the first draft of public library disaster management toolkit Get feedback from the advisory board on the library disaster management toolkit Disseminate findings of the content analysis
Year Three	Edit public library disaster management toolkit based on feedback Publish public library disaster management toolkit on the Syracuse University School of Information Studies website Promote the public library disaster management toolkit Outline best practices for cross-sector collaboration and working with disaster management and governmental organizations Disseminate findings at state library conferences such as NYLA and TLA, national conferences such as ALA and ALISE, and to library leadership organizations like LLAMA; target publication venues such as *Library Quarterly*, *Public Library Quarterly*, and American Libraries; promote toolkit via Syracuse University Social Media, an official university press release, and on the Syracuse University School of Information Studies website

Broad Impact These new findings will act as a catalyst and generate insight into libraries' roles throughout various disaster types, provide a flexible disaster management plan for public libraries, and establish guidelines for partnering with relevant disaster response organizations to help enhance community resilience after disasters. The findings of this work will broaden the scope of what is known about public libraries and various types of disasters. They will be essential in establishing an agenda of research on crisis informatics and libraries.

Additionally, this project's findings can serve as the foundation for future workshops instructing librarians in creating comprehensive disaster management plans. Further, this research has a potential impact on teaching in MLIS programs by identifying a clear path to help librarians plan and prepare for extreme events. Finally, while the project aims to address public libraries' specific needs, its findings could easily be adapted for special, corporate, and academic libraries.

Diversity Plan As the Coronavirus pandemic and recent natural disasters remind us: vulnerable communities often suffer disproportionately in the aftermath of disasters. It is critical for any resilience and disaster management research to consider which communities are systematically disenfranchised and therefore assume higher risk levels in a crisis. PI is from a minoritized community, so supporting this work increases visibility and production of research by diverse LIS researchers. Finally, students from minoritized communities will be given a hiring preference for the project's graduate and doctoral assistantships.

Budget Summary The proposed budget of $279,805 includes $57,587 for three years of PI summer salary; $91,532 for student support; $12,100 for PI and student dissemination travel; $1,500 for qualitative coding software; $5,000 in advisory board stipends; $18,999 in fringe benefits; and $93,268 in indirect costs. SU will cost share $129,697 in PI academic salary and fringe and graduate tuition support.