Public Libraries as Technology Hubs in Disasters

Libraries provide access to, assistance with, and information both through and about technology. Slides available at https://eileenyoung.blog/words/libraries/

Access

Quick fact run-down:

- 16,536 public libraries of 119,487 total libraries in the US (including school libraries)[1]
- 97% of public libraries offer free internet access [2]
- In 2012, 62% of library outlets reported being the only free source of public wifi in their community[3]

That makes them major resources for the 19,450[4] incorporated places in the United States, particularly in terms of accessing https://www.disasterassistance.gov/, which is not only the Federal Emergency Management Agency's recommended way to access aid but also the way one locates the app that allows one to locate disaster recovery centers where one can finally access non-electronic resources in the form of people.

Other than FEMA forms, access to technology can also help families reunite and stay in contact, starting with items like Facebook's Crisis Response system and continuing with email for communication and the organization of relocation with family and person-to-person aid.

Assistance

Free wifi is only the beginning, though: 96.6% of libraries in 2012 reported providing assistance to patrons in "applying for and accessing" electronic government forms[3].

Information

Both through and about: during the H1N1 pandemic many library websites hosted information from the CDC[5].

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[1] http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet01

[2] Eyragon Eidam, "Wi-Fi Hot Spots for Rent: How Public Libraries are Changing with the Times," http://www.govtech.com/network/Wi-Fi-Hot-Spots-for-Rent-How-Public-Libraries-Are-Changing-with-the-Times.html (accessed Nov 27, 2017).

[3] Judy Hoffman, John Carlo Bertot and Denise M. Davis, "Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2011-2012," *American Libraries Magazine* (June, 2012). http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/4673a369.

[4] https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0082/twps0082.html

[5] Bradley Wade Bishop and Shari R. Veil, "Public Libraries as Post-Crisis Information Hubs," *Public Library Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1, 2013), 33-45. doi:10.1080/01616846.2013.760390. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2013.760390.