

**Making Meaning:
Libraries as Partners Survey Data & Next Steps
Advisors Meeting
July 29-30, 2024**

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<https://imlsgrant.web.illinois.edu/>



Today: Research Team Initial Data Overview & Next Steps

- Research: Overview & Reminders
- Survey Data Overview, Jessie Chin
 - Analysis and data visualizations
 - Limitations
- Qualitative Inquiry, Sharon L. Comstock
 - Codebook: Initial coded and sub-coded (to serve Community Engagement Roundtables, CERs)
 - Data Conversation Method Framing Questions
 - To frame your reflections as you review data (after this meeting)
 - Invite your feedback in the form of inquiries and observations (not required)
- Community Engagement Roundtables (CERs), Karen Brown
 - Overview
 - Next steps: Recruitment & Design
- Questions & Wrap-up: Lian Ruan



Reminder: Scope of the Libraries as Partners Planning Grant

- 2-year Planning Grant
- Initial core Research Questions
- Goals
- Outputs
 - Intended to lay groundwork to inform a future framework to understand libraries' roles as partners in times of crisis, with an emphasis on the nature of those working partnerships
 - [See: About - Libraries as Partners for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Times of Crisis \(illinois.edu\)](#)



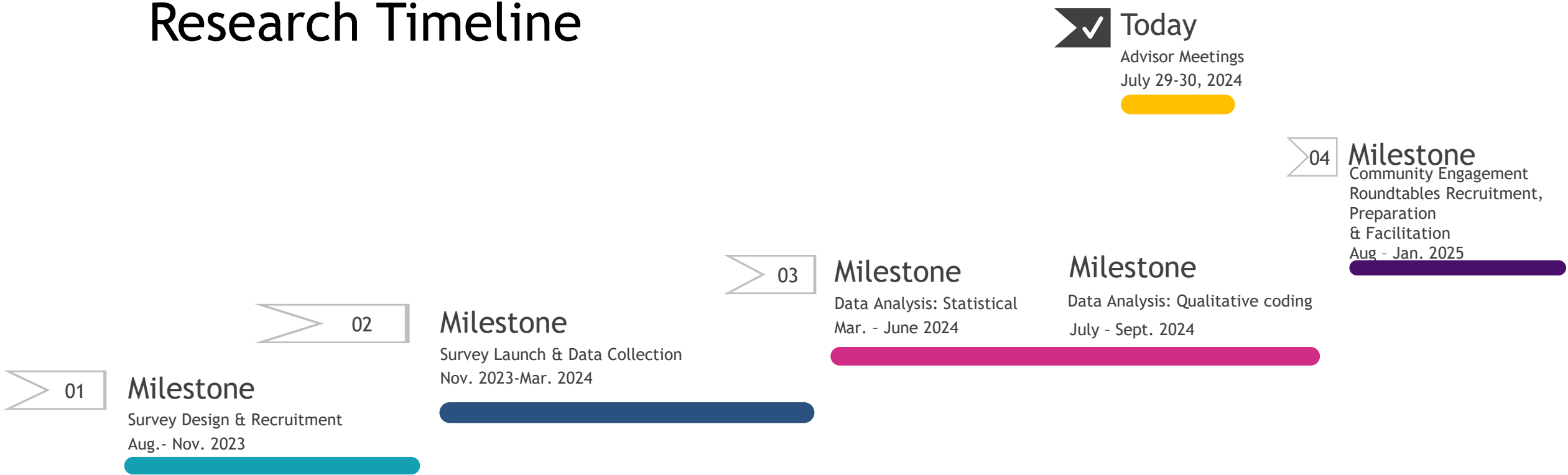
Project Leadership & Research Teaming

Operating as a form of mixed-methods team

- Disciplinary training and experiences
- Research methodologies: quantitative and qualitative areas of expertise
- Professional roles and networks that inform positionalities



Research Timeline



01

Milestone

Survey Design & Recruitment
Aug.- Nov. 2023

02

Milestone

Survey Launch & Data Collection
Nov. 2023-Mar. 2024

03

Milestone

Data Analysis: Statistical
Mar. - June 2024

Milestone

Data Analysis: Qualitative coding
July - Sept. 2024

04

Milestone

Community Engagement
Roundtables Recruitment,
Preparation
& Facilitation
Aug - Jan. 2025



Today

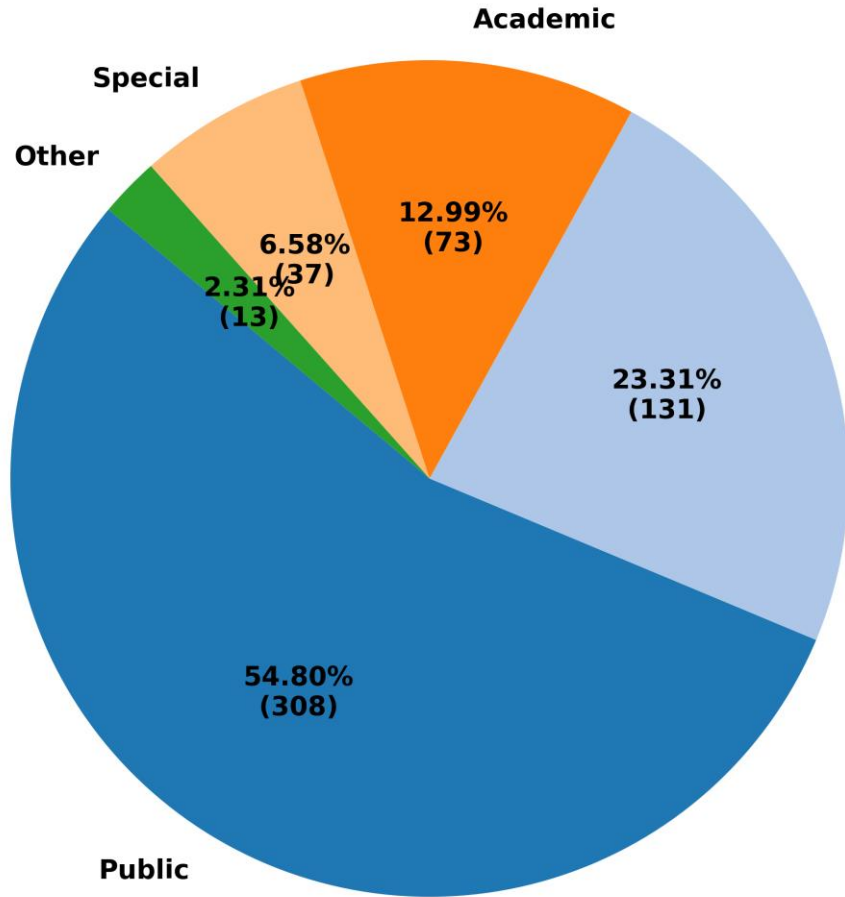
Advisor Meetings
July 29-30, 2024

Survey Overview

- Sample Characteristics
- Responding to Emergencies
- Scope and Nature of Partnership
- Role of Libraries in Partnerships
- Main Take-away Message 1. Urgent Needs for Training
- Main Take-away Message 2. Centralized and Coordinated Cyberinfrastructure
- Main Take-away Message 3. Heterogenous Experiences
- Limitations

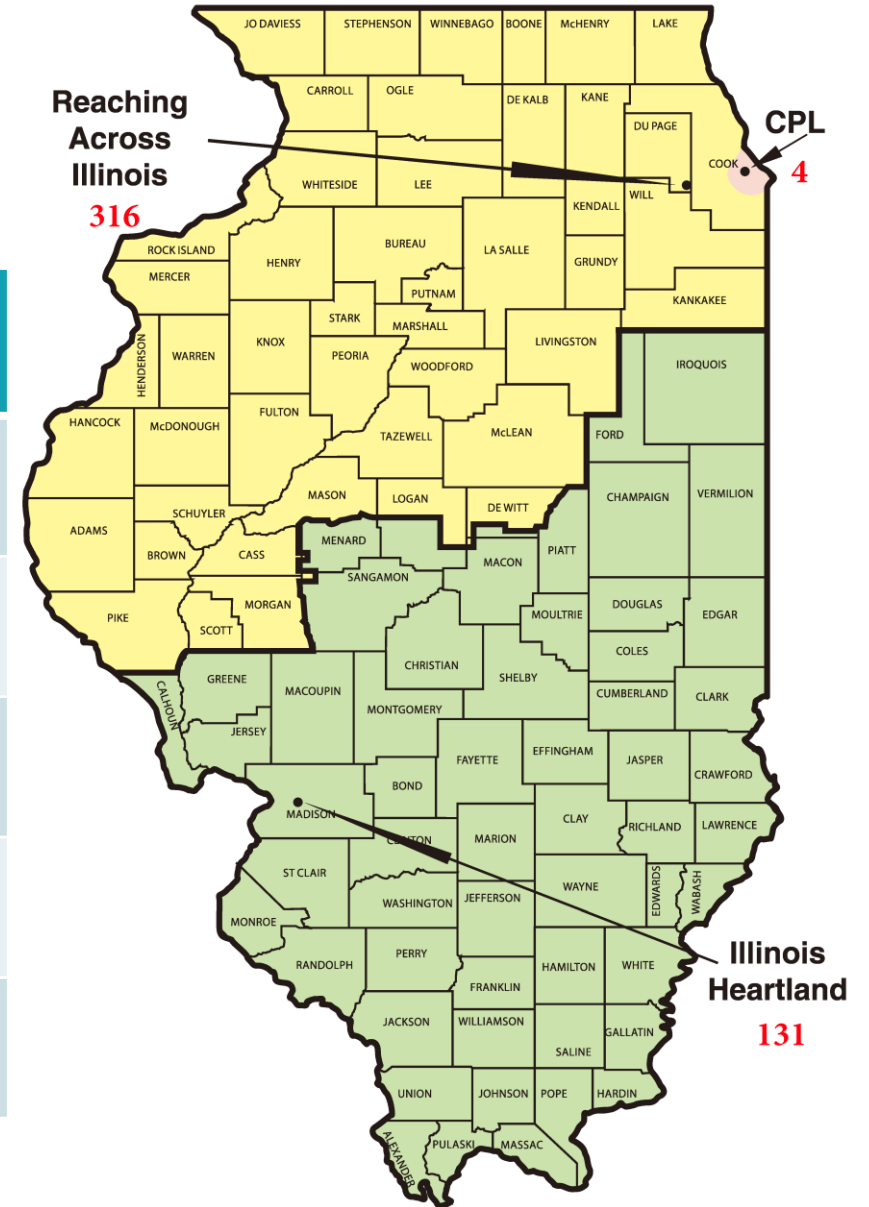


Sample Characteristics (N=562)

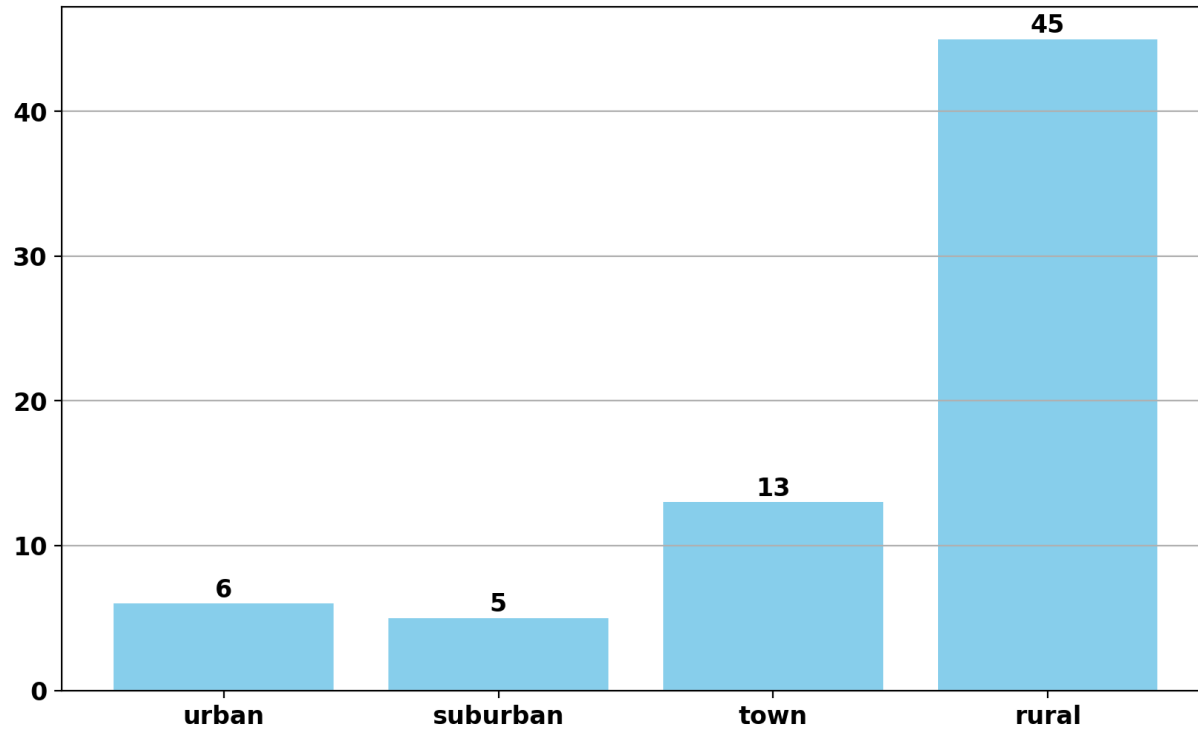


School

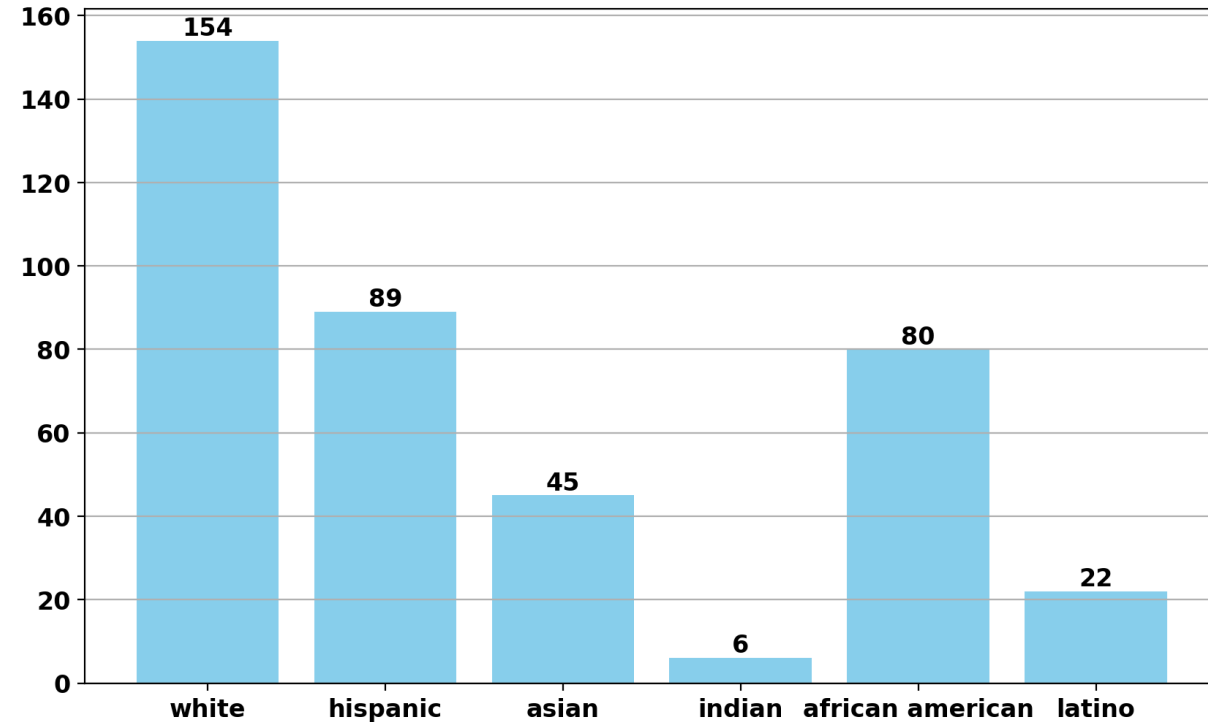
Library Type	N
Public	308
School	131
Academic	73
Special	37
Other	13



Sample Characteristics – Population Demographics



Most serving rural communities.



User populations are mostly white, African American, and Hispanic.



Sample Characteristics – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

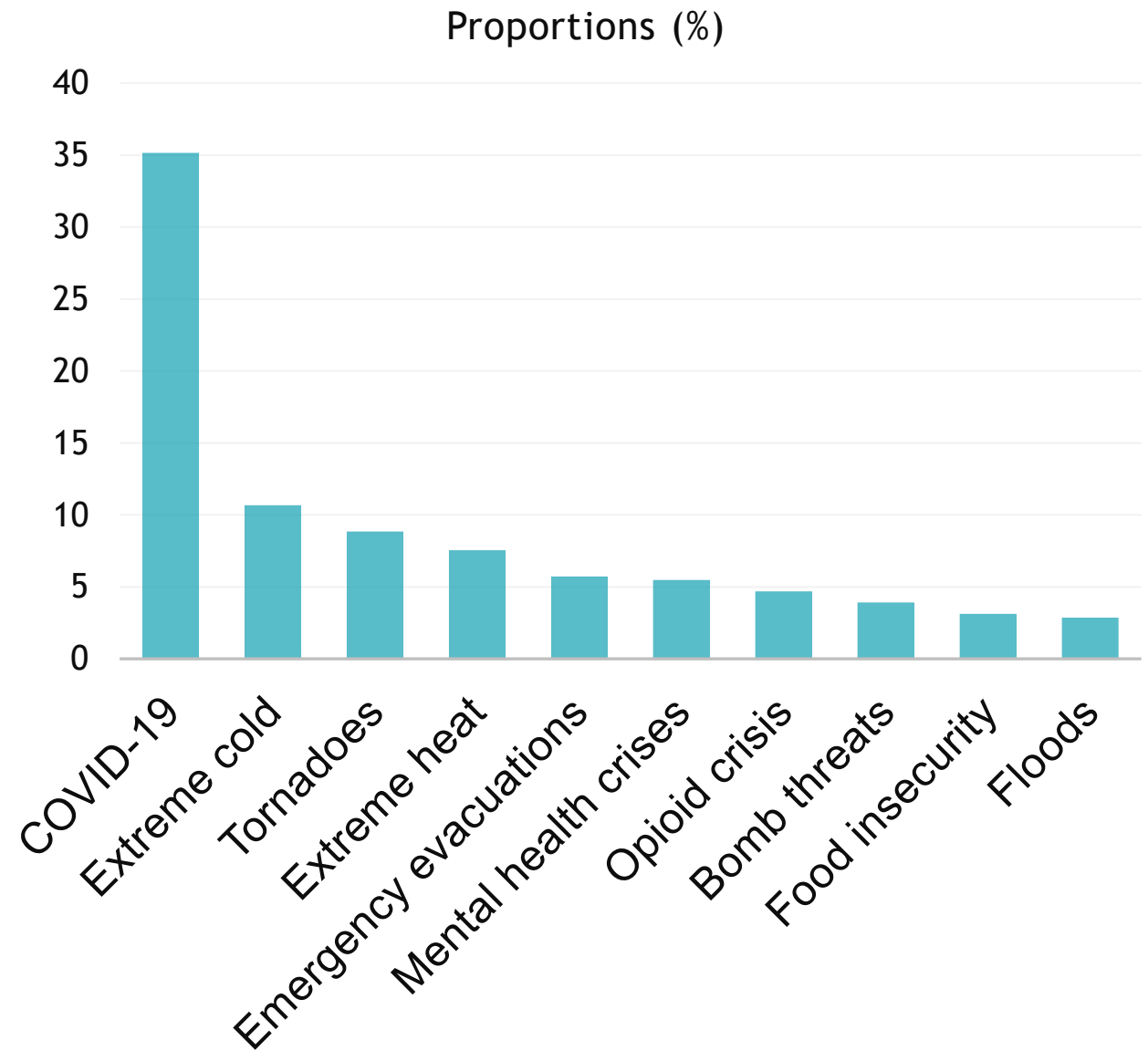
To what degree does your library provide services to the following groups:

- Historically marginalized or underserved communities: 55% often and sometimes
- Living at or below the poverty level: 60% often and sometimes
- Migrant population: 46% lower than occasionally, 32% often and sometimes
- Unemployed: 60% often and sometimes
- Disabled: 60% often and sometimes
- Age 65+: 63% often and sometimes



Responding to Emergencies – Emergency Types

- About **35%** of the libraries have participated in responding to **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Among the users who have responded to emergencies, about 10% responded to "extreme cold", "extreme heat", "tornadoes".



Responding to Emergencies - Personnel and Roles

Who responded to emergencies:

- For COVID-19: About **40% all staff**, 26% Management Team, and 6% respondents themselves
- For all other emergencies: mostly **management team**.

Existence of Emergency Response Team: (vary by emergency)

- **36% COVID-19**
- About 65~75% Bomb Threats, Gun Violence
- 40~55% Floods, fires, emergency evacuation, opioid crisis
- 25~30% chemical hazard, mental health
- 15~25% Extreme heat, cold

What are the roles of the personnels who responded to the emergencies:

- Emergency procedures/plans development and application (30%)
- Leadership and administration (17%)
- Maintain normal library services (13%)
- **External and internal collaboration and communication (10%)**
- **Information collection and sharing (10%)**



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Major gap: lower than 3% training and preparedness



Responding to Emergencies – Cyberinfrastructure

Information used :

- **Credible details of the emergency (19%)**
- **Guidelines/protocols from authorities (14%)**
- Emergency procedures and plans
- Measures taken by other libraries
- Information about neighborhood

Information needed:

- **Credible details of the emergency (24%)**
- **Guidelines/protocols from authorities (18%)**
- Emergency procedures and plans
- Safety information
- Communication and coordination plan

Technology used to contact partners/gather information:

- Phone, emails about 20%
- **Apps (Facebook, Microsoft Team, GroupMe, etc.) 12%**
- Internet 10%
- Virtual meeting 5%

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Rooms of improvement:

- **Federal/state/local governments (e.g., CDC, IDPH, county health department): 2%**
- **Library organizations (e.g., IHLS, state library system, ILA): 0.32%**



Responding to Emergencies – Partnership and COOP

Whom did you contact or seek partnership

- **Other libraries (13%)**
- Police (12%)
- Public health department (11%)
- City/county governments (9%)
- Fire department (6%)
- Schools/teachers (5%)

How to share/exchange information with partners

- Emails, phones about 33~35%
- **Virtual meetings 12%**
- **Apps (Facebook, Microsoft Team, GroupMe, etc.) 4%**

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for future emergencies: 45% Yes
(Varied by emergency types: Mostly about Fires and Tornadoes.)



Responding to Emergencies – Reflections

Self-identified goals during the emergency (e.g., COVID19 90%)

- Maintaining community safety and health (36%)
- Operational continuity, access to service and resources, providing emergency specific responses (14~16%)
- Community support and engagement (9%)

Failed to meet some of the goals:

- COVID-19 20%, bomb threats 40%, gun violence 25%, mental health crisis, chemical hazards, emergency evacuation 14%, opioid crisis, floods 10%
- **Communication and outreach failure 22%**
- **Preparedness and training deficiencies 15%**
- Resources and budget constraints 15%
- **Digital adaptation and adoption challenge 10%**

Overall, positive (40%) and exceptionally positive (33%) toward emergency responses



Responding to Emergencies – Respond to varying needs

- 52% are aware of libraries' designation by the federal government as essential social service providers during emergencies
- 80% agree that libraries factor in the varying needs when planning for emergencies

Responding to Emergencies – Training

Frequencies of specific training for emergencies (including CPR, first aid, active shooter drills, etc.)

- 42% Annually
- 30% Occasionally
- 16% several years ago
- 10% never

Whom provided training:

- Fire department 18%
- Police 14%
- Health providers/Schools/teachers 7-8%

What were trained in:

- Violence and threat preparedness (38%)
- Medical emergency response (33%)
- **Disaster emergency preparedness (14%)**
- Mental health crisis (5%)
- General evacuation (2%)

Designated staff responsible for emergency response: 58%

- Director 66%
- Special service 9%



Scope and Nature of Partnership - 1

Define partnership:

- Collaboration and mutual support (55%)
- Shared goals and objectives (25%)

Your library being a member of community emergency task force, committee, or group?

- **86% NO**

How did partnership begin?

- **56% Initiated by library**
- 13% by partner

Have established partnership with emergency response groups:

- **51% Never and Occasionally**
- 19% only when we have a drill
- 20% Annually
- 10% Regularly in a collaborative way to plan/design/coordinate



Scope and Nature of Partnership - 2

What emergency response groups already worked with:

- **26% Police and 26% Fire**
- 17% Local health department
- 12% Emergency medical services
- 5% National emergency response groups

Do your community emergency response group recognize libraries contribution as emergency response partner?

- 54% to some extent
- 36% very little
- **10% equal partner**



Role of Libraries in Partnerships

What do you believe is the role of libraries during emergencies?

- **Information collection/sharing 26%**
- Providing emergency specific response 20%
- Access to service and resources 19%
- Community support and resources 15%

More than 66% believe that library's partnerships enhance your library's preparation for emergencies.

What services provided during emergencies?

- **Wifi and device charging 16%**
- **Information hub 15%**
- Emergency education and instruction, shelter, mental health resources 9~10%
- Assistance with filling out federal or state aid forms, physical meeting space for community emergency responders 7~8%

More than 67% believe that library's partnerships enhance community's resilience.



Role of Libraries in Partnerships

How does library's role benefit community emergency response partners?

- **Make partner's messages and guidelines more easily to reach the public 22%**
- Partners use library's physical space for meetings and response activities 20%
- Partners are more easily able to do their job 19%
- Partners use the library's virtual resources for communication and information retrieval 12%

How does library's role benefit your community?

- **Enhanced information sharing 22%**
- **Enhanced resource sharing 16%**
- **Better communication and relationships 15%**
- Maintaining safety and health 7%
- Improved awareness 5%

→ The first two items also apply to the historically underserved and marginalized communities

Role of Libraries in Partnerships

How to evaluate the levels of intended outcome?

- **Library staff's confidence in ability to respond to a future emergency 27%**
- **Increased trust between the library and partners 26%**
- Increased community resiliency 20%
- Stress levels in library staff 13%

Expected future roles to take:

- **Providing emergency specific response 14%**
- **Partners for other entities of emergencies 11%**
- Information collection and sharing 9%
- Open space for other entities 7%



Main Take-away Message 1. Urgent Needs for Training

- For the personnel involved in emergency response, very few (<5%) in charge of training and preparedness
- Do not have regular training
- Large variations on training contents
- When reflecting on past emergency responses, “preparedness and training deficiencies” had been repeatedly raised.

→ There is an urgent need to plan a systematic and tailored training for varying emergency responses

Main Take-away Message 2. Centralized and Coordinated Cyberinfrastructure

- Discrepancies in the information needed, especially credible info and guidelines/protocols from the authorities.
- Little use of information from authorities, including federal, state, local governments and library organizations.
- The top failure during emergency responses was “communication and outreach failure”, followed by the technology adoption challenge.
- Potential to leverage other communication apps (such as Microsoft Team) or virtual meetings to complement conventional communications.

→ Need better cyberinfrastructure to support timely and comprehensive information exchange and communication.



Main Take-away Message 3. Partnership Initiation Challenge, Unmet Roles, and Lack of Recognition

- Most of the partnerships were initiated by libraries.
 - Libraries contacted other libraries more during emergencies.
 - Only 10% of the respondents feel the emergency partners regarded libraries as equal partners.
 - While the current services included wifi and device charging, information hub, physical space sharing, libraries would like to contribute more to emergency partnerships by (1) providing emergency-specific responses, and (2) partnering with other entities.
- Need to reform the role of libraries in emergency response with other stakeholders**

Limitations

- Heterogeneous responses across different emergencies
- Response rate high; narrative responses less robust
 - Lower than 35% of the responders were part of the emergency response team during COVID-19.
 - Further investigation needed in the next phase
- Survey design:
 - General limitations of survey method
 - Specific to ours: possible length; understanding of the question

Qualitative Inquiry: Method and Purpose

Describing the “Wicked Problems”

Qualitative analysis coding methods memo

- Simplified grounded theory approach to support structured participatory data conversation (Community Engagement Roundtables [CERs]).
- Non-duplicative
- Goals: to offer context and inform next phases of the project (CERs, CER data analysis, preliminary synthesis for stakeholders, and inform framework for future research
- Initial coding (open, selective) applied in a limited way to:
 - identify topic areas from open-ended survey responses
 - Identify where there are gaps (e.g., less robust responses)
 - clarify survey response conflation/confusion



Qualitative Inquiry: Participatory Design Coding for Relational Themes

Libraries as Partners Survey Data Codebook Design

- Code analysis is of open-ended responses from the survey; done after statistical analysis is reviewed to focus on gaps or questions. Redundancy avoided.
- Areas of emphasis: Project Research Questions (Rs); Project Goals (Gs); Topics; and emerging lines of inquiries appropriate to a planning grant (e.g., topics that may present as inconsistencies, need clarification, present as gaps, and/or new sub-topics)
- Initial codes are not more than 15-20
- Codes are thematic in nature and are organized hierarchically
 - CODE: Initial
 - SUB-CODE: To which research question it best relates. If it relates to more than one, it is coded to the different research questions
 - SUB-CODE: To which goal it best reflects
 - SUB-CODE: Refining subject within a topic as it is represented in response (e.g., that suggests meaningful context or an emerging area of inquiry for CERs and next step).
 - SUB-CODE: emerging or NEW topic from responses
 - Inter-coding has not been applied at this stage
 - A review of initial codes and adding sub-codes to refine to identify themes is recommended
- **Outputs: Initial Themes derived from the codes and sub-codes**
- Coding Methodology notes are written throughout for positionality (choices made, reasoning, reflexivity) for transparency
- MAXQDA software (on local machine; not cloud)



Initial Codes: Research Questions

- R1a Scope of partnership (who, duration, frequency, how many)
- R1b Nature of partnership (Formal, informal, e.g., “a phone call away”)
- R2a Library as Providers in emergencies of... (*what* is provided = sub-codes)
- R2b Library as Providers in emergencies (*by what means*, e.g., emergency training, manual, access to a resource = sub-codes)

Initial Codes: Goals of the Project to Identify in Responses

- G1 Roles (Extending beyond transactional provisioning)
- G2 Plans (Sub-codes = manual, process [training], policy)
- G3 Resources (Organizational assets [part of a larger entity that provides policy, etc.], staffing, budget, experience, time)
- G4 Assessing “success”
- G5 Equity (of library with partners, e.g., decision-making)



Initial Codes: Focused Topic areas (“holistic” or “lumping” coding)

- Crisis type
- Planning (G2)
- Partnership (R1, R2, G1, G5)
- Communication (may become sub-code)

Initial Codes: Topic Emerging/New from Survey

“Success”

- The delta between resources available and NOT across varying library types may not be solely related to assumed advantages (size, staffing, budget, other resources such as specialized knowledge or networks)
- What elements might define “success” that other libraries of similar (and dis-similar) types might learn?
- Responses such as “we had no goal beyond keeping people safe” may need unpacked. Criteria for success were largely absent; no indicators defined

Initial Codes: Sub-code Emerging/New from Survey

“Violence”

- “Protests” were consistently included in the context of violence
 - What kinds of protests? Are all protests violent? Directed at the library? Or in the community?
 - Survey design revision for future; unpacking in CERs
- How might we understand what “violence” types that library staff are facing (including with weapons or without; against staff or in the community; what types and forms)?
 - Respondents describe bomb threats, gun violence, verbal altercations that escalated to physical, threats made against staff, domestic violence incidents and others
- Threats against library staff & libraries beyond “bomb threat”
 - What is the relationship between violence against library and its staff (e.g., an email threat to do harm) and partnerships (implications, e.g., in police response, sharing incident reports across agencies to identify the threat pattern)
 - What policies, procedures, and communication plans are in place when libraries are threatened?
 - What is the scope and nature of public safety partnerships in these events (e.g., school district, park district lock-downs, mental health supports, etc.)



Initial Codes: Sub-codes Emerging/New from Survey

“Library-only” and “Community-wide”

- An emergency to the library and its staff (e.g., violence against library staff, flooding at the library as a localized event with risk to materials) vs emergency in the community needs refined and distinctions made
- The conflation of these emergencies has implications for the conclusions we can draw, most significantly to “Partnership” (e.g., if it’s a flooding event due to a broken pipe at the library, no partners are needed; but if it’s a flooding event in a community, FEMA or other agencies are described)

Vignettes for CERs: *Composites* by Library and Partner Type

Note: These are *not case studies*, given it is premature to create meaningful cases. These are vignettes with example scenarios grounded in the data (e.g., of challenges, emergencies encountered, partnership processes, etc.) for the purpose of the CERs.

- Public Library
- School Library
- University Library
- Special
- Other: Responder/Partner types (firefighters, FEMA, police, etc.)



Invitation to the Data Conversation: Framing Questions

*What surprised me?
(To identify our assumptions)*

*What intrigued me or did I find most interesting?
(To identify positionality)*

*What disturbed or concerned me?
(To identify our values, beliefs, and attitudes)*

(J. Saldana 2016)



Inquires from the gaps...

- Relatively fewer number of robust responses
 - This could mean the survey instrument was over long for the amount of time respondents had
 - These may be areas we want to unpack within the CERs; or reconsider if these were critical topics to these respondents; or address the gap with another methodology (e.g., focus groups by library type in a next phase of research)
- Lack of diversity
 - *“Please describe the diversity of your user population in your own words. (Write N/A if not applicable or prefer not to answer).”*
 - The overwhelming number of white respondents
 - How respondents answered—wording, phrasing—were both vague and overly specific when describing their communities’ diversity
 - It may reflect the dominant racial make-up of the library profession, those who are in leadership roles (e.g., how many years they have worked at their location), and who were most interested in the survey topics
 - *New inquiries: “How does a library staff’s definitions of ‘diversity’ effect policy, procedures, and partnerships? Whose perspectives may not be included and what are the implications for public safety or in moments of crisis where unconscious bias informs time-critical decision-making?”*



Community Engagement Roundtables (CERs) . . .

Goal

- Discuss and build on the findings of the survey

Process

- Bring together 100 librarians and representatives of community response organizations, plus 20-25 panelists
- Conduct virtual sessions
- Focus on 3 key areas:
 - emergencies
 - scope/nature of partnerships
 - role of libraries in partnerships



Community Engagement Roundtables (CERs) . . .

Two Sets of CERs

January 2025 [dates TBD]

Group A (50 participants + 10-12 panelists)

Group B (50 participants + 10-12 panelists)

February 2025 [dates TBD]

Group A (50 participants + 10-12 panelists)

Group B (50 participants + 10-12 panelists)



Community Engagement Roundtables (CERs) . . .

Process

- Iterative process
- Activities
 - Panel presentations and responses
 - Full-group discussions
 - Small-group conversations

 - Breakout rooms
 - Online polling
 - Discussion capturing tools



Community Engagement Roundtables (CERs) . . .

Content

- January CERs - Group A and Group B
 - Understanding and making sense of the survey findings
 - Identifying gaps in library-community partnerships
- February CERs - Group A and Group B
 - Examining successes in library-community partnerships
 - Generating ideas and strategies for successful and effective collaborative partnerships





Questions?

Thank you for
your service!