Creating a Matrix for Disaster Mental Health: Building a Research Level Collection

Ardis Hanson
University of South Florida

Claudia J. Dold
University of South Florida
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The University of South Florida Library System (USF) supports collection development for the FMHI Research Library Disaster Mental Health Collection. This disaster mental health initiative is one of several initiatives to build additional collections of distinction at USF. We built a conceptual framework for the collection and its subsequent development, using these definitions and premises. Disaster should be viewed within the “all-hazards” model of emergency preparedness. In the all-hazards model, the term “disaster” is broadly defined to include “any event, real and/or perceived, which threatens the well-being of citizens.” The scope of this collection should properly include titles pertaining to the nature, causes, prevention, mitigation of, and response to, different types of disaster threats (with a particular focus on their psychosocial aspects), and to the
nature, causes (including perpetrators), prevention, mitigation of and response to mental, emotional, health-related and behavioral conditions that are associated with or arise from disaster events and their affected populations (e.g., first-responders, refugee, migration, and diaspora). The proper reach of a collection focused on these issues should include/draw content broadly from the social/behavioral and medical sciences to address such areas as services delivery, law & policy, population, health status, epidemiology (prevalence and incidence data), structural factors, and security. This suggests that criteria for discovery and inclusion of relevant titles must extend beyond those that include the specific phrase “disaster mental health.”

We believe this approach to collection development allows us to quickly target and develop collections in response to the changing nature of disaster services, particularly within a public health/mental health perspective. It also allows us to code older materials in our collection to capture the scope and depth of our collection.