

Triple Disaster: Lessons learned from Hurricane Maria, the Southern Puerto Rico Earthquakes of 2020 and COVID-19 – Transcript

Please stand by for realtime captions. Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the FDLP Academy. I hope you got your audio connected. This will be available tomorrow on our webinar in case things don't work out for you today. Good afternoon, we have another great webinar for you today. It is entitled Triple Disaster: Lessons learned from Hurricane Maria, the Southern Puerto Rico Earthquakes of 2020, and COVID-19. That is a triple threat if there ever was one. My name is Joe Paskoski I am with tech support, with us today is our longtime presenter Jane Canfield. She has presented many webinars for us and will present many more in the future. We are in the planning of them. Let me read you a little bit about Jane. Jane is the coordinator of federal government information documents at the Academy of Puerto Rico. She has 40 years of experience in the library field. She started her career as a public library and moved into school libraries and taught for six years in the American graduate school of Library information sciences and worked as the director of the library of a postsecondary vocational school and arrived at her current job in 2007. She fell in love with the world and taken on special task setting other languages and special, especially Spanish. With that, I will hand the virtual microphone over to Jane. Thank you very much, Joe. Good afternoon to everyone and welcome to triple disaster, lessons that we have learned from hurricane Maria, the southern Puerto Rico earthquakes of January 2020 and COVID-19. While our situation is distinct, I don't think it is distinct. There are other areas that have suffered multiple disasters including wildfires, hailstorms, my intent today is to simply present some of the things that happen and how we have dealt with them and I would love to see your questions and hear from you about how any of you have suffered through some of these disasters. How you have dealt with them. With that, I'm going to get started. This is a quote that I like very much from the U.S. geological survey that events such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and tornadoes and we can probably now say, 19 our natural disasters because they negatively impact society and they must be measured and understood in human related terms. I think that is the important thing here, these disasters don't occur out side of the context of how we as humans react to them could. Today I will probably be more personal and more emotional than I usually am because these events have been personal for me and for all of us. First I have some slides that are definitely personal to our situation and some resources and lessons we have learned. The first thing here is, you're not alone, disasters affect all of us. If you have not had a disaster out there, I am truly happy for you but it is entirely possible that it doesn't matter where you live, there is some version of disaster that is coming your way and of course COVID has affected the entire world. This map is from Noah, this does not include any other year, this illustrates disasters that cost over \$1 billion. I cannot even conceive \$1 billion. Each of these disasters that is highlighted here cost over \$1 billion. They are distinct. Wildfires, hailstorms, tornadoes and a whole bunch of hurricanes. These are only the disasters that cost more than \$1 billion in the past year. Puerto Rico, this is when we shut down and had a walkout for COVID. This is a cute little cartoon that showed up all over Puerto Rico and social media and it translates, Puerto Rico: three years of history: strata guide. The gas can, you needed to run your generator or car after Puerto Rico Maria and there wasn't any gasoline. The second is your grab and go back. It certainly applies to hurricanes and earthquakes. The third one is of course the famous mask illustrating COVID. I will try to put a little humor into this also wish those of you who have experience disasters will appreciate that one of the lessons we learned is keeping your sense of humor is really important. Okay, this is the morning after or some days after on September 21st. Hurricane Maria came through on the 20th. This is the fence of the University and I happen to live across the street from this fence. As you can see, it is pretty bad. This is after they had already started moving part of the debris away. Just to illustrate, this is what the day

before hurricane Maria looked like on the same street. If you have been there and then in one of the recent hurricanes or including the flooding that occurred from hurricanes that have moved inland, you probably have a good idea of what this feels like. Okay, this is damage from hurricane Maria that occurred to our branch campus library in the city of Arecibo which is on the north coast and where Maria exited. Keep this picture in my because later when you see earthquake damage, you're going to go, wow, they really look a lot alike. We actually make jokes that we are not really sure how FEMA is distinguishing between leftover damage from hurricane Maria and damage that happened with the earthquakes. So, this was damage to our branch campus library and basically, the windows flew in and the damage was as you can see, pretty extensive. I can report that they are now repaired and have all the books on the shelf and are actually been given partial library service. We do manage to recover from these things. This is one guide I found, this was a NIST publication. They came to look at the effects of how things could be changed not just for Puerto Rico but for other places in the future. It is a very interesting report. It is worth calling up and taking a look at. This is a quote from it that hurricane Maria caused severe physical damage and loss of function. I think you can relate to this. There was complete electrical outage across Puerto Rico with extensive damage to power and distribution systems. One of the light posts behind my apartment building is still sort of leaning sideways from hurricane Maria. These failures of infrastructure had cascading effects on other infrastructure systems, including water and wastewater, transportation and communications. There was near complete loss of digital communications across Puerto Rico. That lasted for about three weeks. We did not have any cell phone coverage even. If this sounds familiar and you have been in a recent wild fire, hurricane, tornado, flood that causes this effect, this report is very interesting. It draws conclusions that has information that would be interesting in any disaster situation. This is just as I said, on the left, those pictures are hurricane damage. On the right and blue, those two pictures are earthquake damage. At first glance, it is hard to see that there is any difference in the kind of damage that hurricanes and earthquakes calls. It doesn't really matter what kind of disaster you are in and I could've put pictures here of California and Nevada in the Western United States recent wildfires and I think the destruction in some areas would look even worse. It really does not matter a lot what disaster. A disaster is a disaster when it causes this kind of destruction. This is a personal photo. This is that fence you so of the University and hurricane Maria. This is myself, my husband, our neighbors, a bunch of students who were present. We were due to start classes the next day after the earthquake. January 6 is a big holiday here. January 7th at 4:30 in the morning, the earthquake occurred. A significant number of people and urged thought there hangover from three Kings Day was severe until we realized it was a major earthquake. This is us camped out across the street from where we live because two buildings next-door on either side of my apartment building were severely damaged. So, this scene of tents and chairs, people camped out, was pretty much what was normal for southern Puerto Rico for a number of weeks while we were having major aftershocks after the earthquake. In this case, you can see why because the University has a generator and they had graciously left on some of the parking lot lighting so we did not feel quite as alone. This is one of the major cities hit by the earthquake. Both of these buildings are within walking distance of the University where I work and where I live. As you can see, this is a downtown historic district and a number of historic buildings were severely damaged. The map is the earthquake and all of the aftershocks. We are still having close to 20 small earthquakes a day in the area. None of them that we can feel for several weeks now, which is a good thing. One of the things I really severely underestimated and never even thought about, the news media says aftershocks. You go, okay, no big deal. I have apologized to some friends from Latin America and apologized to friends from California. I had no idea. Aftershocks are like having more earthquakes. They go on for weeks, may be months. There was a second major one after the 6.4 in January. There was a 5.6 in May which re-damage buildings that had already been repaired. Here is more evidence of the damage the earthquake did. This is the Cathedral wishes in the middle of the city. An inside view

of the floor and what fell on it. There is a picture of what it looks like when it is not damaged. There is a funny story associated with this which is that because of the damage, there are still no services being held in the Cathedral. Those services are being held in the parking lot of the University across the street from where I live three times a weekend. I have never listened to religious services in my entire life. I don't know if there is a personal lesson there, it is a funny story. This Cathedral is still not open. It is still closed because of the severe damage. The other building here is the legal aid clinic of the University. This post out front used to be an electric post. That just snapped off and fell during the earthquake. If you're thinking this is bad, the damage in Haiti from the morrow or recent earthquake is worse. None of us in the United States are immune to experiencing this. This is a main library campus. Think back to the picture of the Arcibo ranch damage. That was hurricane damage. This is earthquake damage to the main library. This is just three shots. When I took these, the security personnel very shortly after the earthquake, they were not letting us into the building yet other than to go in with supervision to pick up things that were essential for library service. When I took these, the security personnel were having us aware hard hats when we went into the building because in addition to the damage to the bookshelves, there was actual structural damage to the building. The concrete on the floor here happens to be less than a foot behind my desk in the government documents area. This is personal and any of you out there who have had this experience will understand what I am saying. Okay, then comes COVID. Earthquake in January, second earthquake in May and this was after we were essentially shut down and working from home. It is like the earthquakes and COVID were actually occurring to a certain extent during the same time period. The map here illustrates how in a two week time period, these were the cases in the United States. By the 15th of March, this is where we were. As we all know, we still are not out of our disaster and crisis with COVID. To inject a little more humor here, that is fine. This was another illustration that popped up in social media in Puerto Rico. It translates as, I am not going to the quarantine without provisions. It was put out by Facebook by various library groups because you will see the provisions are library books. This is another personal picture. I think it illustrates with what we had to deal with to personal extent. This is my son who works for a medical equipment company and the picture on the left is him at work before COVID in the picture on the right is him and his boss at work after COVID. When I found the two pictures I went okay, this illustrates really well the changes that all of us have had to deal with in our workplaces during the pandemic. These are just a few illustrations of the good things that might University have done during COVID. The first picture is a picture from Puerto Rico during the 1918 flu epidemic. It illustrates the importance of keeping your sense of humor. This was published in the newspapers here. What it says is, Spanish flu 1918. The cat was always important. Keep your sense of humor. It looks like the cat is also wearing a mask. So, keep your sense of humor, an important thing to do. The next picture is our University employees using Drive through service to distribute United States Department of agricultural food boxes. The first went to students in the second went to employees and faculty and for many of our students, those food boxes actually were almost lifesaving for their families. For others of us, it was about eating part of it and sharing out of it with other people in need. That was an important thing that they did and it was done as a service to our students and employees. Here we are, a world turned upside down. The first picture here is of employees and students distributing computers and topless that the University purchased to give our students. We have the situation of a number of first generation students, students from homes with few resources whose access to computers has been in the computer labs in campus. They are frequently using their telephones otherwise. So, this was the University saying to the students, if you don't own a computer and if you need access to be able to do class online, let us know and we will provide. On the right was the announcement of the economic aid and logical aid that have gone out to our students. There was a later distribution to faculty members also of computers and earphones and other things like smart boards to be able to teach class from home. This is another sort of fun moment. The picture on the

right is a concert in front of our theater building. Went any other circumstances has been in the beautiful and air-conditioned theater with the proper sound equipment. Because we cannot all be in the theater, this is in front of the theater and people were invited to either sit on the sidewalk or sit in their cars to listen to a concert of students and of our dance team. The picture on the left is my husband and I, we live across the street from the University. We are sitting under a tree in error masks with our hat for some protection watching the concert. It is so very different from usually this would have been a formal concert at night and there would have been a reception beforehand with food and drink. Very different but we managed to continue. I'm sure you're thinking that we managed to continue doing these things in a very different way in a very different world. We offered vaccinations on campus to students and faculty. This was the encounter of medicine and spirituality. We have numerous activities about COVID and its consequences. After the earthquake, we had numerous ones for the earthquakes as well. Those are just my slides illustrating what we have dealt with. I am pretty sure that many of you have dealt with disasters and with COVID and could come up with your own version of exactly those and all the emotions that go with them. I want to talk now about lessons we learned. I talked to my colleagues about this. There are some things that I did not write here, but there one word that came up most often in talking to my colleagues was resilience. You half to be resilient. A second one was, you need to have patience, empathy, compassion. Almost everyone also said you need to have your sense of humor. Sometimes it is just plain flat funny the things that happen after disasters. If you can make jokes about them, then you're probably going to manage to deal with them as well. Other lessons we learned, the biggest one, there is absolutely nothing in the world that actually prepares you for a disaster of the magnitude of the Category 5 hurricane and earthquake, a pandemic, a flood, a wildfire. I cannot imagine because I've been there what a category 5 hurricane is like. I cannot imagine what people in California, having to flee their homes from an advancing wildfire fear. There is nothing that actually is going to prepare you for the actual impact and you can do your best, you can think you're prepared but the reality is that nothing actually really prepares you for that kind of disaster. The second lesson, you really, really, really need a disaster policy. Ours is still in the making but it is in the making. When I first wrote this, we had a couple of paragraphs that said the federal depository library will follow the disaster policy of the University. The library disaster policy says that the library will follow the disaster policy of the University. Guess what, there's not one word in the University develop disaster policy about the library. All of that in the wake of hurricane Maria, earthquakes and COVID is in the process of being formalized and changed. If you happen to have a disaster, you really need your disaster policy in place for when you do. Those who have had a disaster know exactly what I'm talking about. Lesson three, we are supposed to be able to say that there is another depository library able to take over our functions if we cannot. The reality may be depending on your area that there may not be another library available to take over that option. After hurricane Maria, there was no functioning library in Puerto Rico, therefore no functioning depository library. And the virgin islands which has a depository library also had no functioning library. It is something that I think you need to think about including in your disaster policy. What can we do on an emergency basis to provide some sort of service even if there is no other library available to take over? Okay here we are. Lesson four. You need in your disaster policy to be able to define, what are the emergencies in your areas? Maybe hurricane is not one of them but a tornado is. Maybe a hurricane is not one of them but a snowstorm is. Maybe you have never had an earthquake but you are in an area that is prone to flooding and landslides. You need to define and I don't think none of us, maybe the biologists anticipated that COVID might occur but I'm pretty sure the rest of us did not. You need within your disaster policy to try to anticipate what kinds of things may occur in your area and incorporate them. One of the things we learned is, you can't just say in the event of a hurricane we will do the following. There is a very big difference between a category one hurricane in a category 5 hurricane. There is a big difference between a 6.4 earthquake, which is what we had. And a 7.2

earthquake which is what Haiti had. Your disaster policy needs to define , in the event of a category 1 hurricane I'm going to cover my computer, I will walk out of the library with a couple of folders and a pen drive with information about FEMA and existing resources. In a category 5 hurricane I'm going to do my best to pack as many materials into plastic boxes and I will have at least one box that I put essential materials in and make them as waterproof as possible. The level you're dealing with of a disaster will have a lot to do with how you spell out what you're going to do and when you're going to do it. Lesson five. Make very sure that your library and your university have, or if you are in a public library that your library and your town or city have disaster policies that do include the depository collection. Part of what is important is also making sure of what is covered in your insurance policy, what is not covered in your insurance policy. To consult with GPO about it before it comes too late to do so. Lesson six, how I wished I had done this before hurricane Maria and in the rush to get prepared, I did not. I just had a few handout sheets with me. Locate, download and print and I do mean print and physical format on paper, contact information for FEMA and local agencies and information about the disaster. If it is a tornado, hurricane, earthquake, have it printed in physical format and if you possibly can have multiple copies. I now have a shelf in the library with a disaster folder. That contains local agencies, FEMA information, local emergency phone numbers and it includes the fact sheets in Spanish and in English. If you have speakers of other languages, whatever languages you can find them in on hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding and COVID. Every time I have 10 of those folders on a library card that I confiscated from the library that is now at my house because we're still working from home most days. I have some of those folders on my card in case I need them. Put that same information on a USB drive. Put it in your laptop computer. Put it in your phone, put it on your tablet, put it on another USB drive so you have access outside of your library to that information. If possible, send it home with your employees so that they can make it known in their area. After hurricane Maria, my husband and I were working in our distribution center for clothing, for food, for emergency supplies and I had one handout with local phone numbers and one with FEMA information on it and I gave it out to so many people who just needed, how do I get in touch with FEMA? How do I find the local police? I kept supplementing it when the newspaper came back and print with information from the newspaper. And so now I have folders that I can just hand a person. Here is a folder, please share this with people with their neighbors and people in the shelter with you, so there is some amount of service that people need at that moment in terms of government information. And if you possibly can, have more if you can, and emergency box dock that is stored somewhere. In the emergency box, you make a list, these are publications in my collection that are physical that I consider important enough to protect as much as I possibly can against rain, flooding, tornado, earthquake, hurricane, fire. And if possible, make the box of a size that you can actually walk out of the library with yourself. If you have time, take four or five boxes. At least one. And what will go in my box are the historical documents that I have that have to do with Puerto Rico. Those are important and they would be harder to replace. Those are just some of my hints and tips and lessons learned. One that all of my colleagues also commented on was, seek medical help, physical and mental if you need it. One of the smartest things we did after we shut down from COVID and got up and running and doing virtual library service was, we got together in a meeting and we invited one of our clinical psychology professors. We said, help, we need you to come and meet with us and let us talk to you and help us cope with what we are dealing with and what we are hearing from students and from other faculty members. It was an extremely valuable thing that we did. It was helpful for us to feel like, what we are feeling after a hurricane, and earthquake and COVID is perfectly normal. In fact, she asked us all, what crazy thing are you still doing that you would never have done before? Mine was that I leave a light on in my living room that I will not turn off because I might need to escape during the next earthquake. That would probably make me certifiably crazy in other worlds. Our psychology professor admitted that she still sleeps with her keys and a flashlight around her neck at night. Several other people said they leave

their door open, nobody in their right mind leaser door open except after N earthquake. Other people commented that they were really afraid about how they were going to get food because I did not want to go out of the house to get food. All of those things that we discussed and presented what our emotional feelings were lead us to also prepare a package of material on mental health and local mental health phone numbers and facilities that can be consulted and get that out to our faculty and to our students. All of those things are wrapped up in lessons that we learned. One of my colleagues commented that one of the things we all need to do is not assume that because we have not had a disaster that we are exempt from one. She was referring specifically to that here on the island of Puerto Rico. There had not been a major hurricane since 1998. There was a feeling that somehow Puerto Rico was especially protected by God. That feeling of we are protected, this will not happen to us, it happens to other places, it prevented people from being aware. This is happening, it is going to occur and you need to be prepared. Even though my colleague put it in very specific context. That feeling of, this is not going to happen, it cannot happen to us, and never has, it is something that we all probably need to say, this disaster in the situation could happen to us. With that, I included a few resources here, not as many as I usually do but I'm about to refer you to where you can find some of those. This is the screenshot of the first slide of a disaster webinar that was presented by the U.S. national Library of medicine. It was in the 2018, so it did not cover COVID. It did cover how to be prepared and it contains excellent information and it is available in the FDLP Academy. On the transceiver www.fldp.gov webpage, there is valuable information. This is National Preparedness Month and it explains what that is. There are a number if you are on the FDLP.gov page. Safeguarding documents and valuables. That is one thing in your grab and go bag in case you need to leave, you need to have copies of your drivers license, passport, insurance papers, health insurance card, anything you may need access to if you cannot be in your home or if that gets damaged. Keeping food safe and emergency, this is a Spanish version, a fact sheet on hurricane and flood recovery. On the fdlp.gov page, there are links to valuable information about preparing for disasters. Specific information can be found at NOAA which includes the National Hurricane Center at the USGS site which covers volcanoes, water watch, earthquakes, floods, droughts, wildfires. They have real-time hazards so you can see what is happening. Around the world. The earthquake will either fascinate you or scare you to death or some combination of both. There is also within FEMA the U.S. fire administration and this was one that I do not know much about. May be some of you from the West may have more information that I do. This works from keeping America safe from fires. There is a national Library of medicine which includes numerous links to dealing with your health and mental health during disasters. There is of course FEMA which is the major response agency after a disaster occurs. And this would not be complete without the CDC which is providing much of our coronavirus information at the moment. Here is, this is all of my contact information including at this moment my cell phone. We are only in person in the library about one day a week. Hopefully by January that will change. And, just to wrap up because I'm getting close to running out of time, we will check for questions in the chat. Sometimes you just need a hug, I am sending all of you a socially distanced hug with the hope that by this time next year, we can actually hit hint GPO have a conference in person again and everybody can get together and actually hug each other. So, with that, I am finished and I will take questions that you may have. As always, if you send me an email I will actually send you the PowerPoint and you can add your own disaster slides and you're good to go. Thank you, Jane, great information. It was sad and amazing to see those Category 5. We had a small earthquake in GPO around 2011 and we thought that was a big deal. Seeing those Category 5, my gosh, unbelievable. That earthquake in Washington damaged the Washington monument. It did in the national Cathedral, I think they are still working to fix that and even the Washington Monument as well, it is a long process. But nothing you suffered there. Any questions for Jane? Don't forget on a small level that if you have a disaster and you contact GPO, sometimes we reach out and we can stop shipments and

may be do something else, if you have a problem with some kind of fire flood et cetera. I can say that GPO has been amazingly responsive with us, after all of our three disasters and wonderfully helpful. If nothing else, emotionally encouraging that we can deal with this and that we can stop shipments for a while. So, I would indeed say that if you have a disaster of any kind, do not hesitate to reach out to GPO. They will not say oh my goodness, you have to keep getting service, they will actually do their best to help you get through it. Mark has a question. How do you decide on the most important books to pack in your go box? Rarity, high use? That is a good question. It was a combination of both. And obviously in your box, you're not going to be able to put all of them. And, part of it was just things that, some were things I like and thought was important. It was a combination of things that get used and rarity. Rarity would win if I could only walk out with one box because most things that are high use, unless they are also rare, I could probably find a replacement. Thank you. Ashley, if you can put the satisfaction survey in the chat, please fill this out and also Ashley will put in links to our webinar archives, you can see some of Jane's past webinars. There are quite a few. There are several webinars there that GPO has done. We took them out before 2018 and I know you had a bunch before that. Any other questions for Jane? Let's see. Well, that was very nice of Eric to make the comment. He found messaging and reopening incredibly helpful and used it as a model for state depository in Louisiana. Thank you very much, I will pass that message on, we appreciate that. Any other questions for Jane? We have time, I am supposed to end up at 3:00. Let me go into some closing remarks here. I would like to thank Jane for another fantastic webinar. She has done so many fours and she will do many more in the future as well. We have one more webinar scheduled for September, next Wednesday, September 29th. U.S. congressional set the collection debuting. Also, do not forget to register for virtual conference coming up in the fall, October 18th through the 20th. Jane, I think you are presenting again at the conference? Actually this year I am not. Simply because we got involved in a grant with the American Library Association and I ran out of time to get anything in. This year I am not but I will be an eager participant listening to other presentations. We have some other good presentations and a keynote speaker from the Institute of Museum. It is October 18th through the 20th, we run in the afternoon so we can pick up people in all time zones. Please check that out. We have some questions coming in? We have some questions coming in. Okay, here we go, I'm sorry about that. Are there any volunteer groups to help with disaster recovery? He follows up with especially rare materials? I don't have an answer to that. I was suspect that maybe the northeast documents conservation group out of Massachusetts might be someone to contact who can put you in charge with people in your area. I know they do a tremendous amount of preservation and recovery work with documents. Let me put in a plug for our preservation librarian. Anytime you have a problem with any disaster, flooding, mold, et cetera. We will hook you up with Dave and we will have a meeting. Dave is an expert in the field and knows all of these preservation techniques. If you can put something in ask GPO, we will get in touch with David. David has done several presentations there out there on the FDLP website that are really good. We have a lot of good information on the website about preservation. Timothy said, without a power grid it seems many logistical alternatives like laptops and digital tools become less effective. Are there workarounds have become useful. The workaround for us in Puerto Rico were local a.m. radio stations including the one that belongs to the University. They were most useful in getting information out. Also, one of our local newspapers only missed one day and for about six weeks published daily and distributed free the print version of the newspaper. Also, one of our cell phone towers were basically destroyed. Once some of those got up, cell phone providers here agreed very rapidly that they made service available and it was for a couple of months free to anyone. That helped and that a cell phone is not a computer but it still can give you valuable information. At first it was quite literally, there were three a.m. radio stations and one newspaper that managed to continue functioning. We have a couple more minutes. Any last questions for Jane? This is been a fantastic webinar. There is the link in the chat. We have David and

others that can assist you in your disaster recovery preservation of depository materials. Please think about volunteering to present a webinar. It could be on anything government information or managing a depository library. Either one of those are fair game. Anything specific management or other issues related to depository catalogs. This will be well used. Disaster preparedness month which I have tried in the past to get someone from the agency to do disaster recovery. This fits in perfectly with this month. This fits perfectly with dad. Some eye-opening slides. Okay, I think I will close things out. Thank you one last time Jane for your fantastic webinar. More to come from Jane and others. Come back next Wednesday for a great webinar and sign up for our fall digital conference, should be fantastic. Thank you audience and come back to the Academy for more events and webinars and have a great rest of the day, thank you. [Event Concluded] [Event Concluded]