

Resilience in the Aftermath: School Libraries and Rebounding After Trauma

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This systematic literature review of librarians' responses to traumatic and tragic events in the school ecology curates the existing anecdotal and empirical evidence to identify gaps in the research and suggest areas for future research. Using resilience as the conceptual framework, the authors implemented a review protocol to plan, conduct, and report on the role of librarians across the profession and more specifically within the school ecology and school library environment when faced with unforeseen circumstances. Results show that while the field lacks empirical studies on the topic, information available through the popular and professional media can begin to provide some background to inform future research.

Introduction

What happens in a school library when disaster strikes? Whether the disaster is natural, such as a fire or hurricane, or man-made, such as a school shooting, the effect to library programming may be substantial, and immediate emergency response may be necessary. Often, school administrators and counselors occupy the library and disrupt planned programming. Special programs, such as therapy dog visits, may replace library instruction. The librarian may need to adapt his/her instruction to be carried out in classrooms, or even abandon lessons.

Having a structured plan in place can be the difference between confusion and orderliness in the face of disaster. It is not uncommon for public and academic libraries to develop and implement emergency plans. Yet few school librarians take this into consideration in their planning process, relying instead on school- or district-wide emergency planning which may not consider the specific needs of a library.

Trauma and tragedy have impacted schools and school libraries. In 2019 there were at least 130 incidents of gunfire on school grounds in the United States, including 32 deaths - four of these suicides - and 77 injuries (Everytown, 2019). Witnessing acts of violence can have devastating effects on students, resulting in drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, and academic difficulties (Everytown, 2019). Fires, floods and other natural disasters may also affect library services, interfere with library programming, and interrupt the provision of learning for students. For these reasons, the American Library Association (ALA) provides a LibGuide for planning and resources for effective response, assistance, and recovery (ALA, 2019).

School shootings dramatically display the response of librarians to traumatic events. For example, Yvonne Cech, librarian at Sandy Hook Elementary, and Diana Haneski, librarian at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, found themselves united in the role of survivors of mass shootings. They had known one another for over thirty years when a gunman attacked Haneski's

Parkland, Florida school. Fortunately for Haneski and her students, Cech had shared with her friend some proactive and reactive interventions based on her experience facing a similar event in her Newtown, Connecticut school. (Darville, 2018; Zezima, 2018).

Natural disasters also force librarians to plan and respond in resilient ways. The 1988 U.S. Stafford Act (FEMA, 2019) encourages state and local governments to develop disaster preparedness plans in the event of a natural catastrophe which warrants resources from the government. Traditionally, libraries in the U.S. have been considered as nonessential services in the aftermath of disasters and emergencies. However, after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, libraries began to take on new roles as citizens flocked to libraries for assistance. Librarians who were denied temporary facilities by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) pushed for change, and in 2010, FEMA revised the Stafford Act to recognize libraries as essential, which opened opportunity for provision of services in the wake of disaster (National Library of Medicine, 2019). More globally, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) also provides a manual for Disaster Preparedness and Planning as a model for risk assessment, disaster management, coping when disaster strikes, and responding to get back to normal conditions (IFLA, 2016).

This study examines anecdotal evidence and empirical research of response to trauma and tragedy in libraries, schools, and school libraries. The objective of this study was three-fold. First, is was to review available literature in books, online resources, and popular media to inform and situate future study of the role of the school librarian in the face of unplanned negative events in the school; second, to review published refereed research articles for the purpose of understanding the current state of the research, and third, to analyze and identify gaps in the research for the purpose of informing the direction of new research.

Research Questions

The researchers defined the following research questions to frame a comprehensive search strategy:

1. What evidence is available to describe the role of librarians in developing resilient response to trauma and tragedy?
2. What evidence is available to describe the role of school librarians in developing resilient response to trauma and tragedy within the school ecology?
3. What evidence is available to describe the role of school librarians in developing resilient response to trauma and tragedy within the school library environment?

Methodology

Conceptual Framework

This literature review is framed in Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) theory of resilience applied to library, school, and school library settings. Their theory outlines a framework for positive psychology, which fosters positive attitudes toward subjective experiences, individual traits, and life events through psychological interventions. The Center for the Future of Libraries (ALA, 2019) highlights resilience as an emerging trend and new framework for reflective understanding of librarians' commitment to diversity, education, engagement, equitable access, preservation, service to the public good, and social responsibility (Aldrich, 2018). Resilience is defined as "a capacity that enables people, places, and systems to **survive, adapt, and thrive**" (p. 1). Aldrich describes the response by local libraries to natural disaster and civil unrest. She highlights the essential role of librarians as activists in the face of political, economic, technological, environmental, or social

disruption to bring community members together as a catalyst for finding solutions to common problems.

Identification of Relevant Articles

To develop the search strategy, the researchers considered both the conceptual framework and the research questions. Searches were conducted using several platforms, including Google, Google Scholar, two large city public library collections, and two large public university library collections. First, search terms were extracted directly from the research questions (Table 1). Historically and geographically, school libraries and school librarians have been referenced in several ways. Therefore, these keyword searches were repeated using varied location titles (e.g. media center, learning commons) and job titles (e.g. media coordinator, media specialist, teacher librarian) until searches were exhausted and the researchers felt that they had examined all relevant information.

trauma and librarians	resilience and library or libraries
tragedy and librarians	resilience and librarian
trauma and library or libraries	
tragedy and library or libraries	
trauma and “school library” or “school libraries”	
tragedy and “school library” or “school libraries”	
trauma and “school librarian”	resilience and “school librarian”
tragedy and “school librarian”	
trauma and schools	resilience and schools
tragedy and schools	
trauma and “school ecology”	resilience and “school ecology”
tragedy and “school ecology”	
trauma and “school environment”	resilience and “school librar*”
tragedy and “school environment”	
trauma and librar*	
tragedy and librar*	
trauma informed schools	trauma sensitivity in the school library
trauma sensitive schools	trauma informed libraries
social-emotional learning	

Table 1. Search terms

Identification of relevant publications also led to more results using a snowball or chain referral sampling method by perusing the references and bibliographies. Additional searches for more work by the same author produced further relevant materials using library advanced search strategies, such as “resilience AND (author) Jamie Jones.” Use of Google advanced search options was also productive. In several cases, articles serendipitously came to light in the course of the research.

The researchers intentionally reviewed journals from the past five years (Table 2) which were strongly related to the research questions and in which school library researchers regularly publish

(Johnston & Green, 2018). This was to increase the opportunity for all relevant empirical studies to be included, and to minimize bias.

Organization	Peer Reviewed Journal
International Association of School Librarianship (IASL)	<i>School Libraries Worldwide (SLW)</i>
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)	<i>IFLA Journal</i>
American Educational Research Association (AERA)	<i>American Educational Research Journal</i>
Johns Hopkins University Press	<i>Library Trends</i>
Elsevier	<i>Library and Information Science Research</i>
Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE)	<i>Journal of Education for Library and Information Science (JELIS)</i>
American Association of School Librarians (AASL)	<i>School Library Research (SLR) (formerly School Library Media Research)</i>
American Association of School Librarians (AASL)	<i>Knowledge Quest (KQ)</i>

Table 2. Journal Review

Selection of Articles to Chart and Collate Data

The researchers defined selection criteria to determine which studies were included in the literature review (Johnston & Green, 2018). First, the topic/subject must be event specific and related to the conceptual framework and/or include a systematic approach to plan for resilience inside the library and/or within the school or school library ecology. Secondly, the date of publication was originally set to 2010-2019. However, given the dearth of rigorous research on the topic, the researchers determined the need to include mature resources which were original and fundamental to provide structure to the review. Also due to a lack of empirical studies on the topic, the researchers determined the need to include print and online media resources such as newspapers, magazines, and practitioner journals. Finally, only articles with either library or education professionals, or students as subjects were included. Studies addressing response to tragedy and traumatic events which occurred outside the environment of the library or school were excluded.

The selected articles were then sorted into categories and organized on a spreadsheet. Categories included peer-reviewed research journals (20), institutional repository (2), peer-reviewed practitioner journals (2), practitioner journals (9), practitioner blogs (2), books (6), websites (9), news (4), and a federal document (1). The authors reviewed the scholarly articles and those found in institutional repositories in detail.

Findings

Results of the research are described below by research question, moving from general libraries, to the school ecology, and then focusing on school library environments.

Research Question 1: What evidence is available to describe the role of librarians in developing resilient response to trauma and tragedy?

Halsted, Clifton, and Wilson (2014) provide a manual for libraries in crisis. They describe ways psychologists help individuals develop resilience skills, by making connections with other survivors, accepting change as an ongoing experience, maintaining a hopeful outlook, and helping people to develop personal plans of action. In the face of trauma, libraries go beyond offering access to books and other informational resources. They also provide shelter from the elements, clean drinking water, and internet access. Public libraries have played a role in helping their communities after such natural disasters as the Thomas Fire in Santa Barbara, the Camp Fire in Butte County, California and Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. Public libraries remained open during the Ferguson riots and provided support after the Orlando Night Club shootings. Fallows (2019) refers to public libraries as ‘second responders’, recognizing the importance of these community facilities during all kinds of crises. Building on this crucial role, Lloyd (2018) suggests that the public library also provides opportunities for consistency, socialization, and relationship building. Brunvand (2019) echoes the idea that public libraries not only offer physical resources but also a safe haven and a return to the ordinary. Librarian Ashley Maynor (2019) expresses her understanding of the library’s value after a community tragedy, having been a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University when the 2007 shooting occurred.

Trauma-Informed Library Transformation (TILT) is an initiative funded by the U.S. Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) with the University of Georgia School of Social Work (UGASSW) and the Athens Clarke County Library. A key goal of TILT is to create a library where trained staff can provide appropriate social support for all their patrons. Scheyett (2020) describes a trauma-informed library as a space where those affected by tragic events are aided in finding the resources they need by supportive library staff who understand the challenges of distressed patrons. Trauma informed libraries respond in positive, non-judgmental ways in an environment which conveys a message of safety and caring. The TILT project recognizes the realities of public libraries, and librarians need to expand the services available at the public library to help those citizens who are in distress or crises.

Results of an oral history project (Featherstone, Lyon, & Ruffin, 2008) and the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) show both the expected and the unusual roles of librarians during and in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and in other disasters (Table 3). These responses to trauma and tragedy demonstrate the key role that libraries and librarians play as resilient actors who provide a gathering place of support to rebuild communities.

Expected Roles	Additional Roles
Institutional supporter	Internet/computer hub
Collection manager	Community "living room" for human expression
Information disseminator	Neutral zone where controversy is left at the door

Internal planner	Provider of emergency public services when regular operations are disrupted Counseling services Food services Shelter
Community supporter	Situational awareness monitor
Government partner	Command center
Educator and trainer	Sanctuary or safe place during times of civil unrest
Information community builder	Ad hoc school Cooling or warming center Recorder to document events Project tracker

Table 3. Roles of the librarian during disaster and in the aftermath

Research Question 2: What evidence is available to describe the role of school librarians in developing resilient response to trauma and tragedy within the school ecology?

There is a large body of research that shows the negative impact of trauma and crises on student learning (Harms, Shannon-Bowen, Hanson, & Pollak, 2018; Schwabe, Joels, Roozendaal, Wolf, & Oitzl, 2012; Veltman & Browne, 2001). Whether it is ongoing exposure to negative circumstances such as abuse and neglect, homelessness, or community violence or an acute event such as a mass shooting or catastrophic hurricane, trauma disrupts children's learning and behavior.

However, there are few empirical studies of trauma-symptom reduction programs in school settings. Chemtob, Nakashima, and Hamada (2002) conducted a randomized experiment to determine whether a school-based psychosocial intervention could reduce post-disaster trauma symptoms in students who experienced a hurricane in Hawaii. Using a combination of play, expressive art, and talk, students in group or individual therapy sessions were assisted in exploring their feelings about the disaster and finding ways to overcome lingering issues. Children in the treatment group showed significant reductions in symptoms even one year later. Similarly, Berger and Gelkopf (2009) conducted a quasi-randomized controlled trial in a Sri Lanka school to reduce trauma symptoms for students exposed to a tsunami. A twelve-session structured program designed to help students build resilience and resources resulted in a significant reduction of trauma-related problems, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression. The results of these studies confirm that schools can effectively facilitate psychological recovery for students who have experienced trauma.

More than twenty years ago, Gilligan (1998) recognized schools and teachers as having a central role in supporting children experiencing adversity. Teachers can provide positive role models for students, and a lasting supportive relationship with faculty can protect students experiencing adverse events (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; McNeely & Falci, 2004). Research shows that instability negatively impacts children (Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013). Schools can act as

secure bases that provide consistency and routine. In their 2013 article on creating trauma-informed schools, Walkley and Cox suggest that supportive school libraries can advocate for changes to policies and procedures to ameliorate the experiences of trauma-affected children. The library and library professionals seem poised to fulfill these roles by providing resources for all community stakeholders.

Gray (2017) studied social workers who were involved in schools that have trauma-informed programs to better understand the advantages and difficulties of implementing policies and procedures that support students who suffer adverse childhood experiences. Three themes that emerged from Gray's work echo Gilligan (1998) and have direct implications for librarians: trauma education, building relationships, and funding. School librarians, who are experienced in selecting resources, can provide professional development resources to faculty highlighting the repercussions of trauma on the growth and education of students. School librarians who work with students at all levels and for successive years are also in a unique position to build lasting relationships with children. Finally, librarians who are responsible for selection and purchasing for the library collection can direct funding toward appropriate materials to help schools implement trauma-informed programs. They also may help principals and faculty research potential grant applications that can provide funding for development of more comprehensive school-trauma programs. Librarians can act as a conduit to bring more resources into the school to respond to traumatic events.

Examples of faculty and librarians providing support for traumatized students already exist. Taylor (2019) describes a variety of trauma-informed teaching interventions from a small school in Vermont, urban elementary schools in Denver, and state-wide policies in Pennsylvania. These interventions include non-traditional activities such as meditation, mindfulness, yoga, and art. Hutchison (2019) recommends the use of the Stop-Orient-Soothe (SOS) technique to calm students. This method teaches students to stop escalation by taking deep breaths, orient to their surroundings, and apply self-soothing behaviors. Librarians can play a central role in these initiatives. Alex Venet, a former teacher who specializes in trauma-informed practices, points out that "the school library can be a lower-stakes environment than a classroom" which may facilitate emotional learning" (as quoted in Taylor, 2019, p. 36). Dotson Davis, an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, suggests librarians become knowledgeable in the field of trauma-informed techniques and work these into existing programs in the school (Taylor, 2019). She also recommends that school librarians work with school counselors and social workers in curating a selection of books that can help students with a high number of adverse childhood experiences to learn coping strategies

Research Question 3: What evidence is available to describe the role of school librarians in developing resilient response to trauma and tragedy within the school library environment?

Not only can the school librarian take a leadership role in helping students handle the emotional aftermath of a tragedy, but they can also help develop resilient students. Doll and Doll (2010) recognize resilience as "the capacity of children to grow up to be successful, content, and competent even though they are faced with adversities like poverty, violence, illness, or neglect" (p. 1). Research suggests that resilience can help children overcome negative impacts of trauma (Masten & Barnes, 2018), and supportive environments can influence social and emotional behaviors in children (Davidson & McEwen, 2012; Doll, Zucker, & Brehm, 2004). School librarians have a special opportunity to create a supportive space which contributes to children's resilience as role models and nurturing caretakers (Doll & Doll, 2010; Gardner, 2019). Librarians are positioned to provide children with resiliency skills to surmount hardship and become successful lifelong learners (St.

Lifer, 2010). Maughan (2018) also discusses the crucial position of the school librarian in times of crises. The librarian often takes a leadership role in helping students handle the emotional aftermath of a traumatic event including providing materials to help students cope with the crisis or hosting a school-wide response in the library's physical space. Gardner (2019) suggests that librarians establish a consistently safe space, earn the trust and rapport of students by emphasizing student choice and control in their library use, and through bibliotherapy. Even the structure and policies of the library can be designed to support students as planned predictable environments with clear boundaries and explicit expectations (Taylor, 2019).

Phillips (2017) conducted interviews and an autoethnographic study with rural public and school librarians to determine the types of empathy and support they provide (or want to provide) to teens. She identified three significant roles that librarians play: information resource, instruction resource, and source of social, emotional, and psychological support. Her analysis shows that librarians already provide a significant amount of empathy and support for teens in their libraries. Philips (2017) also found that school librarians often develop a library leadership role in which they support their schools and communities through activities. These results highlight the librarian's unique position to respond to traumatic events in their school.

Steps Towards Resilience

Doll and Doll (2010) identified six academic foci that promote resilience: efficacy, self-selected learning goals, behavioral self-control, strong relationships with adults, appropriate peer relationships, and family involvement within the school. They suggest school librarians can address these foci using pedagogical techniques such as cooperative learning, literature circles, and peer tutoring to support student resilience. Periodic evaluation of resilience activities provides evidence to guide continuing development of resilience plans within the library setting (Doll & Doll, 2010).

Jones (2003a) developed the Library Ladder of Resilience to respond to challenges that teenagers face. Stemming from the fields of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and reading promotion (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001) she encourages school librarians to establish programs which promote resiliency through the protective factors of mentoring, reading, problem solving, social skills, and interests/hobbies (Jones, 2003a; 2003b; 2005). Jones (2006b) further identifies six ingredients of resiliency- bonding, boundaries, life skills, caring and support, high expectations, and participation- that should be built into the school library curriculum.

1. Social Emotional Learning and School Libraries. Himmelstein (2019) notes that libraries can contribute to a key component of resilience: social emotional learning (SEL). Libraries should foster positive relationships, integrate restorative methods, and deal with conflict and discipline issues. More concrete steps can be taken to help facilitate SEL in schools. Stevenson (2017) suggests bibliotherapy as a natural fit with SEL. Students can learn valuable lessons in empathy, emotional regulation, and other similar skills through reading books with characters handling various situations. In fact, research shows that reading fiction is correlated with higher levels of empathy and social ability (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006). Additionally, Schlosser (2019) points out that the *AASL Standards Framework for Learning* (2018) encompasses a variety of social emotional learning skills such as problem solving, growth mindset, and making meaning. These connections further highlight the role of school librarians in developing resilience in students.

2. Bibliotherapy. An obvious fit between trauma-sensitivity programs and libraries is the use of bibliotherapy. In her 2017 study of rural librarians, Phillips found that many librarians recognize the importance of having physical and electronic resources in the library about sensitive topics such as bullying and homosexuality. Catalano (2008) proposes developmental bibliotherapy as a

preventative method to help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, provide struggling students with the knowledge that they are not alone, and allow other students to develop empathy for those who are struggling. The U.S. National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) suggests a school-based multidisciplinary approach in dealing with trauma impacting children and recommends the use of books as part of any intervention in a school setting (NASP, 2015). The librarian becomes essential in curating a suitable collection of books and educating teachers in their use. Self-service resources in both paper and digital formats provide even greater access for traumatized students who might avoid interaction with staff to acquire valuable information (Conley, Ferguson, & Kumbier, 2019).

Doll and Doll (1997) discuss using bibliotherapy with children and teenagers from the perspective of a school librarian and a psychologist. They identify collaborations among mental health professionals, school librarians, and public librarians working with children and young adults as most effective. By framing a broader definition of bibliotherapy as “sharing a book or books with the intent of helping the reader deal with a personal problem” (p. 1), they recommend a partnership in which librarians identify appropriate materials while mental health professionals negotiate interaction with children and young adults experiencing severe distress. In this context, school librarians are uniquely trained in evaluation and selection of materials, reference skills, and reader guidance. Librarians also address bibliotherapy through reader’s advisory, book discussions, and book talks. Hill and Adesanya (2019) further suggest the use of properly curated books to prompt discussions among children that can help build resilience.

Jones (2003a) argues that school librarians can make a difference in the lives of teen students through services and programs which promote resiliency in adolescence by encouraging reading, developing programs, and making connections. Her foundational work on bibliotherapy, resiliency, and mental health warning signs and symptoms is followed by identification of ten problems and challenges that may be experienced by teens, and ways to bring attention to these issues. Jones introduces interactive booktalking, a new strategy that provides opportunity for dialogue and discussion to more fully meet the social needs of teen readers (Jones, 2003a; 2006a). Humphrey (2008) promotes resiliency strategies for character education using children’s literature based on lessons taught in her elementary library. She provides practical plans using picture books and intermediate novels to support developing a personal talent, finding a champion who can advise when problem solving, looking within for creative insightful solutions, using inner strengths to cope and succeed, and helping others to bring forth the compassionate spirit.

In the United States, library programs in which children read to a certified therapy animal have become a well-established success story (Kozikowski, 2018). Dog handling teams participate in education programs in schools, including children reading to dogs in the Therapy Dogs International (TDI) Tail Waggin’ Tutors program (TDI, 2020). This organization also provides the Disaster Stress Relief (DSR) dogs program, bringing comfort and consolation to people affected by disaster. In one example of response to a traumatic event, after the Newtown, Connecticut tragedy, DSR/TDI dog teams visited schools and events to bring stress relief to school children and families of victims. Therapy dog programs have proven to be so successful that they are now commonplace both in regular library programming and in the wake of disasters.

As noted above, during and after the 2018 mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, Haneski used lessons she had learned from Cech’s 2012 experience in Newtown, Connecticut (Darville, 2018; Zezima, 2018). The following interventions are collected from their combined experience (Table 4) to proactively plan for a traumatic event and reactively respond with resilience strategies. These examples are limited to the mass shooting events experienced by Cech and Haneski but demonstrate

examples of resilience planning within the library setting. As discussed in Himmelstein (2019), the librarian at Fair Haven Union in Vermont recognized the need for student support after a school shooting plot was uncovered. Librarian Ehler-Hansen worked with the school counselor and the 12th grade English students to develop lesson plans to increase empathy, to prompt conversations, to help students develop toolkits for dealing with issues, and to engage in mental health exercises.

Before Event Plan for resilience Proactive	During Event	After Event Respond with Resilience Strategies Reactive
Be aware of surroundings.	Listen carefully to coded announcements.	<i>Immediately:</i> Insist that first responders push their identification under the door.
Address security issues. Make plan for shelter.	Shepherd students into closet or equipment storage room(s).	Do not open door until absolutely certain that event has ended.
Make plan for escape.	Barricade the door with filing cabinets or media equipment carts.	<i>Later:</i> Invite school counselors to create a counselling hub in the library space. Invite therapy dogs into the library.
Build proactive planning into daily routine.	Instruct students to crouch behind media/computer equipment or paper boxes.	Create a space and time for yoga in the library.
Always carry cell phone, school radio, keys.	Cover windows with paper.	Critically evaluate the library collection for titles that may assist or impede the healing process.
Use a pouch for clothing that does not have pockets.	Turn off lights.	Gather additional nonfiction and fiction resources to support healing process.
	Text family/loved ones.	Include audiobooks, which may be more accessible to grieving survivors.
	Allow students to only text parents.	
	Do not allow students to access news or social media.	

Set aside teaching temporarily for healing and help.

Current survivors may feel a strong need to talk with survivors of previous tragedies.

Survivors of previous tragedies may arrive in person or write handwritten letters of support.

Current survivors may wish to connect to survivors of previous tragedies through formal and informal networks, such as social media.

Previous survivors may accompany current survivors to memorial services or other post-tragedy events.

Survivors may use activism to turn grief into action by lobbying legislators, testifying before Congress, public speaking, organizing a non-profit, speaking to school board, writing and publishing, or through prayer and faith.

Table 4. Interventions identified by Cech and Haneski

*Practicing school librarians should be knowledgeable of their own school and district policies and modify these interventions to suit their local requirements.

Adapted from (Darville, 2018; Zezima, 2018)

Scholarly records of responses to trauma in school libraries are sorely lacking. One librarian, Beth Patin, in her autoethnography about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, describes how she found herself without a library at Holy Cross School for Boys in the devastated Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana (Patin, 2015). Rather than accept a position outside of New Orleans, she chose to stay, pillaging books and writing grant proposals to rebuild her library. With no usable physical space and no money, she created a “cybrary” (p. 70) of online books, subscriptions, and websites. Volunteers from the American Library Association cleared and packed salvageable materials from her moldy and mildewed library stacks. With \$50,000 from the Laura Bush Foundation, the school purchased a trailer to house the library. A second grant from the Laura Bush Foundation, along with grants from other organizations raised almost half a million dollars to purchase books, furniture, equipment, software, shelving and supplies to open three temporary libraries which served as a community meeting spaces until a permanent library was opened five years after the hurricane struck.

Discussion

This investigation into resilient response to trauma and tragedy in school libraries has revealed that, while testimony exists in the form of anecdotal accounts from the popular media, empirical research of resilient response to traumatic events from the perspective of the school library is lacking. Of the twenty studies consulted which appeared in peer-reviewed journals, only two evidenced sound scholarly research for school libraries, and one consisted of practitioner discussion for school librarians. Examination of the available literature led to only one empirical study which described the aftermath of a traumatic incident and the long-term effects for a school library and one empirical study of rural school and public librarians’ role in providing empathetic services for teens. Additionally, although the researchers attempted to search for international literature, only two of the scholarly articles discovered were set in environments outside the United States.

In one example of resilient school libraries, Patin’s 2015 autoethnographic essay describes the process of rebuilding in the context of information science and community resiliency. Her examples of the adaptive capacities of the school library evidence how the community adjusted to demonstrate resiliency. In another example, a study of rural school and public librarians serving teens in southwest Georgia, USA, Phillips (2017) investigated provision of “empathetic services” through semi-structured interviews and structured video-taped autoethnographies. The seven participants included three school librarians at the middle (children age 12-15) and high (children age 15-18) school levels. She found that relationships with students, teachers, parents, and administrators were central to the school librarian experience. This echoes findings for studies of school librarians’ effect on resilience through a mentoring and collaborative role with first year teachers and new teachers in their first three years (Soulen, 2018; Soulen & Wine, 2018).

Examination of peer-reviewed practitioner journals for school librarians revealed one article which provided anecdotal evidence discussing the role of the school librarian in developing supportive relationships and safe spaces for resilient learners (Gardner, 2019). It is recommended school librarians provide a safe haven where learners who have been exposed to trauma can develop long-term, positive relationships with trusted adults. It is also advised that bibliotherapy be used not only to approach an issue or conflict, but also to develop empathy in learners who have not experienced trauma.

The international literature described two empirical studies related to resilience in libraries and schools. In the University of Toronto study (Mar et al., 2005), participants from the local community ranging in age from 17 to 57 years were assessed for empathy and social ability. Findings

show that fiction print-exposure and the tendency to become absorbed in a story positively predict measures of social ability, but non-fiction print-exposure was a negative predictor. While the Toronto study is of interest in that it describes reader empathy and social ability, it is only peripherally related to the efforts of this study in describing resilient response to traumatic events in school libraries.

More closely related to the intent of the researchers is the previously described Berger and Gelkopf 2009 study of Sri Lankan children in the aftermath of a tsunami. This study is of interest in that it describes response to intervention as a recovery effort for a specific traumatic event. Additionally, it is set in a school environment. However, this study does not mention the role of the school library or the school librarian in providing resilient response to the tsunami.

The researchers found little data to describe the events which occur in a school library and to the school library program in the wake of a disaster, either man-made or natural. How does this affect the library program that had been in place before the disaster occurred? How does this affect the role of the school librarian in providing instruction? How does the school librarian adapt the collection, programming, and instruction in the library to address post-disaster needs? These and many other questions remain unanswered as such small quantities of data have been collected to describe the role of the school librarian and the school library program in response to trauma and tragedy.

Conclusions

Taken together, these seven studies make up the bulk of scholarly research investigating resilience in school libraries as found by these researchers. The results of this literature review suggest that response to trauma in the school library is two-fold. On the one side is building resilient students and resilient school ecologies. On the other side is disaster management.

Proposed Model

To represent the school library as a buffer to traumatic and tragic events in schools, we have combined these processes into one model (Figure 1) which responds proactively and reactively to events. This model gives students the skills they need to be resilient and sets up a system to provide support. It also puts in place planning to quickly implement the needed resources to help students bounce back from adversity, creating a veritable bumper car of library programming.

Proactive Building Resilience	Event Man-made or Natural Disaster	Reactive Disaster Management
Build protective factors and resilience in student population	Community-level event (Natural disaster, civil unrest, poverty)	Event-specific response Physical resources
Emergency plan	School-level event (Shooting, suicide)	Digital resources Human/animal resources
	Individual-level event (Divorce, death, homelessness)	Resources for students Resources for teachers

Chronic Versus Acute
Events

Resources for parents and
community

Figure 1. The School Library as a Buffer

Based on this model, prior to an event, librarians should construct plans for building resilience, as well as anticipate potential traumatic events and develop emergency plans for the library response to them. Librarians need to consider the issues, challenges, and problems that their populations face; build meaningful library collections that are supportive of students; advocate for school libraries and library programming; and make/practice emergency plans for library.

The types of events that schools and librarians must consider vary widely. Traumatic events can occur at the community level, including natural disasters such as floods or tornados, civil unrest, or even the ongoing problems associated with chronic and extreme poverty. Events can occur at the school level such as school shootings or the sudden death of a student or teacher. Events can also occur at the individual level, such as when students are dealing with a tragedy in their family, parent divorce, or homelessness. Currently, librarians have been dealing with the impact of the COVID virus. Librarians should consider plans for acute events that are time-limited such as a school shooting and for chronic events that school populations may deal with year after year.

With a resilient population and proper planning, librarians may find reacting to traumatic events less difficult. In addition to having event-specific responses in place, librarians can make sure they have the physical, digital, and human/animal resources available post-trauma. Resources should be provided for students, teachers, parents, and community members. The following list contains some recommendations based on this literature review that can help librarians begin the planning process:

- Identify resources (books or otherwise) and purchase materials that are event-specific
- Maintain consistency, routine, and structure in the library
- Allow some student choice and control in the library; collaborate with students
- Teach problem solving skills and other social skills (social-emotional learning)
- Incorporate meditation/mindfulness practices, ie. Deep breathing, SOS (stop-orient-soothe)
- Incorporate yoga and art into the library
- Create a safe haven for library patrons
- Invite therapy dogs to library
- Provide mentoring, positive role models, and at least one strong relationship with an adult for at-risk students
- Provide opportunities for students to help others
- Provide physical resources (such as space in the library) and access to internet
- Build relationships with students, teachers, parents, school counselors, and school administrators

Building resilience is not disaster specific. Resilient social emotional skills create more positive responses to trauma and quicker recovery times for any population. Efforts to build resilience should be situated within a library program that has a plan to respond to traumatic events. Creating students who are more generally resilient combined with planning for specific disasters appears to be the best combination.

This model is a call to action for the school librarian. Not only do librarians need to build resilience in their student population and school ecology, but they also need to develop disaster specific management plans that can be quickly implemented in the aftermath of a negative event.

Librarians may have to rebuild physical resources while also responding to the emotional needs of students. However, school librarians are not working alone. Their work is situated within the school ecology where they share a collaborative role with teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents. When response to trauma by the school librarian begins long before the actual event, the school librarian embeds herself in a position of power within the school ecology and builds trust so that she and her library are seen as resources when called to act in a pivotal role of resilience (Patin, 2015).

Based upon this examination of available anecdotal evidence and empirical studies, gaps appear in the field of school library research related to the role of the school librarian in responding to tragedy in the school. Today’s students continue to experience traumatic events in their lives, yet very little empirical evidence exists to describe the role that school libraries and librarians play in developing resilience response to tragedy in our schools. An understanding of resilience has been developed by school mental health professionals. However, this knowledge has transferred to the school library program in only informal ways. There is a strong need for more empirically-based evidence of specific steps librarians should take to build resilience and support students recovering from traumatic incidents.

Limitations

To limit the scope, this study did not address home or inherited factors. Although efforts were made to search global literature, due to the researchers’ residence in the Southeastern United States, search results may have been influenced by geographic location of the university and public libraries, and searches in Google and Google Scholar. Due to the dearth of empirical evidence, the researchers selected to include “gray” literature in the results, which would likely influence developed conclusions.

Further Study

Initially, future research on the role of school libraries in responding to traumatic and tragic events in schools should include a collection of data to describe the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters. An oral history project following the National Library of Medicine model (Featherstone, 2008) would provide such evidence. Surveys of school librarians who have experienced traumatic events in their schools could take the form of interviews, focus groups, quantitative data collection to collate types of disasters and responses, or a combination of these. In any instance, a future research study would need to address three phases of response, with two components to each phase (Figure 2). Proactively building a resilient school ecology and emergency planning, would position the librarian in the event of a disaster to act on emergency plans and address student SEL needs resulting from the event.

Before Event	During Event	After Event
Building resilient school ecology	Patron safety	Put in place items on emergency plan
Disaster emergency planning		Addressing social emotional needs resulting from event

Figure 2. Phases of Study

Patin (2005) did not plan for a network of alumni to provide the resources she needed after Hurricane Katrina. Fortunately, they were there for her, as were the organizations who provided much-needed funding. School librarians who actively forward think to plan for patron needs, both physical and social-emotional, will be in the best position should disaster strike. We can use the lessons learned from Patin to proactively set up response contingencies for the benefit of our students.

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Together, they represent a unique perspective on resilient response to trauma and tragedy in school libraries.