Nicholas B Frederick. Living in a New Normal: How One Library and its Librarians Live in a Historical Moment, and how Those That Came Before Them Coped with Crisis. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April, 2021. 31 pages. Advisor: Ronald E. Bergquist

Libraries have encountered major crises in the past that impacted either their patrons critically, or the entire population of the countries they work in. These crises come in many forms, whether in the form of natural disasters, health crises such as epidemics or pandemics, or political events such as wars. The COVID-19 pandemic, which reached the United States in early 2020, has impacted every facet of everyday life, and libraries are included. Drawing from the past and present, this pandemic can be placed in the context of how libraries experience a crisis. A case study was performed using the Wake County North Regional Library to study the response of librarians at one specific library to tell a story about being a librarian in this historic moment, with the historical data being used to frame the interviews.

Headings:

     Public Libraries

LIVING IN A NEW NORMAL:
HOW ONE LIBRARY AND ITS LIBRARIANS LIVE IN A HISTORICAL MOMENT, AND
HOW THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE THEM COPED WITH CRISIS.

by
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Introduction

Libraries are no strangers to crises. In previous world events, whether they be environment or economic disasters, health crises, or wars, libraries needed to navigate them because they were often caught up in the impact of them. The onset of COVID-19 impacted libraries, just as it impacted all aspects of ordinary life in the United States when it arrived. As with previous moments of crises, public libraries needed to respond to this moment in order to serve their patrons. Despite the closing of physical buildings and physical libraries services, libraries are still expected to perform their duties in a digital capacity. As with previous moments, libraries needed to adapt.

But what was this adaptation like? The point of this paper is to describe a study conducted to examine the responses and workings of a singular library in the Wake County Library System. As the COVID-19 pandemic is an historic moment in the country, it's worth the effort to take a closer look at the response of one library in the midst of history.

Literature Review

Recently, libraries have become more and more involved with crises response, growing from "defenders and preservers of cultural artifacts, to becoming integral members of essential services teams in times of crisis." Even just the physical space of a library can be "an important component of resilience and rebuilding" even if the library cannot offer normal services (Flaherty, 2016). This wasn't always the case—a study conducted by Lisl Zach found that during the Swine Flu epidemic the libraries she studied, "providing risk alerts, or even links to emergency preparedness and response resources, is not a priority." Fifteen public library systems "in the fifty largest US cities" provided links to the CDC or related resources during the epidemic (Zach, 2011). This sentiments, as will be seen, are relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current COVID-19 situation is also not on its own in creating a difficult environment that libraries have to navigate; controversies surrounding then President Trump's administration combined with the social and civil unrest created by the killing of George Floyd all came together to create a difficult and partisan environment during the pandemic. One such library that had to—and still is—maneuvering the changes brought by the pandemic is the Wake County North Regional Library. The North Regional Library—NOR—is one of twenty-three libraries that makes up the large Wake County Public Library System, which is located around the Raleigh, NC area. Situated on Harps

Mill Road, it is a relatively large library within the system. According to its

Adult Services Manager, in Pre-Covid times NOR had the third highest door count and

third highest circulation of all the libraries in the system. Specifically, in 2019 the library

had 321,681 as its total door count. The Library closed its doors in the early months of

the pandemic, and before the summer instituted a curbside pickup plan for patrons, called

Books-On-The-Go. It was only in November of 2020 that the library reopened its doors

for express visits. North Regional Library's situation is not unique as far as COVID is

concerned, nor is it unique in the history of libraries and their relation to crisis. In the

backdrop of this particular instance is the history of libraries and their response to

troubling times in history.

In the next sections, two historical moments in the past—World War I and World

War II—and the response to COVID-19 in the present will be examined. The wars were

chosen alongside COVID response because COVID, just like the wars, impacted multiple

aspects of ordinary life during their duration. Within them, libraries had an important role

to play.

In War

Both World Wars were examined in the context of library response for this

project, because like COVID they were incidents that impacted multiple facets of life for

Americans and were sources of information about what was going on in the world. World

War I presented a situation for librarians to participate in national defense. Before the US

even formally entered the war in its last years, public libraries were a source of

information for what was going on across the Atlantic. Both children and adults took

advantage of this information. Books about Europe—"*Pan-Germanism, Secrets of the German War Office"*—were common picks at this time (Kimball, 2007). But how libraries functioned during World War I fundamentally changed with the advent of the Spanish Flue in 1918. Public schools closed. Libraries were used to divert the flow of children looking for books. (Kimball, 2007).

Libraries were connected to the war effort in World War II as well. According to Tamara Shaw, "within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war, the call went out for every public library to become a war information center." The Office of Civilian Defense asked for government reports to be distributed to these information centers, one of which being the San Diego Public Library. Exhibits were set up in front of the library to provide information on buying war bonds and stamps. (Shaw, 2007).

This harkens back to Zach and Flaherty's writings—libraries have a role to play in crises response. In addition to archivist being called on by then President FDR to "safeguard [American] information resources and cultural treasures," librarians helped with "civil defense preparations" and served on defense councils (Spencer, 2008) And in both world wars, librarians gathered books and shipped them to soldiers overseas, where they "boost[ed] morale, provided connections to people back home and offered technical guidance." (NPR, 2015). Much as librarians now are called to serve their country and communities in the midst of this pandemic, librarians in wartime were called to be active participants in war effort.

In the Present

It is important to lay out how libraries reacted since the US started to close in 2020 in order to give context to North Regional's response. While the responses librarians made in NOR are particular to them and their context, they exist in the wider context of how the world of libraries had to rise to the occasion. The dominating sentiment is reflected in the words of Rebekkah Smith Aldrich: "We are libraries. That doesn't change with the closure of our physical doors. Libraries are about people, those who serve and those who are served, not the buildings we normally serve from, not the physical stuff we circulate. We still ride at dawn" (Aldrich, Rebekkah Smith, 2020).

A way librarians met the challenge of the pandemic is through providing information, just like they did during the wars. This was done, according to the Library Journal, by recommending sources like the World Health Organization or the Center for Disease Control, or the National Network of Libraries of Medicine. Serving as an information source right now is crucial, as the Journal notes that "messaging from the Trump administration has been inconsistent." (2020). Furthermore, the information libraries put out about the pandemic varies, particularly information about closings and procedures. According to one study, library closings surged around the time the NBA suspended in April. Even before libraries closed, libraries in the study did provide information about the virus, and a little over half of the libraries surveyed provided information on finding reliable information about the virus (Wang, Lund, 2020). Other libraries tackled the problem of spreading information differently. The Skokie Public Library used an in-person event before closings occurred to hold an information session

called "Civic Lab Coronavirus: Distinguishing Fears from Facts." Other libraries joined with local partners; the Princeton Public Library joined with Princeton Public Schools and the Municipality of Princeton to create princeton-covid.org, "a one stop information shop for the entire community" according to Princeton Public Library executive director Jennifer Podolsky. (Shoenberger, 2020).

In some ways the COVID-19 crisis was instructional. In the first place, it taught that the digital infrastructure libraries invested in during pre-pandemic times was not just complementary to physical materials, but absolutely vital to continued operations. Libraries "spent the last two decades increasing and expanding their digital collections," and "could nimbly shift resources from print to digital and create popular original content like online story time and maker activities" (Jones, 2020). But digital resources are not all a library can offer. Writing about her experiences during the pandemic as a school librarian, Kelly Ahfield writes about "families who went out of their way to use an online catalog, search it, and place an order using a Google survey form, all in the name of borrowing a few real books." When students were given a free book for the summer, they pulled the books out of gift bags "as if it were a new smartphone." (Ahfield, 2020). These two views can co-exist, at least with these cases; while the digital infrastructure of libraries keeps them alive in a crisis where the closing of buildings and the lessening of physical contact is a necessity, it can also be true that digital resources are no total replacement of physical materials, especially when patrons crave those materials in a difficult time.

In the end, opening up again itself is a huge question. One piece on the business of reopening opens with a question many librarians are no doubt facing right now: "How do you reopen a library with no guidelines or best practices to work from?" The article discusses the approaches of various libraries, from emphasis on Personal Protective Equipment—PPE— and sanitizer, and person counts. Even beyond the question of safety are logistical questions such as, how to you bring back all the items checked in before the pandemic? (Freudenberger, 2020). Of course, how do you negotiate the tension to reopen as fast as possible? Library usage tends to increase during crises (Winston, Quinn, 2005), and the nature of COVID-19 closing down physical spaces doesn't do much for assisting with patrons' information needs and stress levels. Opening, then, can became a question each library system—or each individual library—must ask themselves at this critical time.

These observations about how libraries reacted to moments in the past and present are valuable for understanding how libraries in general react to crisis. As the more recent literature showcased in this section illustrates, there is a wealth of analysis coming out about COVID-19 and its impact on libraries. Adding to this analysis by engaging in a close study of a single library and its librarians' reactions to the crisis adds more to the scholarly conversation, while giving said conversation a human element. At its core, the story of librarians navigating this crisis is a story of humans coping with uncertain times.

Research Questions and Methods

In order to assess how the librarians at Wake County North Regional Library thought about, reacted to, or considered their place as librarians in the middle of a crisis, an interview method was used, mixed with written answers when practicality demanded. The central purpose of this interview method was to study the response of librarians at this specific library to COVID-19, to ask them questions about the purpose and function of libraries in a crisis broadly, and how they personally felt about their place in these turbulent times. To take this purpose and translate it into two research questions, the questions were:

1. How have librarians at Wake County North Regional Library responded and reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how has the library as a whole reacted?
2. How do these feelings and reactions fit into the larger story of how libraries reacted and lived through historical crises?

When considering potential responses, the following key terms and concepts emerge as important:

COVID-19/Coronavirus—the upper-respiratory infectious disease that is the central cause of the largest world pandemic since the Spanish Flu in the early 20th

century. While there are many strains of the disease around the world at this

point, collectively they will be referred to as COVID-19 or Coronavirus in this paper.

Crisis—A major world event brought about by natural disasters, political events,

or global health events. These crises can either impact the world collectively or can be

limited to a large area in a nation.

Librarian—Standard definition for an information professional who works in a

library setting. Librarian Assistants and Head Librarians are included in this definition.

This interview process operates under a Case Study frame; the aim was to study

this specific library as it relates to COVID-19 and examine how librarians within NOR

felt about their experience during the pandemic. While data about the general response of

an entire library system would be invaluable to make broad conclusions, data about a

specific library in this specific moment is valuable in a different way. The story of

COVID-19 responses is both a story of large reforms and adjustments made by entities

collectively, and a story of personal reactions, troubles, and triumphs in a turbulent time.

A case study of a specific library presents the opportunity to know how this library

existed in this time.

The benefits of this method are that specific questions can be asked to each

interviewee to find specific data, and that this data can tell a personal story about the

library and the librarians working there. Another limitation is this data will be specific to

North Regional Library, but because the goal is to tell a personal story of this library, this

could be considered a strength. However, a broader limitation of this study is that only

one library is being examined. In the pragmatic interest of time and personal resources during a pandemic, only one library was chosen. This limitation is accepted; even one library's circumstances during this historic moment are invaluable.

Population

The main population used were librarians within Wake Country North Regional Library. What was pulled from this population were interview responses. In terms of sampling, a semi-purposeful, semi-random method was used. Librarians were selected as was deemed convenient. In total five librarians were interviewed.

Data Collection

Considering the current situation with the pandemic, Zoom was used to conduct interviews. As the study went on, time and practicality demanded that written responses be used. While that undoubtably weakens the cohesiveness of the study, there is confidence that the quality of the data received is not diminished. Interview length ran around 30 minutes at most, though a maximum time of an hour and thirty minutes was allowed. When data collection finished, the data was looked over to find emergent codes within the responses.

For ethical considerations, at the beginning of each interview and before any questions were sent out, it was reaffirmed that the interviewee could opt out at any time. They were also asked if they wish to be referred to by name in this paper, referred to

anonymously, or referred to with a pseudonym. While all interviewees

responded that they didn't mind being referred by name, for posterity their names have

been changed.

Results

Once all the interviews were conducted the interviews were reviewed and answers to each question were paraphrased in a coding document. Upon investigation of the data, different themes emerged across all the responses, and these themes were turned into different codes. The three codes that emerged that encompassed the most significant themes of the interviews were Digital Success/Efficiency/Trade-offs, Essential/Non-Essential/Crisis Work, and Patrons and Expectations. Digital Success/Efficiency/Trade-offs encompassed comments relating to the library's use of digital resources to fulfill its duties during the pandemic. Essential/Non-Essential/Crisis Work encompassed comments on the broad matter of librarian work being considered non-essential or essential, and whether librarian work should be considered part of crisis response. Finally, Patrons and Expectations touched on the relationship between the librarians and their patrons during a historic moment, and the reactions and interactions with patrons.

I: Digital Success/Efficiency/Trade-offs.

A striking similarity across the interviews was the mention of Wake County's digital resources and how they fared during the pandemic. They were instrumental to the library preforming its duties once the physical building closed down. While librarians did

miss the face-to-face contact in face-to-face programming, it is undeniable that digital resources were helpful.

One line of thought that emerged from the interviews was COVID didn't force a dramatic change on libraries, but instead prompted more of a shift. "We've always been in the business of getting information out there to people," said one librarian, Carli, in response to one question. "…how we did that was different." The library couldn't use "tangible resources" anymore, and so focus was shifted to electronic resources. It was "not what we did, but the resources that we used to do it." One librarian, Sally, claims that "this pandemic has helped our system realize how important digital services are."

What also emerged along this subject was not just affirmation that digital services have been essential during the pandemic, but that many digital adjustments—moving some programs totally over to Zoom for example—may be here to stay for the long term. "We may continue to do programs via Zoom since we can have one program for everyone instead of having seven programs at each regional library," writes one librarian, Ashly, indicating that it may be in the interest of efficiency that the Wake County System consolidates programs into one, system wide programming schedule delivered through Zoom. This librarian even adds that Zoom may even be the "go-to platform" for a few of those programs. This view is concurred by North Regional's Adult Services Manager Joan, who claims that "other programs have been so successful in the virtual setting that we may continue to offer them virtually indefinitely." In fact, Jones says that the pandemic has allowed them to "expand our virtual services and digital library in ways that our funding authority would not have supported in a regular environment," which the

public "wanted for some time." The effects will likely be brought about by some programs being offered in a hybrid setting, and also because she thinks it will be some time before "anyone—patrons or librarians—are comfortable in group settings." What begins to emerge from these claims is a picture of remote librarian work as not a temporary fix, but a more permanent transformation of library work.

But despite this success and even flourishing on the digital front, the librarians missed the "old normal." "I miss those programs, those in-person programs, with the patrons, whether it be my book discussions, or my craft programs, or…health and wellness programs," says Carli. She highlights the "comaraderie" that comes with such programs. Joan supports this view; "I miss seeing people's faces! I miss storytimes! I miss in-person programs and services, and chatting with patrons about their days, their books, or helping on the computer," writes Joan. "Our connections are in danger."

"There's nothing like an in-person storytime," writes Susan. "That's really what it's all about for me." She talked about knowing the names of regulars who come multiple times a week. What there could be here then is potential friction between the advantages of remote librarianship and even the flourishing of certain programs, and the desire amongst librarians and patrons for face-to-face contact with programming.

II: Essential/Non-Essential/Crisis Work

A conversation COVID forced to the forefront of discussions about work is who constitutes an essential worker. Once businesses began to close down across the country it became important to distinguish between workers who had to continue working despite

the risk, and those worker's duties people can do without. Library work inevitably became part of this conversation. Coupled with this question is another question: can—and even should—librarians be constituted as part of crisis response? As discussed earlier, librarians have distributed information in times of crisis, but can librarians be put on the level as firefighters or health care workers during a crisis?

For the first question, some of the librarians had strong answers. "Yes," says Joan to the question of whether library work is essential. "The library offers so many resources to those who cannot get them anywhere else." She explains that the library's curbside book pickup program—Books on the Go—was started in response to patron demand, "as well as to ensure we provided access to all—whether or not we had the technology." Other librarians had different opinions. "That's a complicated question," responds Ashly. "Libraries, of course, provide information, computer access, entertainment, and joy for so many people…Because we are funded by tax dollars, we had to work on being accessible to whatever degree we could safely as soon as we could." In another case the question was answered from a definitional standpoint. Youth Services Librarian Sharon also claimed that library work was essential; "I don't feel libraries are life and death essential such as EMS, fire and police, but overall I think libraries are essential to a thriving community."

The second question—as to whether librarians constitute crisis workers—brought a similar diversity of answers. "…I felt more like a facilitator of the work. I was tangentially involved in technology aspects…and in scheduling…but that was the extent of my involvement with emergency operations," writes Joan. Some librarians at NOR

were involved in health-related responses to COVID. The librarians

interviewed described how some librarians were tasked with contact-tracing work.

Others, such as Carli, got to work at the Emergency Operations Center. Some answers

were succinct; "No," says Ashlyn in response to the crisis response question. "…although

many staff members opted to do contact tracing. Again, we were not/are not on the front

lines."

Those librarians who still worked in the physical building, as Carli described,

handled crisis work from a different perspective. They made sure their patrons had

relevant COVID resources available, such as testing locations. Carli described her work

as more "behind the scenes."

III: Patrons and Expectations

It's important to remember that while librarians are the ones who work a library,

they serve as one half of the equation for their institution. There are no libraries without

library patrons. Questions in the survey targeted the librarian's feelings about and related

to patrons in a time when patron-librarian interaction is either limited or lacking all

together.

"I am surprised, by how understand[ing] and thoughtful most of our patrons have

been. I think most of them appreciate what we have to offer and are being patient as we

slowly make changes to offering more," writes Sharon. In response to a question about

re-opening, she relates similar anxieties. "I felt we were going to have to deal with a lot

more anti-maskers than we actually have to." About patron attitudes and expectations,

Sharon writes that "for the most part they have been realistic. We get many compliments about the services we were offering and many thankful attitudes. Occasionally we would get someone grumbling about something they were unhappy with, but overall the compliments and gratefulness overwhelmed any negativity." There is the sentiment here of being nervous at what can't be directly controlled; while an individual librarian can control their own responses and safety measures to protect themselves, they can't control patrons. However, patrons for the most part appear to be grateful for the services given to them.

A mixed reaction was recorded by Ashly: "Some are grateful and appreciative while others don't want to wear a mask and are unhappy about just about everything." She also felt that patron expectations during the pandemic have been "reasonable." Joan recorded a similar sentiment; "For the most part, people are understanding. There are always a few standout patrons who are more vocal about their misgivings, such as a disagreement over our safety protocols including mask-wearing, lack of seating and time limits." However, "the vast majority of our patrons have been grateful, thankful, and appreciative of our work and efforts to remain accessible." The library received positive comments when it reopened, according to Joan, with such comments as "I'm so glad you're open!" and "It feels like coming home!" Similar sentiments are reflected by Carli; "The patrons are always very thankful that we have opened back up," and when Books On The Go services started up. Susan even found that some people felt safe in the library because of the precautions taken.

On the subject of re-opening, Susan had an interesting experience related to patron reactions. There was "a huge public pushback" against efforts to reopen. People said, "I don't feel comfortable yet coming back into the library." Susan remembers keeping tabs on Wake County's Facebook page and viewing user comments. "It's kind of an interesting roller coaster," she says, "you get the whole range of people's views on things. Some people are like, 'this is crazy that you're still closed,' and people are like 'this is crazy that you're re-opening at this point.' It's been very mixed, for sure."

Conclusions

The conclusions of this paper will be organized based on the three coding groups. There was much to discuss after data gathering finished, particularly in what the data possibly implicates for librarianship during the pandemic and after.

The research questions focused on the librarians and the library's reaction to the crisis, as well as how this experience fits into the broader context of libraries navigating through crisis. As an answer to the first question, librarians mentioned how helpful technology was, their experiences with patrons, and how they felt about their work during a period of crisis. To answer the second question, the experiences fit into the broader context of library work during a crisis; the libraries and the librarians had to respond to the times they found themselves in.

Digital Success/Efficiency/Trade-offs

That digital resources played a crucial role for North County Regional Library is self-evident. The data speaks for itself. Thanks to digital resources the library could deliver information about the pandemic, offer eBooks, and offer programs over Zoom. The data suggests that the change to digital resources predominately was less of a giant lurch into the unknown and more of a light shift. The library already had digital infrastructure to meet the demand, and it held.

It not only held, but it also thrived. Testimonies from the librarians illustrates how well digital resources did their job. Some programs may even be offered digitally indefinitely, both out of convivence—a book discussion group over Zoom only requires that a patron have Zoom and have the meeting room, rather than needing transportation, time, and the patience to drive to the physical location for a physical meeting—and to streamline. For a large library system like Wake County, it would save money and time to have single system wide programs offered over Zoom rather than individual offers from individual libraries. The success of these digital resources could be used also as proof to funding bodies for how important these resources are. Combine this with how long it may take for patrons to be comfortable to return to group programming settings—something dependent on vaccine rollout and individual preference—focus on digital programs is here to stay for a while.

However, the new focus and even reliance on digital resources may create a flashpoint for libraries in the future; what balance will there be between offering digital resources and digital programming and choosing to focus on tangible resources and in-person programming? Regardless of positive feelings about digital resources, the librarians here miss in-person programming and seeing patrons faces. Joan voiced concern over losing the connections North Regional built in the community. Digital resources are convenient and powerful, but how well do they build communities? While the pandemic may show that libraries are robust in digital capabilities, they will have to face the question of how much are the willing to rely on technology versus in-person work.

Essential Work/Non-Essential Work/Crisis Work

The question of librarianship being an essential service in communities was a pressing question before the pandemic. However, what do librarians working in the field think? Questions about this topic were included in the survey not just because the division of essential/non-essential work became a dominant discussion during COVID response, but because it is important to ask librarians what they think of their own practice in an historic moment.

The answers were mixed. Some librarians strongly claimed that yes, librarianship is essential. The resources offered by a library are important to a community. There was certainly a demand for those resources, as North Regional's curbside book pickup service Books-On-The-Go and the positive patron responses to re-opening would indicate. Other answered yes but qualified that librarianship—while essential-is not on the same level of essential as emergency services.

The responses around library work being considered crisis work were generally negative, while it was true that some librarians did work in some crisis response work. One librarian, Ashly, clarified that she does view her work as being "on the front lines." While some librarians did work either as Contact Tracers or, in Carli's case, in the Emergency Operations Center, there was the sense that they viewed this work as separate from their own librarian duties. As one of the librarians claimed, it felt more like they were facilitators of crisis work rather than crisis workers on the front lines of the pandemic. What could be implied by this is while there may be cries from certain sources—such as academia—for librarianship to be considered crisis work, librarians

themselves need to be consulted as to whether their work can or should be considered crisis work.

Patrons and Expectations.

Questions related to patrons were put into the survey in order to examine the other half of the librarian equation. It's one thing to wonder about how librarians are reacting to the pandemic, and it's another thing entirely to wonder at how their relationships with their patrons are weathering the pandemic. What the responses in this area illustrate is a mixed bag.

As expressed by the librarians, most patrons were understanding and grateful to the librarians for their work and for keeping the library open in some capacity during the pandemic. The librarians heard that gratitude on a day-to-day basis. Mixed within this positive response were the negatives. There were patrons who did not follow mask rules and disagreed with rules the library had to implement in order to work safely. Taken as a whole, the librarians had positive words to say about their communities as a whole. The negatives were there but were generally outnumbered.

Of note is the situation Susan described, of patrons pushing back against re-opening efforts. There were mixed responses to re-opening measures on the libraries Facebook page as well. This piece offers nuance to that mixed-bag response. While overall patrons were happy to see library services renewed, they were concerned for their safety, which perhaps means that the positive responses to library services to the time are

caused not only by happiness at having library services but also because there
are signs the library is trying to accommodate patron desire for self-protection in a
dangerous time.

Overall

The librarians interviewed viewed the services they offer as important during this
uncertain time, and patrons were clearly happy to receive those services. The area with
the most implications for the future of librarianship at NOR is the impact of digital
resources. Could the new reliance on resources such as Zoom for programming be here to
stay? If that is the case, what are the costs and benefits of this? One of the costs might be
harm to the connections the library fostered within its community. The next question is, is
NOR willing to risk those connections to their local community by leaning on remote
resources? The success of these resources causing higher attendance numbers makes the
question complicated. And while the librarians did see themselves as facilitators for crisis
work and information about the pandemic, the did not see themselves as on the front
lines. As this line of thought about librarianship is debated in scholarly circles, the
reactions of librarians on the ground in their communities to such a question has
importance. At least at NOR, while they saw themselves as a resource during this time,
they did not see themselves as equals to health professionals. Finally, patron response
was mixed, but overall patrons were happy to have library services in some capacity
during this time.

Future Research

While this study did dig up interesting implications for librarianship within NOR, Wake County and potentially librarianship as a whole, the scope of this study was limited. This was by design to make it a case study. The conclusions here cannot be extended to librarianship as a whole. A study that could follow this one and produce more generalizable results would be a study on the entire Wake County Library System, interviewing multiple librarians. The selection method for this study was also more purposeful than random, which means such a large study could produce more valuable data by making a more truly random sampling method.

What this paper does indicate is attention should be paid to the role digital resources continue to play during the pandemic and during a post-pandemic world. It does not follow necessarily that NOR will return to the state it was in during the "old normal." Is this case for the other libraries in the library system, or even in libraries in general? Similarly, a whole study focused on whether librarians see themselves as crisis workers could be helpful on providing more answers to the associated question.

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