

## LBSC708X

### Special Topics in LIS: Information Institutions Roles and Responses during Crises

#### Course Description

Inspired by recent challenges experienced by information institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic which forced information institutions to physically close their buildings to public, this course will introduce students to the challenges that underserved populations face during crises and how to co-create solutions to connect, learn, and innovate with their community to mitigate these challenges. In this course, students will embrace an equity lens and adopt a mindset centered around community and public service - using asset-based approaches to examine needs in underserved communities. Students will be introduced to case studies of information institutions that leveraged their community assets to meet critical needs of youth and families during crises. Students will also be able to create a pathway to reimagine services and programs offered by an information institution of their choice during crises. While this course will cover physical handling of materials/services available in information institutions during crises briefly at the end of the course, it will exclusively focus on the larger goal of reimagining services and programs to serve communities as public servants.

By the end of course, students will have the necessary skills to:

- Explain how information institutions have responded to disasters and crises in the past;
- Distinguish between being a library servant and a public servant to communities that they serve;
- Adopt an equity mindset when working with underserved communities that need the information institutions the most during crises;
- Leverage asset-based approaches to examine critical assets and needs/challenges of a community;
- Co-create solutions with and for their community by leveraging assets and mitigating challenges, and
- Create a pathway to reimagine services and programs offered by an information institution of their choice during crises.

**Prerequisite:** None

#### Required Text

There is no textbook required for this course.



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**Preferred Pronoun:**  
she/her

**Class Meets:**  
Online

**Office Hours**  
As needed

**Course Communication**  
Via Canvas and Canvas messaging system  
[elms.umd.edu](https://elms.umd.edu)

## Relevant Course Policies

### Academic Integrity

The University is an intellectual community. Its fundamental purpose is the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Like all other communities, the University can function properly only if its members adhere to clearly established goals and values. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. The Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principle of academic honesty is upheld. While all members of the University community share this responsibility, The Code of Academic Integrity is designed so that special responsibility for upholding the principle of academic honesty lies with students.

### Accessibility and Accommodations

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The University of Maryland provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals. Reasonable accommodations shall be made in a timely manner and on an individualized and flexible basis. Discrimination against individuals on the grounds of disability is prohibited. The University also strictly prohibits retaliation against persons arising in connection with the assertion of rights under this Policy.

Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS) facilitates reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals. For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact ADS at [301.314.7682](tel:301.314.7682), or [adsfrontdesk@umd.edu](mailto:adsfrontdesk@umd.edu). More information is available from the [Counseling Center](#).

**After receiving an Accommodations Letter from ADS, as a student, you are expected to meet with the course instructor online via Zoom or a student preferred video conferencing system or have a phone call, to share a copy of the Accommodations Letter via Canvas message, and to obtain their signature on the Acknowledgement of Student Request form. You and I will discuss a plan for how the accommodations will be implemented throughout the semester for the course. Specific details regarding the implementation of certain ADS approved accommodations agreed upon between you as the student and the individual course instructor must be documented on an Acknowledgment of Student Request Addendum, signed by the instructor, and submitted to ADS. You as the student are responsible for submitting the signed original forms to ADS and retaining a copy of the signed Acknowledgment of Student Request for your records. Please do this **before the second day of class.****

### Office of Civil Rights & Sexual Misconduct

This is [where](#) students who believe that they have been denied reasonable accommodations can file a complaint.

## Attendance Policy

Regular participation is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that participation must be missed due to an illness or family or personal emergencies, the policy in this class is as follows:

1. For every medically necessary delayed assignment submission, a reasonable effort should be made to notify me in advance of the due date. The notification (preferably in the form of a message through Canvas) must identify the assignment that will be delayed and the reason for the delay, and acknowledging that the

information provided is accurate.

2. If you are delayed more than TWO times consecutively (without advance notification), I may require documentation signed by a health care professional.
3. That said, please take note that I understand that this is difficult time for everyone, so please feel free to share with me if you have any personal, family, or health issues that you have to deal with and may not be able to submit assignments for an extended period of time. Together, we will map out a submission timeline for the remaining assignments.

## **Extension**

Timeliness is extremely important in graduate work, and extensions will only be available during personal or family emergencies. Students who need to request an extension should discuss the matter in advance with the instructor. If an extension is granted, the work must be submitted within the extension period to avoid grade penalties. Unexcused delays in submission of the assignments will result in a deduction of half of a letter grade for each day the assignment is late. Take note of bullet (3) above in the “*Attendance policy*” section.

Please visit <https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/policies/> for the Office of Graduate Studies’ full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

## **Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

## **Get Some Help!**

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit [tutoring.umd.edu](https://tutoring.umd.edu) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you. In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting <https://english.umd.edu/writing-programs/writing-center> and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (see [go.umd.edu/assistance](https://go.umd.edu/assistance)), and if you just need someone to talk to and/or mental health support, visit [counseling.umd.edu](https://counseling.umd.edu) or [one of the many other resources on campus](#).

Most services are free because you have already paid for it, and **everyone needs help**... all you have to do is ask for it.

## **Basic Needs Security**

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live and believe this may affect your performance in this course, please visit [go.umd.edu/basic-needs](https://go.umd.edu/basic-needs) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

## **Names/Pronouns and Self Identifications**

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to

both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit [trans.umd.edu](https://trans.umd.edu) to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

## Emergency Preparedness

Please check the University's inclement weather number (**301-405-SNOW [7669]**), which is used for inclement weather and other emergency situations. The University announces closings for snow early each day, not the night before. While local television and radio stations report on University closings, the information is not always correct. Information about the status of the campus and procedures for delayed openings and campus closings is available at <http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/>. \*University closing will likely not have an impact on our course, since we are completely online and asynchronous, however weather situations may impact our ability to login to Canvas to complete work. In such situation, get in touch with me in any way you are able to. \*

## Course Method

In order to engage various learning styles, this course will utilize various assessment methods to measure the achievement of learning objectives. It is essential that every student read the course readings, participate in class discussions actively, and complete all the assignments. Based on critical examination of course readings and asynchronous discussions, each student should develop an analytical stance concerning the issues in the course. The students are expected to question, challenge, argue, and discuss issues and topics brought forward in this course. There will be not be any mandatory synchronous meetings throughout the semester.

## Classroom Environment

As a graduate seminar, the classroom environment should be professional and respectful. Discussions should be based on course readings, lectures, and critical thinking. Remember—others may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect.

## Grades

Students' grade will be determined through performance on discussion board postings, community engaged assignments, and a final pathway report.

Learning Assessments	#	Points Each	Category Total
Discussion board postings	5	80	400
Community-engaged assignments	2	150	300
Pathway report	1	300	300
<b>Total Points:</b>			<b>1000</b>

Each component is expected to reflect the highest professional standards, and both substantive and technical quality will be considered in determining your grade for each. Thoroughness, accuracy, salience, and effective organization are required; correct English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage are expected. Adherence to

University policies on matters of intellectual integrity is also imperative. The grade range that will be used to determine the final grade for this class is:

<b>Letter grade</b>	<b>Range</b>
A	94 - 100
A-	90 – 93.9
B+	87 – 89.9
B	83 – 86.9
B-	80 – 82.9
C+	77 – 79.9
C	73 – 76.9
C-	70 – 72.9
D+	67 – 69.9
D	63 – 66.9
D-	60 – 62.0
F	0 – 59.9

## Course Schedule

<b>DAY/ DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS (SEE END OF THE SYLLABUS FOR CITATIONS)</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS DUE (AT 11.59 PM ET)</b>
<b>1 JAN 4</b>	Course overview Introductions	Read syllabus Watch introduction to course lecture	Who are you?: 1/4
<b>2 JAN 5</b>	Information institutions responses to past crises/disasters	Watch lecture Read Bishop & Veil (2013) Read Stricker (2019) Read Young (2018)	
<b>3 JAN 6</b>	Equity vs. equality	Watch lecture Read Hughes-Hassell (2020) Read Gibson et al (2020) Read Gibson et al (2017)	
<b>4 JAN 7</b>	Public servant vs. library servant mindset	Watch lecture Read United Nations (2020) Read Needham & Mangan (2014) Read Braun et al (in press)	Discussion board postings 1 on Canvas: 1 <sup>st</sup> (1/7) & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (1/10)
<b>5 JAN 8</b>	COVID-19 pandemic - An analysis on how information institutions have responded and to whom	Read Subramaniam & Braun (2020a) Read Braun & Subramaniam (2020a) Read Negron (2020) Read Peachey (2020, p. 1-9)	
<b>6 JAN 11</b>	Field guide to supporting communities during crises	Watch lecture Read Subramaniam & Braun (in press) Society of American Archivists (2019)	Discussion board postings 2 on Canvas: 1 <sup>st</sup> (1/11) & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (1/14)
<b>7 JAN 12</b>	Asset-mapping and gathering data about community	Watch lecture Read Urban Libraries Council (2016, p. 38) Read Stierholz & Fontichiaro (n.d.)	
<b>8 JAN 13</b>	Why information institutions during crises?	Watch lecture Read NLM (2020) Read Subramaniam & Braun (2021)	Discussion board postings 3 on Canvas: 1 <sup>st</sup> (1/13) & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (1/16)
<b>9 JAN 14</b>	Outcomes and evaluation that matters	Watch lecture Allen et al (2020) Hooper-Greenhill (2004) Public Libraries Association (2017)	Community-engaged assignment 1 - 1/14 (Flexible, with permission)

<b>DAY/ DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS (SEE END OF THE SYLLABUS FOR CITATIONS)</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS DUE (AT 11.59 PM ET)</b>
<b>10 JAN 15</b>	Logic model creation	Watch lecture	Discussion board postings 4 (on a collaborative Google slide deck): 1 <sup>st</sup> (1/16) & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (1/19)
<b>11 JAN 18</b>	Co-designing solutions - Part 1	Watch lecture Read Subramaniam (2016) Read Bonsignore (2020)	
<b>12 JAN 19</b>	Co-designing solutions - Part 2	Watch lecture	Community-engaged assignment 2 - 1/19 (Flexible, with permission)
<b>13 JAN 20</b>	Decision making structures during crisis	Watch lecture Read Braun & Subramaniam (2020b) Read Ackerson et al (2017)	Discussion board postings 5: 1 <sup>st</sup> (1/20) & 2 <sup>nd</sup> (1/22)
<b>14 JAN 21</b>	Guidance for handling of physical materials	Watch lecture Read ALA (2020)	
<b>15 JAN 22</b>	Finish up the course!		Pathway report: 01/22

**Note:** This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Week 1 – Who are you? (Not graded)

Using VoiceThread, create a 5-7 minute long video introduction of yourself by sharing who you are, your background, your preferred pronouns, your major and specialization (if applicable) at UMD, what you currently do, and why you are taking this course.

### Discussion board 1 – Equity vs equality

Based on your derived understanding from the readings and the lecture on how equity should manifest in terms of services and programs during crises, pick one of the programs highlighted in the articles provided (see Discussion Board for complete prompt) or a program/service that you know of or have found on your own, and reflect how equity is or is not manifested in these programs and services. Support your argument with quotes from the lectures and readings.

You must also respond to at least two of your classmates' postings. In these responses, ask substantive questions or provide comments about your peers' postings.

### Discussion board 2 – Is how we are responding showing that we are public servants or “the information institution” servants?

Based on your derived understanding from the readings and the lecture on how public servant mindset differs from library (or information institution) servant mindset, discuss why is it difficult for library (or information institution) staff to move beyond this library (or information institution) servant mindset.

You must also respond to at least two of your classmates' postings. In these responses, ask substantive questions or provide comments about your peers' postings.

### Discussion board 3 – Create an asset map

Build an asset map using the tools and examples provided in the readings. You can build an asset map for the assets that are available at the area where library/information institutions that you current work for is located, where you previously work for, or where you want to work for in the future. Or you can simply focus on a location/area that you are familiar with (i.e. your home town, your current town, etc.). It is best to sync this focus with upcoming assignments: Community engagement assignment 1 and 2, and discussion board 4. Map the organizations, businesses, individuals, spaces, education, entertainment venues, and so on that are a part of your area in an asset map.

You must also respond to at least two of your classmates' postings. In these responses, ask substantive questions or provide comments about your peers' postings.

### Community-engaged assignment 1 - Connecting with Community Connectors

Conduct a 20-30 minute short video conferencing or phone interview/chat with one community connector or potential partner of the information institutions that you are thinking of working at in the future. The goal of this interview with community connectors is to learn about community assets and needs. Pay special attention to non-dominant<sup>1</sup> communities. Some examples of questions that you may ask these community connectors are:

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<sup>1</sup> Instead of using terms like minority, diverse, or of color, I use the term non-dominant because it “...explicitly calls attention to issues of power and power relations...to describe members of differing cultural groups” (Ito, et al, 2013, p7).



- You interact with the community everyday, what are the problems you are hearing about at this very moment?
  - What interventions do you think will help solve that problem?
  - Who is working with them to solve these problems, and how?
- How can I get to know more community connectors like you that can share youth and family needs with me?
- What are you seeing as the primary needs of communities in your area during this time?
  - Follow up with what about housing, food, mental health, etc.
- Who in the community is working with the non-dominant population and what kinds of services are they providing?
- It seems like the most hard COVID hit community is the XXX community in XXX, can you tell us a bit more about the community organizations that are already working with this community? What are they doing? If none are working, why do you think this is the case?
- If I like to connect briefly with the non-dominant population, how should I go about it during this time of physical distancing?

As you select who you might talk with, consider the following:

- Who in your community can answer the types of questions such as the above?
- Who in your community is a true connector and is able to talk about the community as a whole and not just their piece of work in/for/with the community?
- Who will help you to learn something new about your community and in particular help you to think more critically and strategically about those in your community who the library doesn't serve successfully?

Use this [note taking Doc](#) (download it as a Word document) when you have the conversation and complete the Community Connector Reflection available in Canvas. Submit both of these documents via Canvas. If you have trouble finding a community connector, please let me know **as soon as possible**, and together, we can find someone for you.

#### Discussion board 4 – A plan for gathering data about the community

Now that you have learned multiple tools and techniques to gather data quickly from your community during a crisis, start creating a logic model to begin transferring what you want to learn and what remains to be learned about your community. Remember that it is not about choosing one tool or technique, but being able to use multiple tools and techniques to triangulate information about the assets available in your community. Complete one portion of a logic model (the inputs portion, using the logic model template provided in the collaborative slide deck). Logic model is a visual tool you can use to design services/activities based on outcomes and inputs. In the collaborative slide deck, copy and add one slide to the deck that includes your inputs (resources). Take one slide in the collaborative deck and add at least three inputs (resources) that you think are important in your work learning about community needs during times of crisis. In a fully developed logic model, resources also include staff, funds, space, and so on, but for this exercise, simply include only data gathering resources. As you decide on the resources, ask yourself, who might I talk with, what data might I collect information about in order to learn about community needs during crisis times? Who might I talk with that might have a different way of looking at this work than I've thought about before? You must also respond to at least two of your classmates' logic models by leaving comments in the slide deck. In these responses, ask substantive questions or provide comments about your peers' input resources - is there anything that they missed? Is there a data input there that needs more explanation on why it is there?

#### Community-engaged assignment 2 - A plan to co-design with the community

Complete the remainder of the logic model using the following [template](#) (download the template) based pm what you have learned through the asset mapping, community connector interview, and other data sources. Once the logic model has been created, plan a design session with your community using the provided [design session template](#). As we have learned, solutions during crises need to be created with the community, and not for the community. Using

the provided design session template, indicate the design goal session, length of the session, materials needed, session plan which includes introduction, design description, activity plan, etc. Submit the logic model and the design session plan. An example of a logic model and a complete design session plan is available in the [Field Guide](#) by Subramaniam & Braun (in press) (under Essential Task: Learning about Community & Co-Create with Community).

### Discussion board 5 – Decision making structures

Conduct a 15-20 minute short video conferencing or phone interview/chat with a staff from the information institutions that you are thinking of working at in the future or currently working at. Here are some examples of interview questions to determine how decision making is done during crises:

- Tell us a little bit about how your library/archives made decisions - programming, services, building, collections, etc. - during COVID-19 [prompt who made the decisions, what strategies were used to make the decisions, etc.?
- What was good or challenging about this process?
- How do you think that this process could be improved?
- If you have the power to completely restructure the way that your institution is getting things done, what would you do? What would you change?

Share the interview questions, and a short summary of what you have learned about the decision-making structures during crises. If you have trouble finding a person to interview, please let me know **as soon as possible**, and together, we can find someone for you.

You must also respond to at least two of your classmates' postings. In these responses, ask substantive questions or provide comments about your peers' postings.

### Pathway report

Using the essential tasks mentioned in the field guide to respond to crises and the readings you have done in this course, create your own pathway that will describe the role and steps that your chosen information institutions will play and take during a crisis as well as how to determine responses to community needs during crises. Select a community location that your institution will serve. This should be ideally aligned with the Community-engaged Assignment 1 and 2 and Discussion Board postings 3 & 4. The pathway must include answers to these following questions:

- Introduction - Begin with brief description of your chosen information institution – where is it? What is the serving area? Any historical information that may be useful to understand the information institution better.
- Reflection - Values of the public servant mindset that set the stage for the exploration of your community needs. Based on what you have learned from this course, why embrace the public servant mindset to serve your community?
- Essential Task 1 (Learning about your community)- What community data needs to be gathered? What tools to use? Create a quick community profile. What did you learn from the community connector that you had talked to? Who else you should talk to? Make a list of people/organizations. Map the assets to the best you can (which you can tweak from Discussion Board 3 and append to your submission). Create/update the logic model to the best you can (which you can tweak from Discussion Board 4 and Community Engaged Assignment 2).
- Essential Task 2 (Co-create with the community) – Share your plan for the co-design session (which can be tweaked from Community-engaged Assignment 2)
- Essential Task 3 (Iterate and assess with the community) – What are the outcomes that you want to assess? How would you assess it?
- Essential Task 4 (Design structures for community) – From what you know about the information institution that you have chosen, what policies or job specifications need to change?
- Reflect on the differences between responding to needs during crises and responding to everyday information needs during non-crisis times based on what you know about this information institution.

Information from the pathway is to be presented to the class in a 10-12 page typed, 1.5 spaced paper in 12 pt. type.

The rubric for the assessment of the pathway report will be posted on the Canvas site.

## READINGS

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Braun, Linda W. and Mega Subramaniam. 2020a. "Retire Those Legacy Approaches. It's Time to be Bold and Innovative." *School Library Journal* <https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=retire-those-legacy-approaches-its-time-to-be-bold-and-innovative-reimagining-libraries>

Braun, Linda W. and Mega Subramaniam, 2020b. "The Right and Wrong Way to Make Decisions in a Crisis." *School Library Journal* <https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=the-right-and-wrong-way-to-make-decisions-in-a-crisis-reimagining-public-libraries-covid>

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Stierholz & Fontichiaro (n.d.) Questions to ask of Data. Available on the course website.

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