INTRODUCTION

This is a pre-release copy of the NCLIS presentation on its Trust and Terror initiative. The narrative will be recorded and the final presentation will include an audio track that is synchronized with the slides. To see the narrative, print or view the presentation using the "Notes Pages" setting.

Address comments or questions to info@nclis.gov.

May 1, 2002

AUTHENTICATED U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION GPO

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TRUST and TERROR

New Demands for Crisis Information Dissemination and Management

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A Proposal to Expand the Role of U.S. Libraries in Crisis Information Dissemination and Management

U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

May, 2002

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In a crisis, people must have information.

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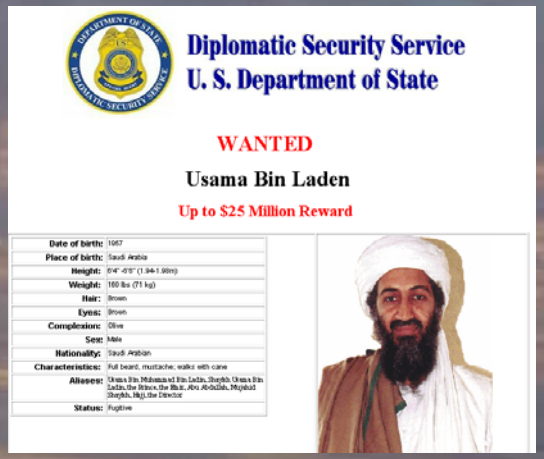
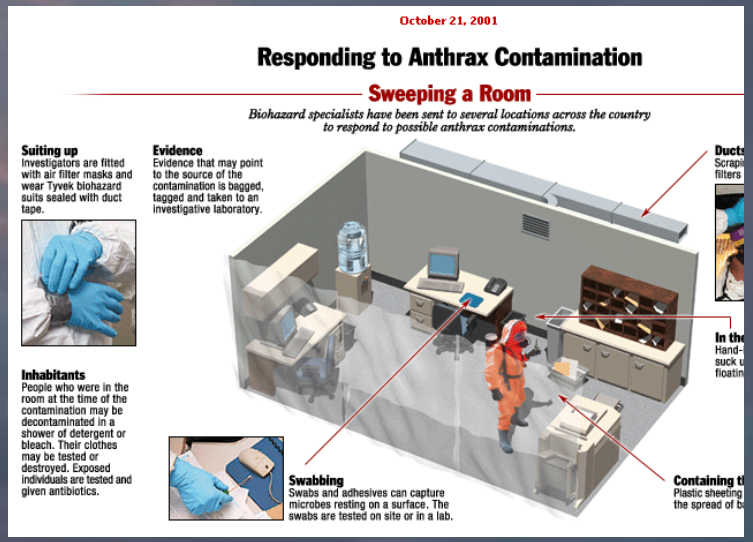
In a crisis, lack of information can be dangerous and terrifying.





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Crises create information overload:

- Official briefings.
- Around-the-clock news coverage.
- Media presentations and magazine articles.

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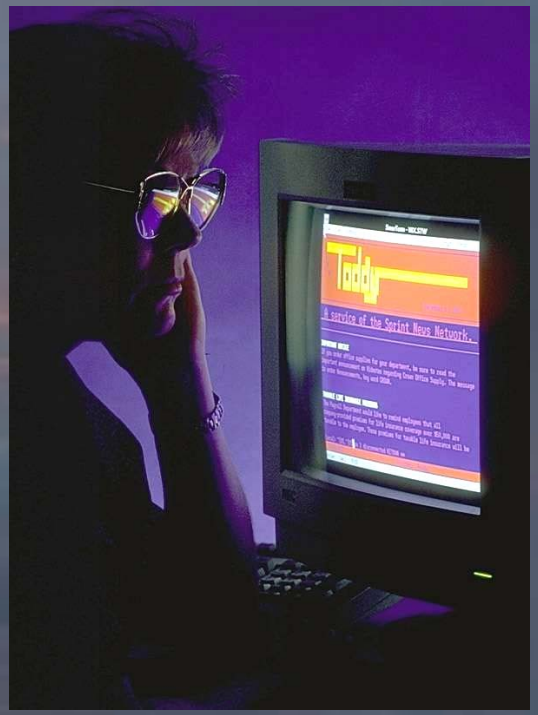
Crises create information overload:

- News analyses from varying perspectives with different conclusions.
- Misinformation, whether accidental or deliberate.
- Gossip.



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Crisis information must…

- Come from trusted and reliable sources.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CDC

American Red Cross

FEMA

- Be usefully organized and independently verified.

Searchable Casualties and Missing Persons Database

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Crisis information must…

- Communicate a sense of order control and continuity.

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Crisis information must…

- Direct people to resources needed to deal with the aftermath of the crisis.

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Crisis information must…

- Be available where and when people need it , both during and after the crisis.

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Crisis information must…

- Have global reach and local presence.
- Serve people who have different ethnic backgrounds and speak many different languages.

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Crisis information must…

- Be given context.
- Be distributed in multiple formats: in person, broadcast media, Internet, print.

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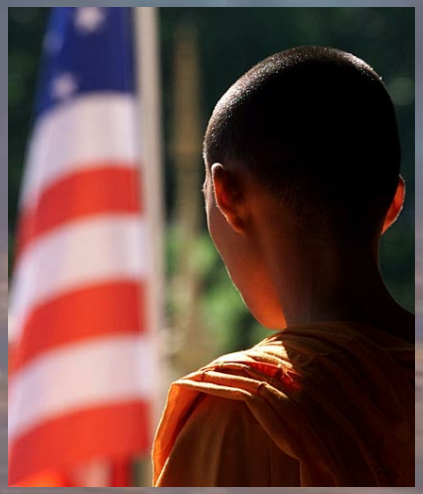
Crisis information must…

- Foster understanding, a sense of community, and hope.



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In light of recent events, the United States must mobilize a comprehensive system for effective crisis information dissemination and management.

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A new national crisis information infrastructure could potentially cost billions of dollars and take years to create, but it does not need to…

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The nation's more than 16,000 public libraries already form an extensive network of resources that can be empowered to fill this need.

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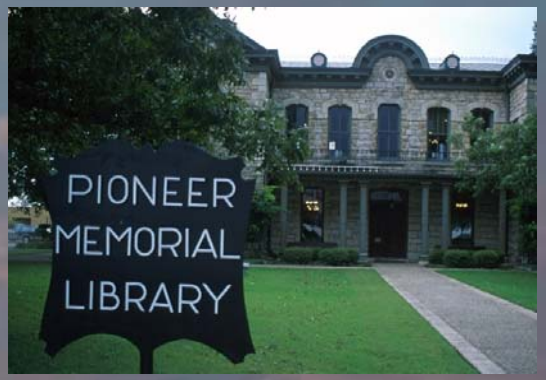
This network exists both virtually and physically. Libraries are on the network and in the neighborhood.



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An example from recent history:

After September 11th, 2002, libraries in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania—and across the nation—mounted heroic efforts to answer important questions:

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“How do I find out who is alive and who is dead?”

“Where do I go to get help?”

“What roads are closed?”

“How can I volunteer to help?”

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“How do I find out if I’ve been exposed to anthrax?”

“I need to know more about Islam.”

“Are the subways still running?”

“What do I tell my children?”

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Libraries responded quickly and effectively by:

- Building organized, accessible databases of information.

- Providing internet access and e-mail for those who needed it.

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Libraries responded by:

- Creating collections of resources related to terrorism, understanding Al-Qaida, and talking to children about trauma.

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Libraries responded by:

- Providing a familiar, neutral physical place where people could come together to learn and talk about what had happened.

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The U.S. network of public libraries is already a tremendous national resource for crisis information dissemination and management.

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Public Libraries…

- Are known as trusted and reliable places to find information.

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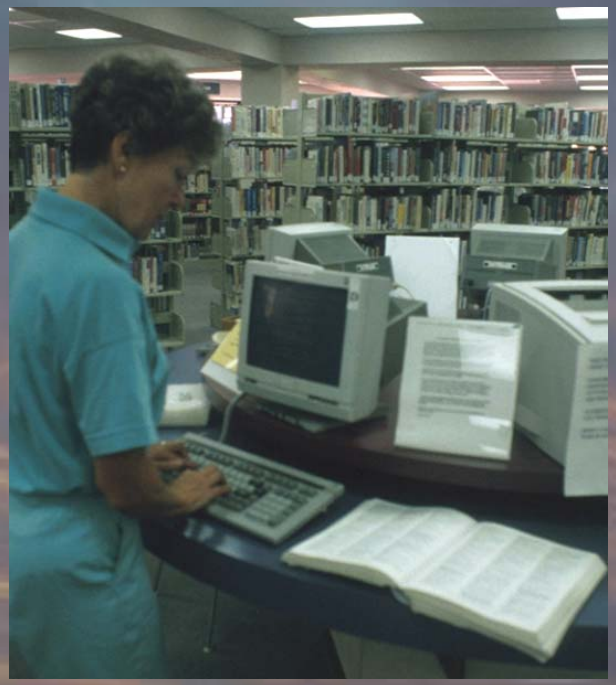
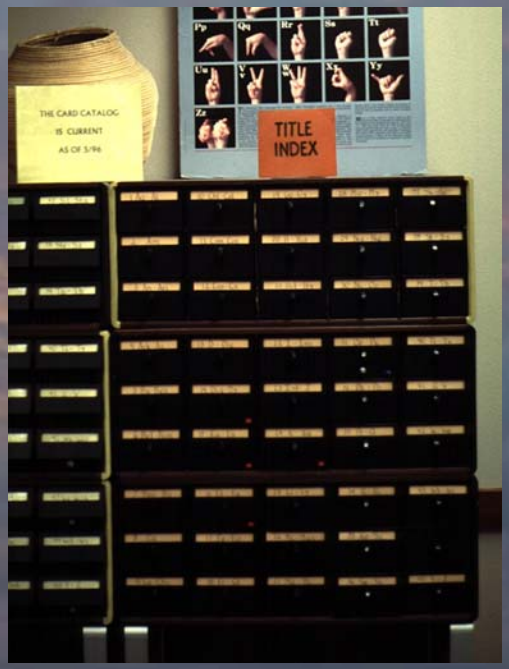
Public Libraries…

- Know how to usefully organize and verify information.





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Public Libraries…

- Can make information available where and when people need it , both during and after the crisis.

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Public Libraries…

- Have global reach and local presence.

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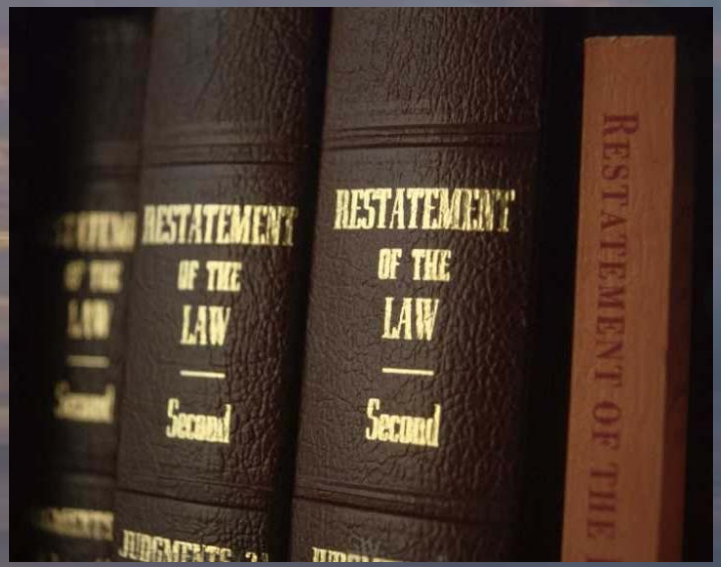
Public Libraries…

- Communicate a sense of order and of a government and community in control and continuing to serve the people.



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Public Libraries…

- Have resources to help people deal with the aftermath of a crisis.

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Public Libraries…

- Can provide context—geographical, historical, political, scientific, social—to crises.

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Public Libraries…

- Provide information in multiple formats: in person, through video and audio recordings, from the Internet, and in print.

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Public Libraries

- Serve people who have different ethnic backgrounds and speak many different languages.

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Public Libraries…

- Foster understanding through dialogue and intellectual exploration.

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Public Libraries…

- Nurture a sense of community.

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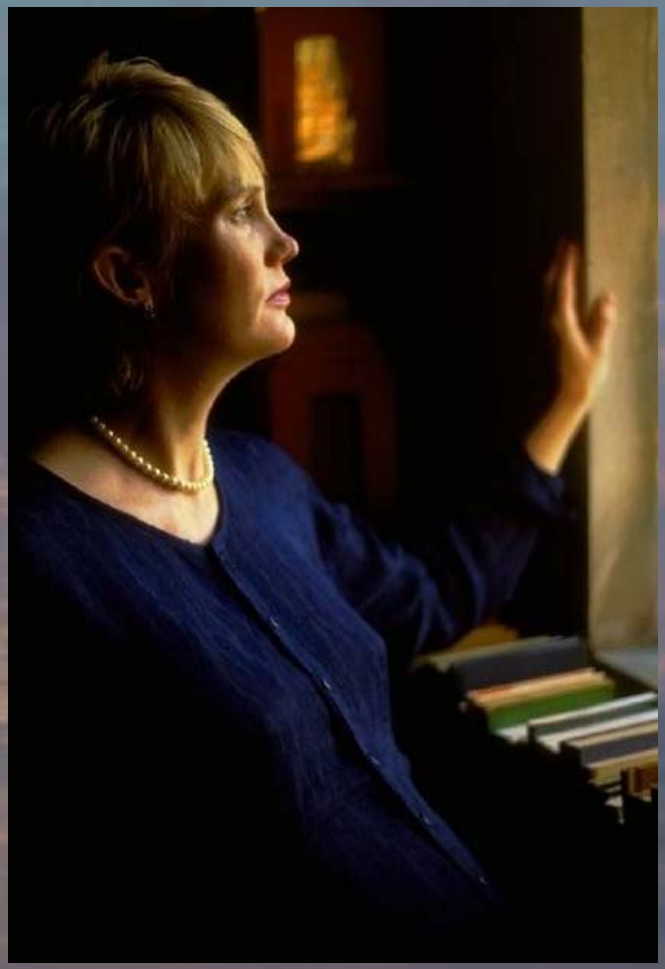
Public Libraries…

- Foster hope.



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Federal, state and local authorities must recognize and empower libraries for crisis information dissemination and management.

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What is needed:

- Government agencies must distribute essential, up-to-date information to public libraries.

- Funding from emergency sources must be allocated for libraries to remain open for extended hours during crises—even 24 hours-a-day, 7-days a week, when necessary.

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What is needed:

- Disaster preparedness planning must include libraries.
- A nationwide phone number should be created for crisis information, comparable to the “911” phone number for emergency response.

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What is needed:

- Print and broadcast media should produce and run public service announcements that direct people to libraries for crisis information—and that publicize the nationwide phone number, when one is established.

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