

Converging Academic Librarianship with a Large-Scale Transdisciplinary Research Project

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Five librarians in Research and Instructional Services at Wichita State University are co-principal investigators in the Disaster Resilience Analytics Center (DRAC), a multi-year grant-funded interdisciplinary project based at the university (See <https://www.wichita.edu/research/drac/index.php>). DRAC involves more than 20 research faculty from 10 departments across five colleges (including Geology, Physics, Sociology, Accounting, Education, and multiple Engineering departments). Project members are also collaborating with other universities and establishing partnerships with government entities, corporations, and local community organizations. The librarians and disciplinary faculty are engaged in research about natural disasters from multiple perspectives in the natural, social, and applied sciences. The aim of the project is to produce a data-rich interactive dashboard to predict future disasters and to assist communities with mitigating the effects of disasters and recovering from them.

The library team is making significant contributions to the project by drawing on the skills they have developed as liaison librarians. For example, they have provided subject-specific research consultations for DRAC-affiliated faculty and engaged in outreach to campus, community, and corporate partners. They have also provided expertise regarding preservation and access by aiding with data storage and educating project members about the institutional repository. Collection development has been another aspect of this work, and the group has purchased disaster-related resources for the library and identified datasets for research. Additionally, they have provided instruction on information literacy, citation management, and cited reference searching.

The team of librarians has also made substantial research contributions to this project. As liaison librarians, they are aware of differences in methods, language, and research practices between disciplines, and therefore are well-suited to interdisciplinary research. They also have played a crucial role in moving the Center and its various researchers toward true transdisciplinarity.¹ This has been

¹ Transdisciplinarity refers to research efforts merging across academic and non-academic, scholarly and societal actors and partnerships, see Frank, C. (2021, June 21). *Transdisciplinarity* [Organization]. Sustainability Methods Wiki. <https://sustainabilitymethods.org/index.php/Transdisciplinarity>.

important for enabling the overall group to work together as a team to address complex local and global problems. In weekly meetings, the librarians have also presented research on topics such as information-seeking behavior in relation to natural disasters, the relationship between social vulnerabilities and disasters, disaster education and literacy, and community risk assessment. In addition, they have identified systematic literature reviews of disaster measurement indices, which are important for understanding the state of the field.

Participating in the Disaster Resilience Analytics Center has provided many important professional opportunities for this team of librarians and demonstrated the value that academic librarians can bring to interdisciplinary university initiatives.

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Disaster Resilience Analytics Center (DRAC) Website (under construction):

<https://www.wichita.edu/research/drac/index.php>

Convergence Sciences Initiative https://www.wichita.edu/academics/convergence_sciences/index.php

News Description: https://www.wichita.edu/about/wsunews/news/2020/10-oct/DigitalTransformation_3.php

2020 Awardees - https://www.wichita.edu/academics/convergence_sciences/2020_awardees.php
