

# Challenges in Managing Public Library Services Aimed at Ensuring the Well-being of Society in the Context of Emergency Situations

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**Abstract.** *The paper analyses the challenges of managing public library services in the context of emergencies in order to sustain public library services and thus contribute to the well-being of society. This is done by answering the following questions: What challenges can be identified in managing*

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*public library services in emergencies? Are public libraries resilient in emergency situations? What are the main enabling and limiting factors influencing the management of public library services to ensure public welfare in such situations? Understanding the enabling and limiting factors can help to ensure the resilience of public libraries to emergency situations and support public well-being in such situations. For the empirical research the mixed methods approach is applied by conducting quantitative survey of public libraries' staff and qualitative interviews with library managers and experts in the field of emergency situations, working in public libraries in municipalities of Kaunas and Šiauliai counties (15 municipalities). The research sample consists of 620 respondents in the quantitative study and 12 informants in the qualitative study. The empirical research has revealed that while libraries face a multitude of challenges, they are among the most resilient organizations for emergencies. Key enabling factors were identified that influence the management of public library services to ensure societal well-being during emergency situations: cross-sectoral and cross-institutional collaboration, social networks, empowering leadership, long-term strategic planning, innovativeness, knowledge and competence development, financial stability, technology development, human resource management and performance management, strategic and psychological resilience, crisis resilience and comprehensive emergency preparedness, accessibility and dissemination of information. The identified main restricting factors are: lack of resilience, inappropriate leadership, lack of funding, lack of strategy, limited human resources and their digital literacy. The implementation of enabling factors and elimination of restrictions is inseparable from the effective management of public library services in emergency situations to ensure the provision of services necessary for the well-being of society.*

**Keywords:** public library, public services, well-being, service management, emergency, social welfare, resilience.

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## Introduction

Public libraries, like other public institutions, during the last several years have been operating in the face of crises and emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, immigration, the threat of war, etc., and at the same time have been trying to provide services geared towards the well-being of society as a whole and its individual members. Public libraries are open and accessible institutions, offering free of charge informational, cultural and educational services, and in comparison to other public institutions, have even wider field of responsibility in ensuring the social well-being of society in the context of recent global emergencies. Creating conditions for the client to “be happy and feel good” in the library services environment, especially in the context of emergency situations, is one of the most important aspects of organization's management (Moc, 2023).

The challenges of managing public library services were first highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when libraries in most countries around the world were closed to physical user visits. With no experience of operating in a pandemic situation, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, the American Library Association, the European Library Association, other international and national library associations, national libraries have taken the initiative to rapidly collect, compile

and disseminate information on the decisions taken in different countries on library operations to ensure the maximum protection of users, staff and information resources during emergency situations. According to Kulikauskienė and Šaparnienė (2022), libraries and especially public libraries as open and accessible organizations and centers of attraction for the communities in which they are located, contribute to the well-being of society by providing free informational, cultural and educational services, and are in a position of strength in crisis situations, such as natural disasters, outbreaks of infectious diseases, etc. In crisis situations it is particularly important to use the informational resources available at public libraries. Also, public libraries' potential might be used to strengthen the media and information literacy, critical thinking competences, and resilience to information threats of the population, which are necessary for the successful functioning in society during emergencies and crisis situations (Culture 2030, 2019).

Library services and their management during emergencies<sup>1</sup> and crisis<sup>2</sup> are analyzed by both foreign and Lithuanian researchers. Recent works of foreign authors (Stricker, 2019; Wertman et al., 2018; Marker, 2020; Young et al., 2021, Young, 2018) show the scale of the problem, noting that although libraries become a society's shelter in an emergency situation, their work is not regulated, which complicates the management of libraries in such situations. Yang and Boryung (2021) raises the issue of accessibility and provision of library services during emergencies, as in 2011 the US Federal Emergency Management Agency recognized libraries as key organizations for community well-being and allowed them to operate under a public assistance program. While analyzing the management of library services in crisis situations Yang and Boryung (2021) highlighted the following shortcomings: lack of collaboration between libraries and governmental and nongovernmental organizations, inactive social networking, and inadequate information dissemination. Similar problems were highlighted by Han (2019), who stressed the unpreparedness of libraries to provide appropriate and necessary information during emergencies through social networks, and thus to inform the public on relevant issues. Standal (2020) noted that library management in emergencies is regulated, but not actually operational, as only 22% of libraries have realistic plans on how to act in an emergency, how to ensure service delivery and how it should be managed. Tu-Keefner (2020) points out that during emergency, a library with a realistic plan is unable to implement it because of the unpreparedness of its staff to respond to an emergency, and that library governance must therefore go beyond the creation of plans and legal regulations and to include the preparation of the library itself and its staff to deal with the emergency. Yelvington (2020) identifies the rigidity of management plans as a major weakness in library emergency management.

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<sup>1</sup> Emergency - a situation resulting from an emergency event that is likely to cause sudden and serious danger to the life or health of the population, to property, to the environment or to cause other damage. An emergency is a specific legal situation that comes into force only after a decision to declare it.

<sup>2</sup> A crisis is a sudden, critical situation, usually triggered by a sudden adverse event or problem; may be part of a specific emergency.

According to the author, the COVID-19 pandemic was a new experience for libraries, revealing their unpreparedness to properly manage their services in the face of a new crisis situation, highlighting a lack of resilience, creativity and flexibility. Lithuanian researchers, working in this field (Bortkevičiūtė et al., 2021; Kuokštis, 2020; Telešienė, Balžekienė, Budužytė, Zolubienė, 2021; Kulikauskienė, Šaparnienė, 2022; Janavičienė, 2019, etc.) also highlight the need of effective public libraries' service management in emergency and crisis situations, putting emphasis on the recent emergencies that had an impact to public libraries, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis of the above mentioned scientific literature has shown that there is a lack of systematic integrated research on this topic. The management of organization's services is particularly relevant topic in this changing social, economic and political context, in the era of global pandemics and climate change, where emergencies are becoming a "new reality," both nationally and internationally. It is therefore evident that there is a need for research that identifies and summarizes the challenges of managing public library services in the context of emergencies, and that the need for such research is likely to increase in the future, as public libraries are one of the main organizations that can contribute to the well-being of society as centers of community information, culture and leisure. This paper seeks to address this need by answering the following questions: What challenges can be identified in managing public library services in emergencies? Are public libraries resilient in emergency situations? What are the main enabling and limiting factors influencing the management of public library services in order to contribute to the well-being of society?

Thus, the **aim** of this paper is to highlight the challenges of public library service management in the context of emergencies and to identify the main enabling and restricting factors influencing the management of public library services to ensure societal well-being during emergency situations. The public libraries of Kaunas and Šiauliai counties were chosen as the case study.

The empirical research is conducted by applying mixed methods approach with parallel design by combining quantitative survey of public libraries' staff (620 respondents) and qualitative interviews with library managers (6 managers) and experts (6 experts) in the field of emergency situations, working in public libraries. The case of public libraries of Kaunas and Šiauliai counties' municipalities (15 libraries) is presented in the study. The data gathered by quantitative survey is analyzed by applying descriptive statistics method, the data collected by interviews is analyzed by applying qualitative methods of categorizing, describing and interpreting.

The analysis presented in this paper gives an opportunity to assess the services provided by public libraries and their management in the context of emergencies from theoretical and empirical perspectives. The results of the empirical study may be significant for library managers seeking to improve library services in emergency situations, as well as to draw the attention of the public, the government, and the responsible authorities to the importance of public libraries' services oriented towards

the public well-being. Public libraries' services must be efficiently managed, thoroughly planned, implemented and continuously evaluated, so they could fully meet the expectations of the largest possible part of society in emergency situations.

## Literature Review

### *The Concept of the Management of Public Library Services aimed at ensuring the Well-being of Society*

Global events in the recent years have shown that the world is changing and various dangers arise unexpectedly. The years 2020–2022 will go down in the world history as a period when the COVID-19 pandemic, migration and the threat of war forced many countries, including Lithuania, to impose a state of emergency, during which various activities were restricted. The analysis of scientific literature (Lund, Wang, 2020; Walkley, Garner, Wakeling, 2021; Kulikauskienė, Šaparnienė, 2022, etc.) has revealed that emergencies inevitably lead to the challenges in the management of the public library services, which are focused on meeting the cultural, informational, educational, social, etc. needs of the society, and thus contributing to its well-being. From this point of view, the well-being of society can be understood as the fulfillment of various members' needs. Among these, public libraries are able to fulfill cultural, informational, educational, and social needs (Lund, Wang, 2020; Kulikauskienė, Šaparnienė, 2020). These challenges are particularly relevant in the face of pandemics, social and economic crisis, immigration and the threat of war, when the various activity restrictions imposed during emergencies are leading to changes in the management of library services.

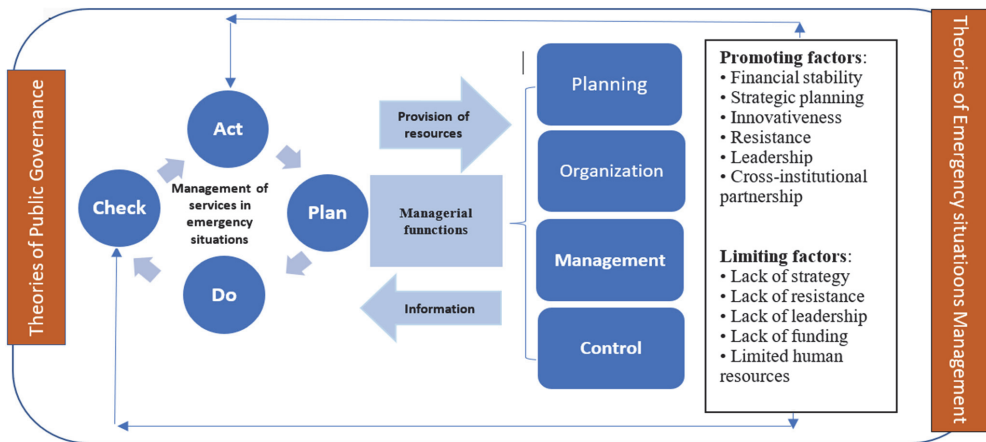
The aspects of planning, organization, management and control are highlighted in public management theories (Biswas, 2020; El-Ghalayini, 2017; Moc, 2023), which can also be applied to the concept of management of organizational services during emergencies. In service management, adequate preparedness to respond to crisis situations requires planning how best to mitigate (reduce), prepare, respond (react) to and recover from anticipated or unexpected events, disasters and catastrophes. The theoretical analysis of the recent research, oriented towards the management of public library services in the context of emergencies (Pitrėnaitė, 2009; Survila, Valickas, 2015; Matthews, 2019; Vivarelli, 2019), leads to the development of a theoretical model for the management of public library services in the context of emergencies (see Fig. 1). This theoretical model reflects the main challenges of the present time – to continuously improve the management of public library services in the context of emergencies, and thus to ensure the delivery of services relevant to society's well-being.

The basis of this model is grounded on the idea that the head of each public library should properly organize the functioning of the classical management functions (i.e. planning, organization, management and control) to ensure the management of public library services in emergencies, which is influenced by the following enabling/

promoting (financial stability, strategic planning, inter-institutional collaboration, innovativeness, leadership, etc.) and restricting/limiting factors (lack of strategy, lack of resilience, lack of leadership, limited human resources, etc.), which are evident in crisis situations (Pitrėnaitė, 2009; Survila, Valickas, 2015; Matthews, 2019; Vivarelli, 2019; Liukinevičienė, Kuodytė, 2021).

**Figure 1**

*Theoretical model for Managing Public Library Services in the Context of Emergencies*



Sources: compiled by the authors, based on Matthews (2019), Vivarelli (2019), Survila, Valickas (2015), Pitrėnaitė (2009)

At the **planning phase**, action plans should be prepared, identifying the activities that the public library will carry out during emergency (introducing new services, improving existing ones, developing collaboration), providing the resources necessary for the implementation of these activities (material, financial, human resources and the sufficiency of their competences for the implementation of the planned activities), the means, the time frame for the implementation of the activities, and the results to be obtained. The planning phase includes the establishment of a risk management plan, the monitoring of threats, the forecasting and prevention of emergencies, and the anticipation of long-term and short-term perspectives for activities (strategic planning) (Pitrėnaitė, 2009; Veil, Bradley, 2014; Survila, Valickas, 2015; Jabbar, Hussein, 2017; Carrillo, Gregory, 2019; Vivarelli, 2019; Miglinė, 2019; Bartuševičienė, 2021; Januševičienė, 2021; Neyra, 2020; Sakalauskas, 2020). This stage should also include collaboration with various institutions and organizations whose assistance could be useful and necessary during emergencies (specialist's advice, training).

The **organization phase** (during emergency) should include actions such as the implementation of the plans and the activities foreseen in the plans (improvement of existing services, development of new services, etc.), ensuring effective management



of the resources (material, financial, human), and the development of the competences of the staff needed to operate in an emergency. This stage requires the mobilization of institutions collaborating with public libraries for joint activities, the adoption of legal procedures related to emergency management, public information, and continuous communication with all stakeholders (Pitrėnaitė, 2009; Survila, Valickas, 2015; Matthews, 2019; Vivarelli, 2019).

The management of public library services during emergencies is particularly relevant in the **management phase**, which involves mobilizing forces, assessing the current situation, threats and opportunities, making decisions, allocating tasks, leading and coordinating actions, managing human resources. It also requires enabling leadership (for the common good), the ability to combine and manage needs, challenges and change (Warfield, 2013; Bundy, 2017; Jucevičius, 2017; Matthews, 2019; Vivarelli, 2019; Bartusevičienė, 2019; Liukinevičienė, Kuodytė, 2021).

The **control phase** (assessing the emergency response) helps to evaluate the public library's preparedness, the response to the emergency situation (implemented activities, their results), analyze the risks and vulnerabilities, eliminate the consequences, reduce risks (by building resilience), and evaluate the communication process (Pitrėnaitė, 2009; Gibson, Tarrant, 2010; Survila, Valickas, 2015; Bartusevičienė, 2019; Matthews, 2019; Vivarelli, 2019; Miglinė, 2019).

One of the key elements in meeting the challenges of emergencies is the **resilience** of the public libraries. According to Misiūnas and Štangej (2020), an organization can be considered resilient when, in the context of adverse, changed conditions, it can continue to create value, contribute to the well-being of society, and recover quickly from shocks. Resilient organizations that are prepared to look for opportunities, seize chances and respond to situations will, in most cases, recover faster and have an advantage. These insights can be complemented by Gečienė and Raišienė (2019) observations that organizational resilience is influenced by such factors as technology and knowledge development, strategic planning, collaboration, human resource management, innovation and proactivity, empowering leadership, performance optimization and continuous improvement, standardized risk management procedures, financial stability, knowledge and competence development.

Taken together, this information suggests that the management of public library services in emergencies, which are geared towards meeting the needs and expectations of the society and its well-being, poses a variety of challenges in terms of planning, organization, management and control processes. The management of public library services in emergencies is strongly influenced by enabling (inter-institutional collaboration, leadership, resilience, strategic planning, financial stability, innovativeness) and restricting (lack of resilience, leadership, funding, lack of strategy, limited human resources) factors. Building resilience and readiness to meet the challenges of an emergency situation are important for the management of public library services in emergencies, as resilient organizations that are prepared to look for

opportunities, take advantage of opportunities and respond to the situation, will in most cases recover faster and have an advantage. Sustainability, survival and resilience, and the ability to act in the face of uncertainty – these challenges are now central to any organization seeking to contribute to the well-being of society.

## Research methodology

**Research methods and organization.** In order to reach the research aim, the study was conducted by applying mixed methods approach by parallelly combining quantitative survey of public libraries' staff and qualitative interviews with library managers and experts in the field of emergency situations. The survey data were collected in 2022. The selected municipalities and their public libraries for the **study** were from Kaunas county (Birštonas, Jonava, Kaišiadorys, Kaunas city, Kaunas district, Kėdainiai, Prienai, Raseiniai) and Šiauliai county (Akmenė, Joniškis, Kelmė, Pakruojis, Radviliškis, Šiauliai district, Šiauliai city). Listed municipal public libraries are regional libraries with a similar library network.

**Quantitative research.** An anonymous close type questionnaire was chosen for the quantitative survey. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, which comprised various questions, oriented towards the evaluation of the management of public libraries' services during emergencies, and aiming to find out how library managers organize and manage their services during emergencies and identify the main resilience factors of public library service management. The questionnaire was compiled by the authors, on the basis of the analysis of the scientific literature (Stricker, 2019; Wertman et al., 2018; Marker, 2020; Young et al., 2021, Young, 2018; Liukinevičienė, Kuodytė, 2021).

**Research sample.** The questionnaire was sent to **620 respondents** from public libraries. The sample size was calculated according to the Panniot formula, which, after applying a 95% probability and a 5% margin of error, would result in 238 respondents. The survey was carried out with 244 respondents from Kaunas (142 / 58.2%) and Šiauliai (102 / 41.8%) counties' municipal public libraries.

**Qualitative research.** In order to investigate the main enabling and limiting factors influencing the management of public library services in the context of emergencies and to disclose the challenges encountered in providing services, two semistructured interview questionnaires were prepared, addressed to municipal public library managers and experts in the field of emergencies. The semistructured interview questionnaires consisted of 7 guiding questions oriented towards the evaluation of the managers' and experts' opinion about the management of public libraries' services during emergencies. The questionnaires were compiled by the authors, on the basis of the analysis of the scientific literature (Young et al., 2021, Young, 2018; Liukinevičienė, Kuodytė, 2021; Walkley, Garner, Wakeling, 2021; Kulikauskienė, Šaparnienė, 2022). Responses were based on participants' personal experience and knowledge in order to gain a broader understanding of the issue under study.



*Research sample:* **6 managers** of Kaunas and Šiauliai counties' public libraries and **6 experts** from Lithuania participated in the study. The sample of experts was selected through purposive sampling, the main criterion of which was that the participant had to be an expert in emergency situations, so it was decided to interview professionals who have worked or are currently working in the process of emergency management, who are able to find answers to complex questions by applying not only their own knowledge, but who also have a great deal of professional experience and intuition.

*Data analysis.* Descriptive statistics were used to organize and summarize the results of the quantitative research. Descriptive statistics condense data into a simpler summary of percentages. The Pearson's correlation analysis was used to assess the linear statistical relationship between the variables. A p-value lower than 0.05 was considered statistically significant. The data gathered by qualitative interviews were processed by applying the method of content analysis (categorization and interpretation). The results of quantitative survey and qualitative interviews were combined during the analysis and were used to supplement each other.

*Research ethics.* The study was conducted in accordance to the ethical principles. The ethics of qualitative research were ensured by accurate data recording and maintaining participant confidentiality. Quantitative access during the study allowed for a presumption to conduct a representative survey, preserving the anonymity of research participants.

## Research results

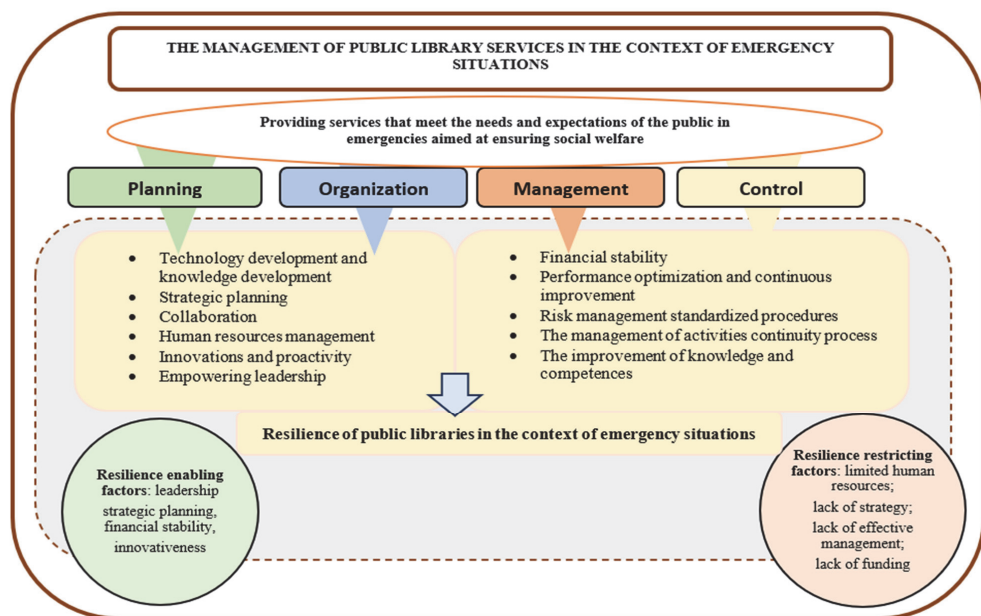
The results of the empirical study on the challenges of managing public library services in the context of emergencies confirmed the findings of other researchers (Stricker, 2019; Wertman et al., 2018; Young et al, 2021; Gečienė, Raišienė, 2019; Kulikauskienė, Šaparnienė, 2022). The results showed, that public libraries have undergone tremendous changes during the recent years of emergencies (COVID-19 pandemic, energy and economic crisis, war in Ukraine, etc.), which required appropriate management of the services that meet the needs and expectations of society and contribute to its well-being. In the face of these challenges and problems, libraries have been constantly confronted with changes and the need for change. For example, when almost all institutions were closed during the quarantine period, public libraries not only adapted to the new conditions with great speed and flexibility, but also expanded their range of services.

According to the results of a quantitative survey, there have been significant changes in the nature of library work during the pandemic. 87% of respondents agree that the pandemic has affected library performance indicators, leading to changes in the nature of provided services, the emergence of new services (69%), increased the need for new digital competencies (59%), and increased the importance and necessity of libraries (43%). As the research results revealed, 25.4% of respondents claimed that the greatest challenge for public libraries during period of extreme situations is the reorganization

of work, when some employees start working in a different way (e.g., remotely). So, another important aspect highlighted in the study is the manager's timely response to environmental changes and smooth redirection of activities. Based on the research data, a strong statistically significant relationship has been identified between the statements "The manager has established clear rules for employees to follow during periods of extreme situations" and "The library promptly responded to environmental changes and smoothly redirected its activities to make them accessible to visitors" ( $r=0.7$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

**Figure 2**

*Model for Managing Public Library Services in the Context of Emergencies*



Source: compiled by the authors based on the results of the quantitative survey and qualitative interview

The analysis of the information gathered during the empirical research revealed that the management of public library services during emergencies placed new demands on the planning, organization, management and control processes. Based on the qualitative and quantitative research data analyzed and summarized, a model representing the challenges of public library service management in emergencies is presented in Figure 2, reflecting the management of public library services and the opportunities for its strengthening during emergencies.

The main idea of this model is that the head of each public library should properly organize the functioning of the classical management functions (i.e. planning, organization, management and control) in order to ensure the management of information, cultural, educational and other services of public libraries that meet the needs of the public and contribute to its welfare in emergency situations.

**The planning phase.** The analysis of the information obtained from the interviews with municipal public libraries' managers revealed that the declaration of an emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic has become a challenge for everyone – the public sector, businesses, NGOs, including public libraries (*<...> emergencies disrupt the normal functioning of the affected population <...> A6*). According to the managers, every emergency is unique and the emergency management process is constantly changing, complex and often chaotic, so preplanned actions help to prevent and successfully cope with emergencies. When assessing emergency management at the local government level, public library managers noted that there was a lack of focus on unified emergency management within local authorities. This suggests that the situation varied from district to district, depending on the local authorities, their approach, planning, understanding of responsibilities, etc. (*<...> Although libraries faced challenges during the emergency in rescheduling their activities and providing remote, virtual and extensive (out-of-contact) services to the population, libraries did not come to a standstill, which was influenced by proper planning for the management of the services, A6*). However, according to library managers, although planning can reduce the difficulties of service management during an emergency, it cannot eliminate them completely (*<...> anticipating long and short term perspectives is very important, as change encourages the organization to look for new ways of doing things <...> A4*). The analysis of the information obtained during the interviews with the experts showed that in the planning phase, the management of public library services can be related to such aspects as planning for service improvement, focusing on new operational models, anticipating long-term and short-term operational perspectives, developing recommendations, monitoring emerging threats, forecasting and preventing possible emergencies. Planning must not only be structured, but also dynamic, taking into account constantly changing conditions. This would allow public libraries to be not only resilient to emergencies, but also to proactively adapt and effectively manage the situation and ensure effective service management during emergencies. A clear and coordinated plan of action, including forecasting, prevention and response, is a key factor in increasing community's confidence in the library's ability to act in a crisis.

**The organization phase.** The results of the quantitative survey revealed that the biggest challenge for public libraries during the emergency was the elimination of physical access and contact with users and visitors (indicated by 76% of respondents), the inability to provide the basic library services of lending physical books (indicated by 66% of respondents), the reorganization of work (indicated by 62% of respondents), and the transfer of activities to the virtual space (indicated by 57% of respondents). All these challenges have clearly had an impact on the management and organization of library services. They required not only an immediate response to emerging problems, but also a long-term strategic planning in order to maintain the relevance and performance of libraries in emergency situations. It also underlines the need to improve the resilience

and adaptability of libraries to unpredictable conditions, ensuring that services remain accessible and efficient for the public and for individual members of society.

The responses from library managers were unanimous in their view that the biggest benefit libraries provide to users is the lending of books (*<...> not being able to lend physical books to the public was the biggest challenge during the emergency <...> A5*) and restrictions that were put on lending books negatively impacted public library users. They argue that the pandemic highlighted the ability of the libraries to quickly adapt and reorient themselves to the changed operating environment, their ability to quickly adopt new technologies, their willingness to work creatively and to achieve their goals (*<...> libraries became closed to physical users, but even though they did not serve physical users, they shifted to developing and delivering their services remotely <...> A6*). The information gathered from the interviews with the experts showed that in the organization phase, aspects of public library service management such as institutional mobilization, information management, application of appropriate legal procedures, management of human and material resources, leadership and coordination, and public information can be identified. The analysis of the results suggests that flexibility and adaptation strategies are necessary in the organization of library services in emergencies. This process should cover every area of the library, from service delivery to user contact. The role of libraries as key information providers in emergencies is important in terms of providing reliable and objective information and reducing misinformation and thus strengthening the role of public libraries in the context of public welfare.

**The management phase.** In the quantitative survey the majority of respondents (77%) stated that the public library manager had established clear rules to guide the staff during the pandemic period, reacted promptly to the situation, and provided clear and specific tasks for the staff to carry out in order to ensure the continuity of the library's services during the emergency situation. Several respondents stated that managers lacked competence in organizing activities, organization and communication skills.

The experts who took part in the interviews pointed out that managers need to be strategic thinkers, planners, team leaders, and to be able to react quickly to changing circumstances, as existing legislation does not solve emergency management problems on its own, and therefore managers need to make adequate decisions and implement them quickly during emergency. The interviews highlighted the key qualities and competences of managers needed to successfully manage an emergency situation. These are: strategic thinking, leadership, flexibility, openness to innovation, communication, responsibility, organization, foresight, rationality, decisiveness. According to the experts, leadership, coordination and management are important aspects of emergency management. The experts who participated in the study also stated, that, the management of public library services during emergencies could be improved through planning and implementation of activities, strengthening risk management, systematic monitoring of intermediate results, and ensuring sufficient resources for their implementation (*<...> when operating in new, extreme conditions, the*

*development of plans, the analysis of the flow of information, and prompt decision-making are essential, K5).*

**The control phase.** The information obtained during the quantitative survey revealed that the following aspects were developed and approved to ensure control in libraries during the emergency: requirements for ensuring the protection of staff and library visitors (indicated by 92% of respondents); procedures for quarantine of users (indicated by 93% of respondents); procedures for the use of documents (indicated by 79% of respondents); requirements for public communication (indicated by 40% of respondents); procedures for electronic content and access to e-content services (indicated by 46% of respondents); procedures for the organization and conduct of distance training for library staff (indicated by 53% of respondents); recommendations for strengthening the management of the library services (indicated by 39% of respondents).

Library managers who participated in the interviews stated that despite the challenges and problems, libraries need to anticipate potential threats as accurately as possible and react promptly when they occur, and it is therefore essential to have a control system that can identify the need for changes in service management and ensure that these changes are implemented in a targeted manner (*<...> It is difficult to prepare adequately in advance, as unforeseen situations arise, to which you have to react quickly and find a solution, which encourages libraries to adopt new methods of service management and to change their approach to internal library control, A1*). The purpose of control is to ensure that the library's service management adequately achieves its objectives and that the necessary resources to achieve these objectives are available when required. While analyzing the statements of library managers, it can be said that the effectiveness of library service management during emergencies depends on the level of control (*<...> an effective control system allows libraries to identify, avoid or manage the most significant risks in a timely manner <...> A4; <...> however, when organizing the control system, it should be kept in mind that the process is a renewable one, and is constantly being modified in the light of the emerging risks, A5*). The experts recommend that public library managers should continuously monitor the situation, carry out hazard, vulnerability and risk analysis, evaluate and take the necessary measures.

**Resilience.** Today's situation shows that the traditional model of library activity can no longer sustain itself by simply reacting to change. Therefore, in order to meet today's challenges, public libraries need to be agile enough to be able to operate and provide services to the society in all conditions. A key element in meeting the challenges is organizational resilience. The quantitative survey asked respondents which resilience-building/enabling factors help to cope with environmental challenges and threats during emergencies. Respondents identified the following as key enabling factors: knowledge and competence development (indicated by 89% of respondents), financial stability (indicated by 86% of respondents), collaboration (indicated by 83% of respondents), technology development (indicated by 81% of respondents). Innovation



and proactivity, human resource management and performance optimization as well as continuous improvement, empowering leadership (pursuit of the common good), the ability to align and manage needs, challenges and change, strategic planning and standardized procedures for risk management were also mentioned.

An analysis of what experts have said in their interviews about the factors that promote resilience highlights the most important ones: strategic resilience (clear plans: identifying potential threats, measures to deal with them, and funding to acquire and maintain them); good internal and external communication; leadership from managers; improving the competences of library staff, especially in the field of ICT, and building psychological resilience (lectures from psychologists, counseling on how to cope with anxiety and fear, how to provide services and how to communicate with the external environment in emergencies), teamwork. Also, this analysis allowed to identify the resilience enabling (leadership, resilience, strategic planning, financial stability, innovation) and restricting (lack of resilience, leadership, lack of funding, lack of strategy, human resource constraints, digital literacy) factors that are important for the management of public library services in emergencies. The resilience built up during an emergency, the readiness to meet the challenges of the emergency, also has an impact on the management of services, as resilient organizations that are prepared to look for opportunities, to seize the opportunities and to react to the situation, will in most cases recover faster and have an advantage.

***Possibilities for improvement.*** The empirical research also sought to find out what and how public libraries' management should be improved to deal with other potential emergencies (e.g., war, immigration, cyberattack, natural, technical, environmental or social crisis). According to the informants, public libraries' service management should include the ability to reorient and adapt, to use the virtual space and modern technologies and innovation. According to the experts, the content of public libraries' services also should be adapted to particular emergencies, and it could be improved through collaboration between libraries and publishers, authors, content developers, through the creation of new services and the provision of more relevant content, education, through reducing public anxiety, and the provision of meaningful leisure opportunities for society members.

## Conclusions

The conducted empirical study has shown that during recent years of emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, public libraries have changed the nature of their work, because they have faced various challenges and problems in managing services to provide the informational, cultural, and educational resources that meet the public's needs and thus contribute to societal well-being. Public libraries quickly reoriented, discovered new forms of activity and become multifunctional centers. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected library performance



indicators, leading to changes in the nature of provided services. More than half of the surveyed librarians state that in the first place there was the emergence of new services and the increased need for new digital competences. In addition, the pandemic has highlighted the increased importance and necessity of libraries in extreme situations. When majority of institutions were closed during the quarantine period, public libraries not only adapted to the new conditions with great speed and flexibility, but also expanded their range of services.

The theoretical analysis of the challenges to management of public library services has shown that it is not appropriate to rely on one particular management theory to effectively manage public library services in emergencies. The analysis of the information gathered during the empirical research revealed that the management of public library services during emergencies placed new demands on the classical management functions – planning, organization, management and control. Their new role becomes crucial for the effective management of information, cultural, educational and other public library services. The study showed that all management functions can be treated as a single emergency management system unit, allowing public libraries for more effective collaboration between different stakeholders, including collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental organizations, businesses, creation of social networks. Thus, in turn, helps to meet public's informational, cultural, educational and other needs and contribute to societal welfare during emergency situations.

While every emergency is unique and the emergency management process is constantly changing, preplanned actions can help to prevent and successfully cope with emergencies. The main challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic in the planning phase was identified as a lack of focus on unified emergency management within local authorities, their approach, planning, understanding of responsibilities. The management of public library services can be related to such aspects as planning for service improvement, focusing on new operational models, anticipating long-term and short-term operational perspectives, developing recommendations, monitoring emerging threats, forecasting and preventing possible emergencies. This would allow public libraries to be not only resilient to emergencies, but also to proactively adapt and effectively manage the situation and ensure effective service management during emergencies.

The biggest challenge in organization phase for public libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic was the elimination of physical access and contact with users and visitors, the inability to provide the basic library services of lending physical books, the reorganization of work, and the transfer of activities to the virtual space. All these challenges have clearly had an impact on the management and organization of library services. According to the research results, leadership, coordination and management are important aspects of management in any emergency.

While the purpose of control is to ensure that the libraries' service management adequately achieves its objectives and that the necessary resources to achieve these

objectives are available when required, the control phase met some challenges for documentation and legal basis changes. During the COVID-19 pandemic the requirements were changed for ensuring the protection of staff and library visitors, procedures for quarantine of users, procedures for the use of documents, requirements for public communication, procedures for electronic content and access to e-content services, procedures for the organization and conduct of distance training for library staff, recommendations for strengthening the management of the library services. The research results revealed, that public library managers should continuously monitor the situation, carry out hazard, vulnerability and risk analysis, evaluate and take the necessary measures.

The data analysis led to the identification of the main enabling factors influencing the management of public library services and their resilience to emergencies while seeking to ensure societal well-being: cross-sectoral and cross-institutional collaboration, social networks, empowering leadership, long-term strategic planning, innovativeness, knowledge and competence development, financial stability, technology development, human resource management and performance management, strategic and psychological resilience, crisis resilience and comprehensive emergency preparedness, accessibility and dissemination of information. As well, the main restricting factors were highlighted: lack of resilience, inappropriate leadership, lack of funding, lack of strategy, limited human resources and their digital literacy. The empirical research has shown that resilience has an impact on the management of public libraries' services in emergencies, because only by being resilient are organizations prepared to seek opportunities, to take advantage of all possible options and to respond quickly and flexibly to the situation and public needs.

The reality of today's public libraries and the services they provide for the well-being of society are inseparable from rapid change, so knowing the most vulnerable areas of activity, being able to react appropriately, to adapt flexibly, and to recover quickly in the event of unfavorable emergencies and crisis, becomes the task of every library management. During emergencies, public libraries need to develop the ability to anticipate, adapt and recover by creating new service management options. Sustainability, survival and resilience, and the ability to operate in the face of uncertainty – these challenges are becoming central to every organization today. The world is changing rapidly, new threats are emerging, and public library managers must be able to identify the most likely threats and the most devastating ones. Of course, it is impossible to plan for or protect against all contingencies, so the focus must be on those threats that have the most undesirable consequences.

The research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the challenges of public library service management in the context of emergencies and highlights the main enabling and restricting factors influencing the management of public library services and their resilience to emergencies. The research also complements the existing research on the public library activities in crisis situations by adding new

perspective on the management of public libraries' services and by highlighting the role of public libraries in ensuring the well-being of society. This area of research is particularly important in the context of public libraries' activities which are aimed at fulfilling the needs of society as a whole and its individual members. The insights gained from the research can be useful for the increasing the resilience of public library services and their ability to support societal well-being during emergencies. Although, while the study was conducted in the case of municipalities of Kaunas and Šiauliai counties, the researchers hypothesize that the findings can be applied to the context of Lithuania as a whole. However, future research would be useful to confirm this hypothesis and enhance our understanding of how to manage library services for community well-being during emergencies in a broader context and under new global conditions.

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