

Workshop Summary

Hazards and Disasters Research Network

December 3rd, 2018, UW Club

Summary:

On December 3rd, EarthLab, the Institute for Hazards Mitigation Planning and Research, and Washington Emergency Management sponsored a workshop to discuss how the hazard community can improve the dialog between hazard/risk researchers and practitioners. This continued the dialogue first initiated at an earlier “State-wide Hazards Coordination Meeting held on September 6, 2018.

The workshop agenda began with a “lighting round” of introductions, facilitated by short PowerPoint presentations to introduce the...

- Organizations (Center, Institute...) represented,
- Research goals and project examples and
- Questions the organization needed help answering.

Introductions were followed by a summary of the September 6th workshop, and an overview of the high-level suggestions. This motivated a new set of questions for the community to discuss through small group breakouts. Attendees were assigned randomly to one of five table groups. After about 45 minutes, these groups rotated among themselves in World Café fashion. Summary reports were offered to the group as a whole after two rotations. Graduate students took notes at each table group. Summary discussions were recorded and transcribed through Zoom software, in addition to notes taken by student volunteers.

The results of these discussions fell into two broad areas.

1. There is a need to convey research results to practitioners that is understood, trusted and actionable.
2. There is a need for researchers and practitioners alike to be more direct partners in hazard-related research being undertaken. In particular, practitioners need to be more fully included as research goals are first being articulated.

Suggested actions for consideration include:

1. Creating a web based Statewide networking hazards research portal/dashboard whereby all involved with hazards research can self-identify and present links to their respective organizations.
2. Sponsor regular workshops that would include opportunities for researchers to showcase results as well as aspirations, and also include opportunities for practitioners to present their research needs.
3. Sponsoring a “listening session” whereby the broad research community can listen to the values and needs of those implementing research.

4. Hazard community should be lobbying the governor's office to better support efforts to improve resilience. Oregon recently created a new staff position on state resilience. Maybe we can use this to pressure WA State to do the same.

Table Facilitators: Travis Ball, Ben Packard, Frank Gonzalez, and Kathleen Phan. Student note takers include Kate Pedersen, Stefanie Hindmarch, Ning Siman, Kayla Greenberg and Linya Cheng.

Discussion

This section briefly documents the themes, issues, concerns, and suggestions raised both in small and large group discussion.

1. There is a need for improved communication between practitioners and researchers.
 - Practitioners (broadly defined) and researchers need to be equals when setting the agenda for research and application. Researchers need to listen more carefully to practitioners, and practitioners need to understand the constraints when formulating a research proposal. Both groups need to build trust. This requires regular face-to-face meetings, and that each party is responsive and invested in the interests/needs of others.
 - There are various ways to foster this dialogue with the goal of building trust and fostering partnerships:
 - Organize a forum focused on a particular problem (i.e. sea level change, or URM buildings). This brings the people together with an invested interest in a particular issue.
 - Organize a listening session where practitioners can fully describe their needs and researchers assimilate. Practitioners may need prompts to fully envision how research can help their situation.
 - Organize get-to-know-you or networking sessions between practitioners and researchers. This might include 20-minute bios of participants where they fully describe their interests and illustrate of how their contributions could best be utilized by others, applying their research to the field. In particular, practitioners need to learn which researchers can best help them with a particular need or challenge- build a partnership.
 - In general, practitioners do not need more information. Practitioners need experts who can help distill the latest science and offer targeted solutions.
2. Researchers are often uninformed of what research is being done elsewhere, even within their own institution.
 - Researchers are often unaware of research in process or being explored within State Universities.
 - Hazards research has expanded greatly to include a wide range of disciplines, and thus work is not typically coordinated between disciplines.

- The concern in resilience as a self-organizing process in response to episodic and chronic environmental changes has greatly expanded those involved with hazards research. (Hazards studies, includes academic disciplines ranging from social ecology to structural engineering.)
- There are 10s of University and university associated organizations conducting hazards related research.

3. Gaps or challenges faced by policy makers and practitioners.

- One gap is a centralized group to coordinate public relations and messaging. Foundations may be willing to fund this gap; help support communication and outreach activities. This would also help with the challenge of communicating risk to the public and educating the public on the need for preparation and challenges. Also, there is a challenge interfacing with the media who often want an inflammatory or volatile statement. We need to do a better job of engaging policy makers and politicians (i.e. city councils, mayors). The media can help to apply pressure on legislative bodies. The universities have the distinct advantage that they can lobby for issues.
- A lot of planning needs (by practitioners) are focused at the local level. Often, trickle-down research agendas do not translate to implementation because they cannot easily address locality-specific problems.
- The hazard products produced by cities and counties vary considerably in quality and extent. This is because some cities have more funding than others to fund studies. Thus hazard assessments and data sets are often spatially heterogeneous.
- Hazards related research (including that addressing resilience) is being conducted within a wide range of disciplines and research organizations. There is no one location that lists all involved with hazards research, or where policy makers can go to for contacts or information.

4. Gaps or challenges faced by researchers

- The breakdown of the “pipeline of information from research to practitioner” is chronic and longstanding. For example, the academic structure works against this because academics are not typically encouraged to reach outside the university. The reward system inside the university needs to change for the pipeline problem to be fixed. University mission statements could be expanded to emphasize work that directly benefits the public good. And practitioners are often not interested in hypothesis-driven activities, nor do they share the educational mission (training of grad students) that is an integral part of many research studies.

5. Other Suggestions and Comments:

- We are really tackling issues that are regional in scope. Activities need to be coordinated across the region, Washington, Oregon, BC, and Northern CA. So any future consortium should be regional

- A list of experts and six-degrees of separation would be highly valued by all parties. This would provide a go-to resource for who is doing what.
- A deliverable is anything that can drive a decision. Different practitioners will need different types of deliverables. So it is difficult to make general statements about deliverables and products.
- There is a need to prioritize products and deliverables. We can't do everything.
- Before making a new organization or structure, we first need to fully leverage existing tools and organizations and events. For example, take advantage of existing opportunities (i.e. attend workshops attended by county planners before creating a whole new dedicated workshop, insert EQ risk information into existing flood risk planning activities.). Do we have a full accounting of all the resources and organizations that are out there?

Next Steps

1. Creating a web based Statewide networking hazards research portal/dashboard whereby all involved with hazards research can self-identify and present links to their respective organizations. This tool may:
 - a. Resemble the [Research Coordination Network](#) (RCN, NSF) structure.
 - b. Include a directory of experts as well as organizations
 - c. Be self-administered among partnering organizations.
 - d. Be housed with the larger EarthLab structure
 - e. Provide tools for dialogue
2. Sponsor yearly workshops that would include opportunities for researchers to show case results as well as aspirations, and may include opportunities for practitioners to present their research needs.
 - a. Sponsorship may be possible through FEMA.
3. Sponsoring a "listening session" whereby the broad research community can listen to the values and needs of those implementing research. This session:
 - a. Would need buy-in by all stakeholders. The full spectrum of participants (researchers, practitioners, non-profits, etc.) needs to be included in the formulation of a regional coordinating organization. In particular, practitioners (particularly at the local level) need to feel included for the organization to be successful.
 - b. Has an objective the alignment of practitioners' needs and researchers' goals, find common ground. Develop a set of agreed upon goals that address regional hazards.
 - c. Given that practitioners often think about problems by locality, maybe this provides the best structure to organize online information. For example, a website with a page for each community that then lists links to hazards and products relevant to their region.

4. Hazard community should be lobbying the governor's office to better support efforts to improve resilience. Oregon recently created a new staff position on state resilience. Maybe we can use this to pressure WA State to do the same.

DRAFT

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