

*Writing a Library Disaster
Plan in a Collaborative
Setting: The Tribulations and
Trials: the Northern Illinois
University Experience*

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Some background ...

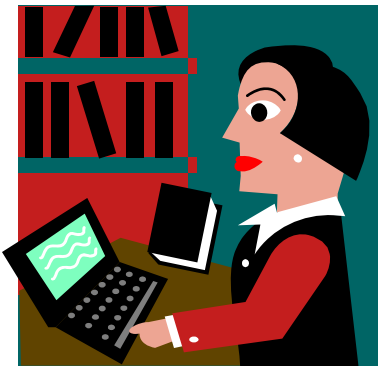
We had input from Dr. Camila Alire regarding how to revise our disaster plan:



- Prepare for worst-case scenario
- Make broader – address services as well as materials
- Combine our two plans into one

Some background ...

We had a group of eight staff and librarians, representing a mix of technical and public services.



Our vision statement (Fall 2006)

The Disaster Plan Task Force is revising and updating the current Disaster Recovery Plan for Library Materials and merging that document with the Library Security and Emergency Manual to create one concise, cohesive document, based upon the recommendations made in Camila A. Alire's presentation, "From Plan to Recovery: Preparing for a Library Disaster," the input of the Disaster Plan Task Force members, and the feedback of the members of both the Preservation Committee and the Library Security and Emergency Committee. Once completed, the revised and updated document will be presented as a recommendation to administration for approval, and upon that approval the Task Force will dissolve. Responsibility for the continued updating of the document will then be transferred to the Preservation Committee.

Some background ...

Major issue: We finished it in June 2008, but nothing was done with it – it was never turned in to administration. The omission wasn't discovered until early 2009.



Some background ...



Also, the two plans were, for some reason, never actually combined.

Changes we made ...

“PRIORITIES DURING AN EMERGENCY

- **Safety is non-negotiable.**
- **Protect your personal safety and that of those around you.**
- **Go to a safe location to call 911 for help.**
- **Evacuate if you are in any danger.**
- **Remain calm.**
- **Make special note of emergency details so you can provide the information needed to emergency personnel.**
- **Stay away from the emergency area until authorities allow re-entry.**
- **Contact the Library Command Center for updates on the current situation.”**

Changes we made ...

Under **LIBRARY MATERIALS SALVAGE TEAM ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS:**

“The Library Materials Salvage Team has as its chief responsibility the supervision of the recovery process and salvage operations. The Team should **meet at least once a semester to update the Disaster Recovery Plan and review personnel changes** that may affect the membership of the team.”

Changes we made ...

We added this note:

NOTE: DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT!

Everyone involved in the recovery effort must document all actions and communications that they undertake at each and every stage of the recovery process. All email, notes, voicemails, phone messages, and other communications must be saved both electronically and in print. The documentation of communications should not only be left up to the recorder.

Changes we made ...

GENERAL SALVAGE PROCEDURES

Once clearance has been granted to allow re-entry into the disaster site, the following general steps outline basic initial procedures:

1. Establish command post.
 - A desk or work station needs to be organized off-site from the scene of the disaster to coordinate recovery efforts.
 - Site should be equipped with telephones, computers with Internet access, and standard office supplies.

Changes we made ...

We added this note to the POST DISASTER PROCESS section:

“Even as the emergency response and salvage efforts are being undertaken, attention must be focused on the restoration of services:
Academic continuity is critical.”

Changes we made ...

POST DISASTER PROCESS continued:

1. Restoration of services.

a. Short-term goals (followed by persons responsible for ensuring):

Restore library services to unaffected areas (Recovery Coordinator, department heads along with faculty and staff).

Arrange for the provision of temporary services to affected areas (for example, arranging alternate sites for service, coordinating Interlibrary Loan, etc.) (Recovery Coordinator, affected department heads along with faculty and staff).

Restore phone and electrical services (Recovery Coordinator and Assistant Dean of Automated Library Services).

Changes we made ...

We made our Salvage List (Appendix A) very specific:

“G. Room 127 – Information Delivery Services
Department

1. All books on trucks.
2. Serials Directory will be on top of one of the computer terminals in the middle of the room.
3. Desk, SE corner: blue binders on the bottom shelf of the shelves against the right-hand side of the desk.
4. Desk, NE corner: 3-drawer brown filing cabinet, #502308.”

Changes we made ...

We made big revisions to Appendix C: Salvage of Water-Damaged Materials:

“In the event of extensive water damage in the library, outside consultants will spearhead the recovery effort. The following information is provided as an overview of issues that may be encountered during that recovery or in the event of a smaller-scale water disaster that is handled on-site. [...]

Methods of salvage are situational. The Recovery Coordinator, in consultation with the Conservator, should determine the most effective or best method of salvage for each type of material (see Appendices F and G for contact information).”

Changes we made ...

Revisions to Appendix C: Salvage of Water-Damaged Materials, cont.

“**SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

- A. Do not under any circumstances enter an area until it has been declared safe to enter.**
- B. Wear protective clothing (long sleeves), latex gloves, and masks.**
- **C. If mold is present, wear a respirator. Some mold species are toxic. If any health effects are observed, contact a doctor and/or mycologist. **Wash your hands after handling materials with mold.****
- **D. If you participate in any recovery efforts where mold may be a danger, you will be given further instructions by the Recovery Coordinator and Conservator.”**

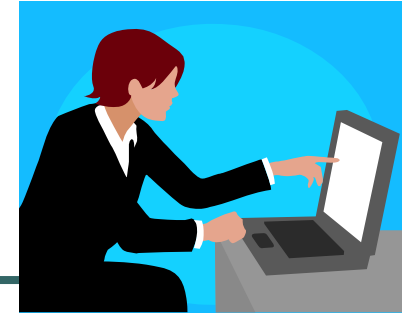
Changes we made ...

Revisions to Appendix C: Salvage of Water-Damaged Materials, cont.

“MOLD

A. Materials will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For small scale mold problems, all staff in contact with affected materials should be issued gloves and protective face masks. Larger-scale mold problems will be handled by salvage companies (as arranged by the Recovery Coordinator or Communications Manager—see Appendix F). Specific steps to be undertaken by library staff and faculty in the salvaging effort will be coordinated by those agencies in such a case. Please see Appendix C for more information about mold.”

An additional point ...



If starting a disaster plan from scratch, a resource such as dPlan (<http://www.dplan.org/>) can be a very valuable resource. The site offers a template to help make a customizable disaster plan for your library, taking into account factors such as prevention, response/ recovery, supplies/services, training for staff, and more.

Tribulations!



- Much easier to distribute the work rather than do it alone.
- The final product is more complete and thorough.

Tribulations!



Different departments and groups of people within the library are better represented.

Tribulations!



The final document is more accurate and more useful

-- having a group helps ensure that mistakes are caught.

Tribulations!



Attitudes of task force members changed
– we became more aware of disaster
preparedness issues in our library.

Trials!



When you spend too long on a project, group members gain new priorities – you risk losing interest and momentum and the plan could be out of date before you even finish.

Trials!



Drawn-out efforts lead to disorganization.

Trials!



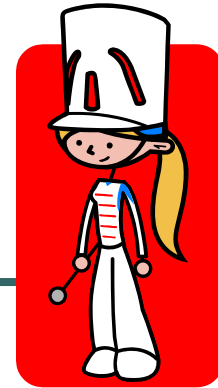
Group efforts can be frustrating.

Trials!



Groups might lack authority – write a plan for the institution that you have, not the one that you wish you had.

Lessons learned



Have one designated chair who can ensure that everyone is doing his or her part and that work is being complete on time.

Lessons learned



Communication is **very** important.
Someone has to make sure that everyone is doing their part and that the task is proceeding as planned.

Lessons learned



Be specific and clear about the roles that everyone in the group will play and what their responsibilities are.

Lessons learned



Document, document, document!

-- Take conscientious notes of group decisions.

Lessons learned



Set a deadline (and stick to it): if you draw out the process, you'll leave your institute vulnerable.

Conversely, give yourselves time to be thorough so that the end-product is useful.