



Disaster Response & Salvage of Library Materials

CARLI Preservation Working Group-Illinois Fire Services Institute
Burn Simulation & Recovery

Jennifer Hain Teper
Head of Conservation, University Library
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
jhain@illinois.edu



Outline

- Overview of fire damage and library materials
- Organize recovery team
- Establish command center
- Assess the damage
- Determine best course of recovery action(s)
- Appoint media liaison
- Verify financial resources
- Contact service providers
- Organize recovery team
- Establish recovery site/location
- Set up transportation between disaster area and recovery site
- Set up temporary storage of salvaged and/or packed materials for vendor recovery
- Begin salvage operations

Fires in Libraries



Bette Davis in *Storm Center*, 1956, LIFE Photograph Archives

Fires in Libraries



First Steps

First steps of disaster recovery: organization and planning

- **Organize recovery team**
 - **Roles as established in your disaster plan**
 - **Disaster Recovery Officer (leader of Disaster Team)**
 - **Recovery Specialist (leader of Recovery Team)**
 - **Recorder/Photographer**
 - **Campus and Public Relations Liaison**
 - **Logistics and Facilities Coordinator**
 - **Administrative Services Coordinator**
 - **Collections Representative**
 - **Pack-Out/Relocation Supervisors**
 - **Systems Recovery Officer**
- **Establish command center**
 - **Central location for sharing and dispersing information**

Assess the damage

Assess Condition of Collections:

- Human safety is top priority
- Before Salvage
 - Maintain items in the conditions found
 - Protect materials with loose plastic sheeting
- Undamaged Items
 - Leave in place if environment/building is stable
 - Move only if environment/building is threatening
- Check for mold daily



Assess the damage

- ID and repair structural hazards
- Reduce temperature and RH to <70 degrees and 45% RH
- Protect undamaged collection materials
- Remove:
 - Standing water and empty items containing water
 - Wet carpet
 - Wet furnishings
- If everything is soaked, secure commercial dehumidification services





Determine recovery actions

- **What type of recovery is appropriate?**
 - Immediate air drying
 - Freeze then air dry
 - Vendor freeze drying
 - Discard
- **What are your salvage priorities?**
 - Set by collection managers prior to disaster, ideally
 - What type of materials are damaged?
 - Loan materials
 - special collections
 - coated paper journal runs



Determine recovery actions

- **What are your salvage priorities? (con't)**
 - **What type of damage have they sustained?**
 - **Water, but not fire**
 - **Fire, but not water**
 - **Water and fire damaged**
 - **Submerged in water, very wet, barely damp?**
- **Mold is biggest threat after water damage**
- **Fire damaged materials are reasonably stable, if environment is not a threat**

Communication and Funding

- **Media liaison responsible for communicating disaster to public/media**
 - Also responsible for making call for volunteers, if needed
- **Establish availability of funding resources**
 - May be OK from business office for reimbursements
 - Institutional charge card
 - OK for charges incurred by disaster recovery firm
- **Contact service providers, if necessary**

Establish recovery site/location

- **Recovery site may include:**
 - **Cleaning station**
 - **Packing station**
 - **Air drying areas**
 - **Pick up and delivery sites**
 - **Rest area for staff/volunteers**



Set up transportation

- **Need to move books in an organized fashion from shelf to recovery site**
 - **Book trucks**
 - **Bucket brigade**
 - **Boxes/crates**
 - **Van or truck**



Temporary Storage and Documentation

- **Temporary storage must be easily accessible space**
 - May serve as temporary access point
 - May serve as holding tank for vendor pickup
- **Establish documentation procedures for materials pulled from the shelf**
 - Freeze
 - Air dry
 - Discard
 - Low/high priority salvage



Begin salvage operations

- **Sort materials by salvage type and priority**
 - **Some materials cannot be frozen**

Betty Walsh *Salvage at a Glance*

<http://cool-palimpsest.stanford.edu/waac/wn/wn19/wn19-2/wn19-207.html>

<http://cool-palimpsest.stanford.edu/waac/wn/wn10/wn10-2/wn10-202.html>

- **Some may need to be cleaned before freezing**
- **Some may be discardable**
- **Some may not be wet, just dirty or burned**

Salvage Operations: Air Drying

Set up in cool, dry space with good air circulation and fans

1. Blot excess water with paper towels. If coated paper, interleave between every sheet with paper towels or blank newsprint
2. Stand on edge, wettest side down. Fan open slightly. Turn every 12 hours to prevent severe distortion of text block and spine.
3. Watch for mold on spines and under plastic book jackets.
4. Remove book jackets if they become moldy.
5. Check paper closest to spine to see when dry.
6. Clean off mold, soot and dirt when books are dry.



Salvage Operations: Packing for Freezing

Clean books in clean water, only if necessary. Squeeze out any excess water



Wrap wet books in waxed paper or freezer paper to separate



Place books in box or crate for shipping. Label and document contents of each container

