Once the Disaster Strikes: Dealing with the Aftermath

September 23, 2020
A Framework for an Orderly Response & Recovery
- Sean Ferguson, Preservation Specialist, NEDCC

Notes from an Example Disaster Response and Recovery
- Andy Corrigan, Associate Dean of Libraries, Chief Collections Officer, Tulane University

As Above, So Below: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina and the Levee Breaches
- Melissa Smith, Assistant Curator of Manuscripts, LSU Libraries Special Collections
A Framework for an Orderly Response & Recovery

Sean Ferguson, Preservation Specialist, NEDCC
Preparing for Re-Entry

- Understand the situation
- Activate your emergency response team
- Virtual/outside command post
- Review roles & procedures
Personal Safety

PPE:

• N-95 masks
• Nitrile gloves
• Eye protection
• Aprons
• Thick boots/shoes

Reforma President Tess Tobin (left) and ALA President-Elect Loida Garcia-Febo visit a hurricane-damaged library at the University of Puerto Rico. [https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2018/02/01/rebuilding-puerto-rican-libraries/]
Watch out for:
- Structural stability
- Mold
- Hurricane/sewage water
- Electrical threats

Investigate:
- Dry spaces for command post, triage, salvage
- Facilities equipment
- Building security
Assessment: Collections

- Locate collection priorities list
- Quickly assess collection priorities in situ
- Generally assess the rest of collections
- Identify dry collections
Managing Response & Recovery

• Establish a command post

• Track collections & people

• Delegate tasks:
  • Building recovery
  • Retrieval & triage
  • Cleaning, drying, & freezing
  • Vendor coordination

Photo by rawpixel on Unsplash
• **Remove** standing water (to make conditions safer and more accessible).

• **Reduce** temperature and relative humidity (to inhibit mold growth).

• **Isolate** dry or safe collections (to prevent them from getting contaminated).

Image courtesy of Joan Bartram, Salve Regina University
Retrieval & Triage

- Safe protocols for retrieving items

- Separate by format and...
  - Wet
  - Slightly wet & damp
  - Soiled
  - Dry
  - Moldy
Cleaning, Drying, & Freezing

- Cleaning techniques for wet, dirty, and soot covered items
- **Dry on** large tables covered in blotter paper
- **Freeze** collections you can’t dry & saturated items

Salvage at a glance:

Vendor Coordination

• For:
  • Mold
  • Advice
  • The building
  • Collections you can’t recover on your own

Helpful Guide on Establishing Recovery Vendor Relationships:

NEDCC | Northeast Document Conservation Center
Notes from an Example
Disaster Response and Recovery
Disasters

- Types
- Scale
- Cascade effects
- Example: Hurricane Katrina
Incident Command Systems

External Responders
City, State, and Federal government entities plus external partners
- Police, Fire, Public Utilities, FEMA, National Weather Service, National Guard, disaster management firms, backup network infrastructure

Tulane University
Incident Command System

University Units
- Academic divisions, student affairs, student housing, hospital, research labs, primate center, libraries, art museum, etc.
Building and Internal Climate Stabilization

- After Katrina, engineers and response crews were mobilized at Tulane to drain flooded library spaces and stabilize their interior climates.
Collections Salvage

• Salvage was accomplished by the response crews, with guidance
• Wet materials selected for salvage were frozen in refrigerated truck trailers onsite
Restoring and Rebuilding Collections

- Materials restoration took place in Ft. Worth, TX
- Catalog and finding aid records were matched to flooded building locations, and these were checked against restored item inventories to determine losses
• Restored or replaced items require storage space and processing
• For this we built a Recovery Center in leased warehouse space
Partial remediation is needed for initial, partial reoccupancy.

Permanent building remediation may require hazard mitigation.

New spaces require moving projects.
Tulane Libraries Recovery Center

Processing
Partner: LAC

HU060EP Special Collection Processing

HU060ES Reshelving Howard-Tilton materials

HU025EP Special Collection Processing

HU025ES Reboxing and archival supplies

HU025EP Special Collections Processing Contract Extension

Tulane Legacy Collection Analysis Project

Cataloging
Partner: LAC

HU060EC Cataloging

HU060EC Cataloging Contract Extension

Restored Backlog Cataloging

Donations

Physical Repurchases (Nondigital formats)

Acquisitions
Partner: LAC

Initial Repurchases from Title Lists

Special Collections Finding Aides
Partner: LAC

Recovery Storage and Processing Space

Recovery Center

Site Renovation

Maintenance

Term Lease | Eventual Purchase

Shelving | Space Reallocation

Acquisitions
Partner: LAC

Initial Repurchases from Title Lists

Special Collections Finding Aides
Partner: LAC

Recovery Storage and Processing Space

Recovery Center

Site Renovation

Maintenance

Term Lease | Eventual Purchase

Shelving | Space Reallocation
Recovery lasted from 2005 to 2016
As Above, So Below: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina and the Levee Breaches

Melissa Smith, Assistant Curator of Manuscripts, LSU Libraries Special Collections
Mold and Collapsing Collections
Materials Return to Tulane’s Recovery Center
Mislabeled Boxes
Materials Retrieved from the Floor

Tulane Univ
Jones BLDG 25
Me Quire
Floor
Collections Requiring Reintegration to Parent Collection
Remediated items from the David Treen Political Papers and the Victor Schiro Political Papers
Exhibition on Reintegrated Materials

Political Cartoons, images, and ledgers successfully salvaged
Materials from the same collections weren’t able to be salvaged.
UNLIKE TULANE WHOSE DAMAGE CAME FROM BELOW, THE LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM’S DAMAGE CAME FROM ABOVE WHEN KATRINA’S WINDS BLEW ROUGHLY 60% OF THE COPPER CLADDING OFF THE MINT’S ROOF.

Images courtesy of the Louisiana State Museum
Prepping Materials for the Move Out of New Orleans

Some of the collections ended up in off-site storage in Denham Springs, Louisiana, while other items headed off for Hill Memorial Library at LSU, as well as other institutions.
LSU Libraries Special Collections
Hill Memorial Library

Triaging and drying of materials belonging to the Louisiana State Museum
LSU Assists with the Triaging and Remediation of Donn Young’s Photos
Lessons Learned

- Clear communication
- Be flexible
- Know your collections, including finding aids, any shelf-read documentation, accession files, and other institutional notes
- Collections will collapse on each other, causing confusion during reintegration
- Remediated boxes may not be fully cleaned
- Boxes may be mislabeled and you may come across other issues like fasteners that shouldn’t be there
- Neighboring institutions play a crucial role in recovery for sister institutions and individuals
Questions?
Contact Us!

Sean Ferguson, NEDCC, sferguson@nedcc.org

Andy Corrigan, Tulane, andyc@tulane.edu

Melissa Smith, LSU, msmith11@lsu.edu