

Chapter 65

Deferred Maintenance and Space Repurposing: The Impact on Libraries and Archives Disaster and Contingency Planning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will review two issues commonly found in libraries and archives, especially those at academic institutions: deferred maintenance of aging facilities and the repurposing of space not designed originally for archives and libraries. These two commonly occurring situations create an environment which increases the probability of large and small-scale disasters. Using The University of Akron (UA) as a case study, the authors will assert that every institution with similar conditions should actively prepare for a variety of disaster situations. The chapter will provide numerous examples of these occurrences at UA accompanied by photographs that illustrate the effects of these catastrophes and emphasize the reality of such events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature on the subject of disaster planning and preparedness reveals that most books and articles on the subject tend to focus on the planning process, writing the plan, and response and recovery procedures. However, few if any resources cover the issues caused by repurposing spaces for library and archives facilities and the problems caused by deferred maintenance of aging structures. Several works include sections on prevention and risk management, including Miriam Kahn's *Disaster Response and*

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Planning for Libraries, Disaster Management for Libraries and Archives edited by Graham Matthews and John Feather, and Johanna Wellheiser's and Jude Scott's *An Ounce of Prevention: Integrated Disaster Planning for Archives, Libraries, and Records Centers*. However, these monographs were published over a decade ago and do not address the more recent harsh realities of declining budgets and deferred maintenance, nor the complications posed by repurposed and aging library and archives facilities and the role they play in disaster and contingency planning in the present day.

Furthermore, books and articles on library security and protecting collections only address arson and vandalism to individual books and other library materials, not the intentional flooding of repurposed buildings and activation of fire suppression systems that can cause large and small-scale disasters that affect whole collections and facilities. This includes Alan J. and Carol Z. Lincoln's *Library Crime and Security: An International Perspective* and Slade R. Gandert's *Protecting Your Collection: A Handbook, Survey, & Guide for the Security of Rare Books, Manuscripts, Archives, & Works of Art*. Other sources, such as Camila Alire's *Library Disaster Planning and Recovery Handbook* include information on facilities, but focus on environmental conditions and building safety and security, not deferred maintenance and space repurposing and its effects on disaster planning and preparedness.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review two issues commonly found in libraries and archives, especially those at academic institutions: deferred maintenance of aging facilities and the repurposing of space not designed originally for archives and libraries. These two commonly occurring situations create an environment which increases the probability of large and small-scale disasters of various types. Using The University of Akron (UA) as a case study, the authors will assert that every institution with similar conditions should actively prepare for a variety of disaster situations. This includes having disaster preparedness and recovery plans and supplies in place and ensuring that all staff and student assistants are trained and prepared to respond to and recover from major and minor disaster situations at a moment's notice.

The chapter also will provide numerous examples of large and small-scale disaster occurrences at UA accompanied by photographs that illustrate the effects of these catastrophes and emphasize the reality of such events. These incidents include major and minor water infiltration caused by flooding, pipe bursts, flash floods, and rapid snow melts in addition to potential fire outbreaks caused by faulty and outdated wiring and overloaded electrical systems. In addition, this chapter will discuss how many of these incidents were caused by building deficiencies and deferred maintenance as well as repurposing buildings for library and archives facilities. These consist of cracks in walls and ceilings, loose and leaking pipes, damaged or non-existent foundation and window caulking, and other building issues. The chapter also will illustrate the potential for vandalism and man-made disasters in repurposed buildings that affect collections, equipment, and facilities and how to be prepared for such unforeseen events. It will conclude with advice on how to actively manage these potential risks and hazards. This includes training, educating, and working with maintenance and health and safety personnel in addition to documenting—both visually and in writing—building deficiencies and deferred maintenance that have affected library and archives facilities and their contents.

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