Chapter 71
It Is Everywhere:
Handling a Mold Outbreak in a Library's High-Density Storage Collection

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ABSTRACT

In early 2012, mold was found on materials stored in the high-density automated storage and retrieval system (ASRS) at Eastern Michigan University, with remediation beginning in late 2013. This chapter will outline the timeline of discovery and eventual remediation of the mold infestation. The authors will discuss the stakeholders within the library and other offices on campus involved with the response planning for closure, cleanup, and reopening of the ASRS, as well as the development of processes for collection intake to mitigate a future outbreak. The chapter will conclude with lessons learned, takeaways for other institutions, and how Eastern Michigan University is moving forward to protect the investment made in the collection.

INTRODUCTION

In early 2012, the staff of the University Archives at Eastern Michigan University discovered mold on a number of theses and dissertations stored in the automated storage and retrieval system (ASRS), a high-density storage environment in the University Library. Initially thought to be restricted to archival holdings, within weeks the infestation was found to have spread to the general circulating collection collocated in the ASRS. The final mold remediation occurred in the fall of 2013, after 1) an investigation of causes and possible solutions to the contamination; 2) reviews of immediate, intermediary and long-term process planning; and 3) the necessary infrastructure improvements and construction, all of which took more than a year to complete. This chapter will outline the timeline of discovery, delibera-

tions regarding appropriate climate controls, and the remediation process itself. We conclude with a discussion of lessons learned, takeaways for other institutions, and how we are moving forward to protect the investment we have made in our collection.

BACKGROUND

Eastern Michigan University (EMU), located in Ypsilanti, Michigan, was founded by the State of Michigan in 1849 as a two-year normal school, training hundreds of Michigan educators. In 1899, it formally became a four-year College known then as the Michigan State Normal College with expanded offerings in the liberal arts. By 1959 it had become a comprehensive university with the final name change settling on Eastern Michigan University.

Ypsilanti is geographically situated between Detroit, home to Wayne State University, and Ann Arbor, home to the University of Michigan. EMU has seven satellite campuses around the state as part of the Office of Extended Programs and, while it offers residential housing on campus, the majority of the approximately 23,000 students commute to campus. Students are pursuing undergraduate, graduate, specialist, doctoral and certificate degrees within five colleges.

In 2012 the Library of EMU was led by a Dean, who reports to the Provost's Office along with all of the College Deans. Librarians have faculty status and work within a base 8-month contract during the academic year. The University Archives is a department within the library, and the archivist is one of two dozen library faculty who support the University community's mission for "teaching, lifelong learning, scholarship and creative activity." The formal archival unit at EMU is relatively young, founded in 1970 by the University President to be housed within the structure of the library.

The library is currently housed in its third dedicated building on campus. Ground breaking for the Bruce T. Halle Library occurred on November 28, 1995, and when planning began for a new library in the 1990s, it was designed to be a 'cybrary,' a modern building supporting both learning resources and enhanced educational technologies. With flexible space and the capacity to house more networked computers than any other building on campus, it included in its design the installation of an ASRS. At that time only the Oviatt Library at California State University, Northridge was operating an ASRS, which makes Eastern Michigan University's installation the second oldest currently active system in an academic library in the United States. The goal of the ASRS at Eastern was to provide high-density onsite storage rather than build an additional two floors for open shelving, a consideration that many libraries take into account when installing an ASRS for onsite storage.

The following synopsis provided by Bullard and Wrosch (2009) recounts the history of ASRS installations in libraries before EMU:

Five libraries, including two large academics, Erasmus in the Netherlands and the Medical Sciences Library at Ohio State University, along with one community college and two public libraries in the U.S., developed and installed ASRS facilities in the early 1970s. But without any additional library installations and technical issues that discouraged others from considering it, all U.S. libraries stopped using the system over the next 19 years, with Ohio State ending operations in 1989 (Kountz, 1990). Over the same time period, ASRS growth in industry flourished, and it wasn't long before the California State University at Northridge was ready to give the concept another try…Northridge's Leviathan II ASRS

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