

Chapter 4

(R)Evolutionary Emergency Planning: Adding Resilience Through Continuous Review

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses how a library can revise its existing Emergency, Disaster and Continuity of Operations plans, through the utilization of an ongoing review cycle, new dissemination techniques, and expanded training protocols. While reviews of existing emergency plans typically happen in response to actual emergencies, flipping that scenario by conducting ongoing reviews with a small, dedicated committee will expand preparedness. The paper identifies important steps to follow in revising emergency plans and discusses incorporating e-book and short form formats to enhance training and documentation.

INTRODUCTION

People are well versed in the benefits of incorporating planning into activities to maximize the impact of effort. When the results of such planning promises to provide a positive outcome, as with planning for retirement or vacation, people recognize the value of a strategic plan and devote the necessary time to ensure a certain result. However, emergency planning, disaster response planning, and contingency planning, while essential to an organization, provide no surety of a positive outcome. This type of plan-

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(R)Evolutionary Emergency Planning

ning requires forethought about unpleasant situations and tries to wrangle with an irresolute future. It isn't surprising, then, that even those who are otherwise adept planners will let emergency plans fall out of date until some need or threat spurs them into action. As threats to business operations become more frequent, opportunities for review increase.

Disaster planning is a crucial component of preparedness for libraries and archives. All too often, the impetus to complete a disaster plan happens only after an emergency that has left a library vulnerable, causing it to recognize its failure to plan. Fires, floods, hurricanes, influenza outbreaks, biological, hazardous material, or terrorist threats, are all reasons a library will call up existing plans. Disasters that affect neighboring institutions will likewise sensitize individuals and organizations to the need to review and revise or begin to write emergency plans.

The Library that serves as the example in this article serves the undergraduate and graduate schools on the main campus of our University, and fortunately, hasn't experienced a catastrophic emergency necessitating large scale response. The library has, however, experienced a number of small scale crises that caused us to use and reevaluate our disaster plan and modify the emergency planning methodology to incorporate it into daily work practices. This article documents our past response to emergencies as well as recent developments in our methodology.

More information on completing a thorough review of your emergency preparedness documents is available from a list of resources that follows this article. Since every library is different, we encourage other libraries to create plans that are going to suit that library's specific needs.

BACKGROUND

Like any institution, academic libraries are vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters. The devastation that can occur when libraries fall victim to natural disasters, such as floods, fires, willful acts of violence and terrorism, has been frequently seen. While such disasters are often unpredicted and instantaneous, libraries may be able to lessen the destructive consequences of any disaster or emergency through the implementation of an emergency management plan. Such a plan is "a unique, detailed guide for times of great stress and crisis," and it serves to "provide the basis for systematic responses to emergencies that threaten an organization and the records and information necessary for continuing operations" (Jones & Keyes, 2008, p. 52). The main components of an emergency management plan include: a policy statement, assignment of responsibilities and authority, task organization, information distribution procedures, preparedness/response/recovery checklists, training programs and testing procedures, and a communications directory (Jones & Keyes, 2008, p. 53).

Much of the early literature addressing library-specific emergency preparedness focused on the protection and recovery of library materials and included detailed instructions and disaster response plans to prevent damage to collections. More recently, the literature presents an increased attention on personal and user safety, greater collaboration with outside agencies and emergency responders, and the use of technologies that can widely disseminate simple, direct and instantaneous instructions to multiple stakeholders in an emerging event. The document *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans in Institutions of Higher Learning* (2013) instructs:

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