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## Disasters: Plans, Clean-up, and Recovery—The Colorado State Experience

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On the evening of July 28, 1997, Colorado State University's (CSU) Morgan Library sustained an unprecedented amount of damage from a 500-year flood that resulted from rains west of the campus that measured between 10 and 14 inches. The flood inundated the basement of Morgan Library, covering some 462,500 volumes with 11.5 feet of water.

Materials damaged included bound scientific journals in compact shelving, books, curriculum materials, current awareness materials and various offices, including Gifts and Exchange and Bindery Preparation. In this case, government publications were spared damage (except for some 200 volumes awaiting shipment to the bindery), as the collection had just been shifted to the third and fourth floors.

The flood damaged some 30 buildings on campus, including the University's bookstore, which had its entire inventory for the fall semester destroyed. The Library sustained what is considered to be greatest amount of damage on record to an academic library caused by a natural disaster.

To put this into perspective: Morgan Library had just completed a \$20 million renovation and addition. As of this date, the total cost of the damage to the Library and its contents is expected to total some \$75 million. The total cost of damage to the University (including the Library) is expected to total approximately \$100 million, which is covered by the State of Colorado through self-insurance.

### **Disaster Recovery**

Recovery efforts began the next morning as the Libraries' disaster team (headed by Camila Alire, Dean, Carmel Bush, Assistant Dean for Technical Services, and Diane Lunde, Preservation Librarian) assembled to address immediate needs, including stabilizing the building environment and pumping water out of the basement. By the second day, the University (which had a disaster plan in place, as did the Library) hired Boss & Associates as the disaster recovery consultant that would oversee the campus recovery effort (this firm led the recovery efforts of the World Trade Center bomb damage). Vendors were hired to

stabilize the building and to pack-out the materials from the basement.

The primary concern was the ultimate salvageability of the collection. Standard procedure in salvaging wet books is to freeze the materials within 48 to 72 hours to prevent to the greatest extent possible mold damage.

Because the pack-out of damaged materials was such a gigantic task, which lasted fourteen days (336 hours), mold damage was evident on some volumes and on the building walls before the materials were all transferred to refrigerated trucks for shipment to the contractor (Disaster Recovery Services (DRS), Fort Worth, Texas) for freeze-drying and cleaning. Bill Boss, Ann Siebert of the Library of Congress and Ms. Lunde visited this vendor to determine the protocol for processing the materials. Each volume would be thawed and washed to remove dirt and to reshape the volume if necessary. All materials would be refrozen and freeze-dried before shipping back to the Library.

In October 1997 the Libraries received a 100+ volume sample from DRS that went through this process. The disaster team, the consultants and insurance representatives viewed this sample and concluded that 80% of the materials would be salvageable and 20% would be a total loss. Later estimates have concluded that the ratio of materials salvageable to total loss will be approximately 75% to 25%. It should be noted that the Libraries hopes to replace, in one form or another, all of the items that were lost.

As soon as word of the disaster became known, the Libraries received offers of gift materials to replace damaged items. Starting in November 1997, a processing plant established by Boss and Associates to begin processing materials returned became operational, initially using a staff of some 250 non-library employees. At that point, the plant began processing gifts resulting from an active gift solicitation process.

A total of some 913,000 pieces were received from individuals, corporations, publishers and libraries (ARL libraries, Colorado Alliance for Research Libraries, and other individual libraries). To date, some 96,000 gift volumes have been processed and shelved. Beginning in the fall of 1998, the processing plant began receiving damaged materials back from DRS. To date, some 70,000 volumes have been received by the plant from DRS for repair and rebinding. The first volumes of this group were returned to the shelves this month.

## **Lessons Learned**

The following recommendations prepared by Ms. Lunde could have application for institutions faced with disasters, small or large:

1. It is essential that each library has an up-to-date disaster plan and that the library rehearses the plan regularly.

The CSU staff has handled various minor disasters over the past few years, but had never held a large-scale disaster drill. The Library did have an up-to-date Disaster Plan Quick Reference Guide and a disaster manual.

2. The disaster plan must be adapted to meet the scope of the disaster.

Be flexible, as a disaster plan is a working document and should be enhanced and reworked as required. CSU's disaster plan, while adequate for most disasters, was not practical for the enormity of this particular event.

3. Along with the disaster plan, establish a disaster team of staff from ALL AREAS of the libraries.

The successful restoration of library services, including reference, circulation, and interlibrary loan, are all-important activities in a major disaster.

All disaster team members must be knowledgeable about their disaster recovery duties and should have a copy of the latest version of the disaster plan at home as well as home phone numbers for all their staff.

4. Know who all the non-library players are ahead of time.

CSU has a campus-wide disaster plan that went into action the night of the flood, with the CSU administration leading the disaster recovery effort.

Disaster preparedness is the key phrase. Knowing the many details before a disaster will make disaster recovery easier if and when it happens. For example, determine the role of the library board of directors/trustees and how the library fits into the governmental structure. Find out who owns the building in which the library is located and who holds the insurance policy. Every bit of knowledge helps tremendously so that the disaster team can go forward quickly without stopping to search for essential details when time is at a premium.

5. Know who and where the disaster recovery resources are.

Each library should have a basic "stash" of disaster supplies located on-site. Consider cooperative arrangements for the bulkier and more expensive supplies. Know the names of disaster vendors just in case the disaster is beyond the scope of library staff members.

## **Conclusion**

The Libraries' recovery from this enormous disaster is well on its way, due to a tremendous effort on the part of all Library and University staff, the existence of University and Libraries Disaster Plans, and the incredible response from the State of Colorado, libraries throughout the country, corporations, publishers and individuals.

For more information on this event, contact the University Web page, <<http://www.colostate.edu/floodrecovery/>> or the Libraries Web page, <<http://manta.library.colostate.edu/water.html>>. An extensive report of the flood can be found in the fall 1998 issue of Colorado Libraries. In addition, the University Library has written an account of the disaster with an extensive number of recommendations on how to

cope with large- scale disasters. It will be published by Neal-Schuman in 1999.