

Planning for what you don't want to happen: The Library & Special Collections Emergency Management and Salvage Plan at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Fiona Hughes and Alison Draper

Introduction

Manchester Metropolitan University Library and Special Collections developed their first emergency management plan in 1994 following on from the devastating fire at Norwich Central Library, which destroyed thousands of historical documents and more than 100,000 books. Norwich Central Library did not have an emergency plan at the time so when the Fire Service entered the building to try to retrieve and save material they inadvertently brought out material that was easy to replace before the more rare items, which hadn't been prioritised for salvage. This experience highlighted the necessity for a robust emergency plan, which is now standard requirement for all libraries, museums and archives

Context

Back in 1994, the Library was the first department within the University to devise an emergency plan and the University Plan was developed subsequently. The University Executive Group approved the current version of the University's *Incident Response and Crisis Management Plan* in November 2017 and followed it up with a series of Business Continuity Workshops to roll out the plan to all departments, including the Library.

The original Library plan was maintained and updated on an annual basis to reflect changes such as new floor layouts and updating contact details, however, it did not reflect how the Library service had evolved and the shift in emphasis on what should be salvaged. Training activities did not properly test the plan as they did not involve using scenarios to put it into practice.

By 2016, Manchester Metropolitan University Library's Emergency Plan was in its 14th edition; however, a flood in the archive store in Special Collections demonstrated that it was no longer fit for purpose.

The flood was caused by blocked toilets on the floor above the store, a scenario that had not been anticipated or planned for. A key omission from the old plan was a lack of health and safety procedures and the requirement to undertake a risk assessment prior to embarking on a salvage operation. Therefore, in the panic of the moment, staff responding to the flood did not undertake a risk assessment before rushing in to remove items from the store. Foul water running through live light fittings and dripping on to the archives put them at risk of electrocution from the lights and infection from foul water splashing into their faces and running down their arms. A second failing of the old plan was a lack of a clear line of communication. This caused confusion as to who was contacting whom, multiple people were all trying to ring for help and colleagues in the library were unable to get through when returning calls.

Fortunately, no staff were injured or became ill as a result of the flood and no archives were damaged or destroyed. Another lesson learned was the value of archival quality boxes. The densely

milled card ensured water just pooled on the surface and did not penetrate, whereas the standard cardboard boxes turned to mush and had to be discarded.

In light of the lessons learned from the flood in the archive store and the creation of the new University Plan, the Library Services Manager responsible for Emergency Planning and the Object Conservator rewrote the Library's plan from scratch. In addition to reading literature on the subject and looking at various standards and guides from professional bodies, they sought expert advice from Harwell Document Restoration Services with whom the University has a contract as a Priority User. An initial draft had been produced by early Easter 2018, which coincided with the Fire Service's site visit with the University's Principal Fire Safety Manager. On their walk round they happened to notice the 'Special Collections' banner attached to the outside of the Library building and contacted the Head of Special Collections to discuss creating a comprehensive salvage plan. This led to the establishment of a Task and Finish Group comprising key stakeholders from across the university to critically review and improve the plan.

Features of the new plan

The new Library plan was written in the context of the *University Incident Response and Crisis Management Plan* and *Business Continuity Policy*. It defines what constitutes an emergency and when it is necessary to call out specialist restoration and salvage services. The plan has been simplified, removing unnecessary information, with clear actions and procedures outlined. Written with reference to other plans and templates, it cherry picked the elements most suited to our purposes. The current plan now includes a number of new features.

- The addition of a Library Crisis Management Team comprising Emergency Management Officer, Salvage Officer, the Head of Special Collections, Business Continuity Officer and Health and Safety Co-ordinator. These roles to be assumed by any members of the Library Management Team in an emergency situation.
- Each role of the Crisis Management Team has a briefing card with clear instructions as to the responsibilities and actions expected from that role
- Branded Hi-Vis vests to facilitate quick and easy recognition of Crisis Management Team and Salvage Team members.
- Includes up to date, detailed and specific salvage priorities within Special Collections.
- Space requirements in an emergency (meeting point, control/admin Post, a room for triage of items recovered and a rest area)
- A branded 'Library salvage bag' kept with University Security to enable the Emergency Management Officer to start the Salvage and Recovery Operation. It contains
 - Contact details of CMT & Salvage Team members and a telephone pyramid for calling out the salvage team
 - Key external contacts – donors, professional restoration and salvage services, mutual aid frameworks, Fire Service
 - Laminated briefing cards for all Crisis Management and Salvage team members
 - Hi-Vis vests for all CMT & Salvage Team members
 - A copy of the Emergency Plan
 - A copy of the Insurance Policy

- Laminated floor plans showing services, stop cocks etc. as well as locations of priority salvage items
- Laminated salvage priority cards
- First aid kit
- Clip board and other stationery

Determining Salvage Priorities

Clearly all items in Special Collections are a salvage priority, however, some of those items can be identified as being more vulnerable than others. In a water-based disaster, for example, paper and organic material will develop mould and be permanently damaged within 48 hours, but most ceramics and glass can withstand being wet until there is time to clean and dry them. Other criteria for salvage priority might be if the items are on loan from another individual or organisation, if the item is unique, has specific significance or is hard to replace. Likewise, salvage priorities in the Library itself are those items, which would be difficult to replace.

The new plan has an extensive table detailing salvage procedures for each material or format type and salvage cards are being created for all top priority salvage items. These cards show the location of the item, how it is stored, information on hazards (weight, prone to mould or breakage), handling and salvage information.

Approval and implementation of the Library Plan

The new Library Plan was Equalities Impact Assessed and approved by the University's Head of Security and Business Continuity in October 2018.

Implementation started with a half-day training event for the Library Management Team and two of the University Security Duty Managers. The University's Head of Security and Business Continuity and the Fire Safety Co-ordinator, delivered the training. They covered the nature of emergencies in the 21st century, the University plan, how it relates to the Library plan, how the Fire Service respond and what they expect from us. This provided a very useful alternative perspective on emergency management.

This was followed up with a series of emergency planning and salvage priority tours of the Library and Special Collections. They focussed on the location of salvage priorities in both areas and an understanding of when an incident can be dealt with locally or needs to be escalated. The tours included looking at the emergency response equipment boxes and how the contents can be used to deal with small-scale incidents. The tours were also used as an opportunity to recruit staff on to the salvage team. The Library Management Team, duty managers, customer services teams (including weekend and evening teams) and security staff have all been on a tour, as a result 59 library and security staff now have detailed knowledge of how to respond to a disaster.

Next steps

Further practical training is planned for the Library Management Team and Salvage Team around applying the plan to a variety of scenarios. The Library Management Team will have a meeting with the University Press Office to generate some pre-approved press statements to be issued swiftly in the event of an emergency.

In Special Collections, our Conservators are continuing to create salvage cards for objects and collections and the rolling programme of purchasing conservation grade boxes for paper archives.

The plan is very much a living document and has already had its first update just six months after being published. It will be important to continue to consult with key stakeholders such as legal, H&S, Fire Safety and Security as the plan continues to evolve.

About the Authors:

Fiona Hughes has worked for Manchester Metropolitan University for 28 years in a variety of roles and has been a member of the Library Management Team since 2005. In 2017 she became responsible for delivering library services to the Arts & Humanities Faculty and managing the University's Special Collections, her new responsibilities included updating the Library Emergency Management Plan.

Alison Draper is the Decorative Art and Object Conservator for Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections. This is the University Museum and includes significant collections of books, objects and archives. She is responsible for all aspects of Collection Care.