

Chapter 1

The Research Project and Disaster Management: Introduction

Aim of the Book

The book aims to provide a contemporary overview of disaster management in archives, libraries and museums in the United Kingdom, and an insight into activities elsewhere in the world. It does so on the basis of primary research into real-world experience and activity that has provided a greater understanding and knowledge of current disaster management/emergency planning activities within and across the UK archive, library and museum domains.

It reports primarily on the findings of a research project, ‘Safeguarding heritage at risk: disaster management in UK archives, libraries and museums’, undertaken at Liverpool John Moores University from March 2005–October 2006, by researchers Yvonne Smith and Gemma Knowles, under the supervision of Graham Matthews. The research was funded by an award from the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). In writing the book, the authors have also incorporated information relevant to the topic beyond the end of the project, up to Summer 2008. The research is the first study of a cross-domain nature that provides an overview of the sector, the individual domains, as well as an international perspective.

Digital resources and services were not within the direct remit of the research on which the book is based. This was decided at the proposal stage of the project as its scope was determined. Reviewers of the proposal influenced this decision which was confirmed later by the Project Advisory Panel. Not only would this have added to the already wide scope of the project but others were already addressing this (for example in the UK, the Digital Preservation Coalition).

Audience

The research reviewed current disaster management practice in the UK and abroad and sought lessons from other fields like business and computing and events such as 11 September 2001. It aimed to provide an up to date overview of good practice that would inform cultural heritage strategists and offer practical advice for managers. Information to assist managers and policy-makers has been identified. It was hoped consideration of results could lead to sharing of innovative approaches in practice.

It was also intended that project findings would inform practitioners' and trainers' prioritisation of training topics and contribute to educators development of courses. The audience of the book is thus wide, including archivists, librarians, curators, managers, trainers, consultants – very much reflecting the range of individuals who contributed to the research. Students should also find the contents helpful and complementary to the kind of information on the topic they will find in 'how to do it' publications on their reading lists.

In academic terms, the project was timely as it took place when there was a wider move to interdisciplinary and academic/practitioner research in this field (e.g. the *Preserving Our Past* event (March 2006), funded by the AHRC, Economic and Science Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), English Heritage, to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration amongst the historic environment research community (*AHRC Preserving Our Past Workshop*). As such, the research should provide researchers in other disciplines with an insight into disaster management in this sector and thus facilitate potentially creative initiatives involving several disciplines (addressing, for example, buildings, environment and climate change).

The project has already had an impact on policy, through, for example, informing and facilitating the development of collaborative support networks (e.g. participation in the DCMS's London Emergency Planning Group meetings and its development of AGORA, an extranet to promote collaboration and sharing of experience; and liaison with East Midlands Museum Service Regional Emergency Disaster Support). The newly established Renaissance South East Emergency Response Units has included project findings in its procedural manual.

The project continues to increase awareness and understanding of disaster management in archives, libraries and museums among practitioners and those in other fields with whom they work (e.g. civil emergency planners, fire service) through a range of dissemination activities including publications and presentation of conference papers.

The Research Project

Background

The national cultural heritage in museums, archives and libraries is at risk from natural and man-made 'disasters'. These may cause damage to collections and buildings, with unique material lost forever. Effective disaster management can prevent or reduce this.

Since the mid 1980s, Professor Matthews has had a considerable research interest in preservation management. Through this he became particularly interested in one of preservation management's key aspects, disaster management. The findings relating to disaster management in a broader investigation of preservation

policy and practice in libraries he was involved in in the early 1990s (Feather, Matthews and Eden 1996), led to him directing the last major UK review of the topic, *Disaster Management in British Libraries*, funded by the British Library Research and Development Department, 1995–1996 (Matthews and Eden 1996).

Since then, however, there have been considerable developments across the cultural heritage sector. In the area of disaster management, these include: ongoing professional and institutional activities, their promotion on websites, research projects, applications from other disciplines, and, unfortunately, yet more experience of disasters, from fire, flood and terrorism, for example. Over the period, government in the UK has encouraged increasing collaboration between domains – archives, libraries and museums (and the private sector). It is acknowledged now that the sector incorporates a broad range of institutions, small and large, local and national, each with varying disaster management requirements, levels of provision and resources. Matthews has continued to monitor developments (Matthews and Feather (eds.) 2003; Matthews 2005a) and undertake research (Matthews, et al. 2004; Matthews 2005b) in this field.

Since the turn of the millennium, there has also been a growing international dimension as, firstly, the Internet has offered opportunities for greater sharing of advice and experience from around the world, and, secondly, the impact of terrorism and war has been seen to be widespread and far ranging. In spite of developments to assist disaster control planning, and reminders of the impact of incidents large and small, Wellheiser and Scott noted that the “‘current” ... reality is that many organisations, despite their good intentions, have yet to realise these intentions in the form of a disaster plan or integrated planning’ (2002, 4).

Indeed, disaster prevention and preparedness are activities which some may put off to a later date, the likelihood of experiencing a disaster thought to be remote, the ‘it won’t happen here’ attitude. Unfortunately, there are many incidents of varying cause and scale from around the world to suggest this may not be the case. Well publicised examples include the flooding in Florence in 1966 and its effect on the National Library (*The Florence Flood* 2008), the destruction by fire of Norwich Central Library in England in 1994 (Creber 2003), the devastating fire at the eighteenth century Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Germany in 2004 (*Help for Anna Amalia* 2006). Archives, libraries and museums are not immune from critical, region-wide incidents, for example, the floods in the Czech Republic in 2003 (Vnouček 2005), the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and the ensuing tsunami’s impact on South and Southeast Asia (IFLA PAC Regional Centre for Asia and National Diet Library, 2005), and Hurricane Katrina’s devastation on the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005 (American Library Association 2008). War and terrorism, likewise – for example, the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 (Heritage Preservation 2002), war in the former Yugoslavia (Tejjgeler 2006), and Iraq (Johnson 2005). It was thus felt timely to consider disaster management practice in this context, including reaction to such disasters, and what might be done to foster good disaster management practice across this sector which has responsibility for what are increasingly recognised

as key economic as well as cultural assets. Existing practice within the UK sector needed to be identified and reviewed to inform the development of effective disaster management to meet the needs of museums, libraries and archives in the 21st century. To achieve this, it was also relevant to consider activity in archives, libraries and museums elsewhere in the world, and to look beyond the sector at other disciplines and sectors for different approaches and lessons.

Aim and Objectives

So, what did the project set out to do, and how did it achieve this? It aimed to:

- achieve a contemporary overview of disaster management practice and issues in the UK cultural heritage sector
- identify relevant practice in other countries and sectors
- inform strategists and managers in museums, libraries and archives
- make recommendations for the effective development of disaster management.

Specific objectives included, to:

- identify and review the literature of disaster management in the UK and international cultural heritage sector
- identify and review practice (good and bad), gaps and issues within the UK sector domains: archives, libraries and museums
- identify and review examples of good practice and theory outside the UK and in other disciplines
- compile and make available an up-to-date bibliographic resource of worldwide documentation (including websites) and practical information on disaster management
- recommend how sector-wide development in the UK might be planned and implemented to achieve effective disaster management in individual institutions and sector-wide.

Method

To achieve these aims and objectives, the project employed a variety of methods, including literature and website searches and review, document analysis, questionnaire surveys and analysis, visits to select organisations, and interviews with key individuals/groups.

The literature review emphasised that there is a vast amount of information available, including that from international and outside the cultural heritage sector organisations and, increasingly, this is available on websites (e.g. International Council of Museums (ICOM), *Risk Management*; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); The World Bank, *Disaster Risk Management*). Indeed, most

initial approaches to ‘non-cultural heritage’ institutions seeking information about disaster management were met with a response to ‘see website’. A review of such websites in the UK with a focus on civil emergency planning, risk management and business continuity (including IT) was undertaken. The review highlighted sources of information and advice, tools, services, examples of good practice and models that could be used in the cultural heritage sector, such as those available on the Collections Link website. (Collections Link is a recently established national advisory service for collection management managed by MDA (Museum Documentation Association) in partnership with the Institute of Conservation (ICON) and the National Preservation Office (NPO) and funded by The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).) Analysis of a sample selection of disaster control plans also contributed to the overview.

Literature and website searching also provided insight into practice and initiatives in other countries and sectors. The project coincided with major events (e.g. 7 July 2005 terrorist attacks in London, Hurricane Katrina August 2005) that led to a further increase in information and advice on emergency planning, business continuity, risk management (including IT) on government and other websites, in addition to that initiated by response to previous man-made and natural disasters worldwide.

A contemporary overview of disaster management practice and issues in the UK was achieved through a questionnaire survey sent to a representative sample of UK archives, libraries and museums. The survey results were enriched by data from interviews, and an e-mail survey of regional MLAs and national equivalents. Analysis of a sample selection of disaster control plans has also contributed to the overview, which was also informed by a thorough literature and website search. In addition to investigating the UK situation, the award allowed the project team to contact key institutions around the world. An e-mail survey of institutions/individuals outside the UK was carried out. Select visits outside the UK afforded opportunities to meet individuals with whom the researchers had already been in e-mail contact as well as new contacts. Interviews with international experts took place.

Individuals who contributed to the project as interviewees or respondents to the questionnaire and e-mail survey were assured of personal and institutional anonymity, including attribution of quotes in publications resulting from the research. To maintain this anonymity, no lists of individuals or institutions are provided. The authors in no way wish to underplay the contribution of the many participants who have contributed greatly to the project but wish to respect the confidentiality assured.

Team members’ attendance at, or participation in, a range of events, both during the course of the research and after it as part of the dissemination of findings have enabled them to gather, share and discuss information and views and to keep abreast of developments, and as such have contributed not only to the research but to the broader content of the book. They are grateful to individuals and organisations who have invited them to participate and for the information and

discussion that has contributed to the research and the writing of the book. Such events (in chronological order) include:

- Disaster Preparedness Planning – Stage 2.* Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, London, 19 April 2005.
- Savings Plan: Emergency Planning for Museums.* Museums Association, London, 25 April 2005.
- Rising from the Rubble: Tsunami Devastates Sri Lankan Libraries.* Presentation by Premila Gamage, Member, Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) Tsunami Library Development Project; Secretary, Twinning and Adoption Task Force of the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Committee for Libraries, Information Services and Archives, Career Development Group, London and South East Divisions, with International Library and Information Group, CILIP, London, 24 August 2005.
- From Parchment to Pictures to Pixels.* Society of Archivists Conference 2005, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 6–9 September 2005.
- Has Preservation Come of Age? 21 Years After the Ratcliffe Report.* National Preservation Office Annual Conference, The British Library, London, 31 October 2005.
- The 3-Ds of Preservation: Disasters, Displays, Digitization, Symposium co-sponsored by the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the International Federation of Library Associations, Preservation and Conservation (IFLA PAC) Core Activity & IFLA Section on Preservation and Conservation,* Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, 8–10 March 2006.
- Capturing Katrina: Collections – Recovery Experiences and Future Directions in Safeguarding Document Collections,* Library of Congress, Washington DC, 20–21 April 2006.
- Disaster Management for Libraries and Archives,* CILIP University College and Research Group East Midlands Section, University of Leicester, 27 April 2006.
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport London Emergency Planning Group (meetings October 2006-).
- Practitioners' Panel,* East Midlands Museums Service, Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham, 8 December 2006.
- Responding to Climate Change,* Institute of Conservation. Care of Collections Group. Responding to Climate Change. Annual meeting, Tate Britain, London, 25 April 2007.
- Safe and Sound: New Approaches to Emergency Planning,* Museums Association, London, 21 May 2007.
- Information Providers Coping with Disaster in Asia-Oceania,* IFLA Asia and Oceania Regional Section Open Session, 73rd IFLA World Library and Information Congress, Durban, South Africa, 19–23 August 2007.
- Differing Directions: Challenging Communities,* Society of Archivists Conference, The Queen's University, Belfast, 28–31 August 2007.

10th World Forum for Motor Museums, Haynes International Motor Museum, Sparkford, nr Yeovil, 16–21 September 2007.

Beyond the Deluge: Moving Forward, Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber, Leeds, 26th November 2007.

Don't Panic! Planning an Effective Disaster Response, The Midlands Federation of Museums and Galleries, RAF Museum Cosford, 2nd July 2008.

Further information about methods used is provided in appropriate chapters in the book.

What is Disaster Management?

Disaster

‘Disaster’ can be an emotive term. The definition used in the project was that determined in a previous investigation of disasters and their management in libraries:

any incident which threatens human safety and/or damages, or threatens to damage [or destroy], a library’s buildings, collections, contents, facilities or services. (Matthews and Eden 1996, 4)

Disasters can result from a range of causes, man-made and natural, including: arson, burst pipe, electrical fault, leaking roof, poor maintenance, earthquake, hurricane, flooding, terrorism, war. They vary in scale and impact. Some may cause minor inconvenience, others can have enormous consequences for the library and its parent organisation, with catastrophic damage to stock, equipment, buildings and disruption to services, with considerable financial implications. If the incident is major and/or region wide and life threatening, emergency services will give priority to human safety and re-establishing the local infrastructure.

Disaster Management (Emergency Planning)

Archives, libraries and museums should take measures to prevent disasters. Not all, however, can be prevented, so they should also prepare for them, and how to react to them to minimise their effect. This should be done in a flexible, not a prescriptive manner. Activities aimed at achieving these ends constitute disaster management. It should be noted that whilst ‘disaster management’ is a term commonly used in libraries and understood by archivists, in the museum domain it is normally referred to as ‘emergency planning’.

Disaster Control Plan

At the centre of effective disaster management is the disaster control plan:

a clear, concise document which outlines preventive and preparatory measures intended to reduce potential risks, and which also provides details of reaction and recovery procedures to be undertaken in the event of a disaster to minimise its effect. (Matthews and Eden 1996, 4)

Over the last thirty years or so, the disaster control plan has been the basis on which disaster management has been founded and developed.

Any disaster, even a minor one, will cost time and money, cause other work to be delayed and possibly inconvenience users. Good disaster management, whilst it can never totally prevent disasters occurring, will reduce their likelihood and enable the library to deal more efficiently and effectively with them. (Matthews and Eden 1996, 72)

The disaster control plan normally addresses four stages:

1. Prevention
2. Preparedness
3. Reaction
4. Recovery.

However,

disaster management includes much more than the formulation of a written disaster control plan. It encompasses broader management issues such as finance, risk assessment and training. (Matthews and Eden 1996, 4)

It is, therefore, vital that the plan is not just words on paper, it should be a blue print for action, and so preparedness should involve familiarisation with all of its aspects. Training for all staff is vital so that they are aware of its contents and know their roles, individually and in teams. Appropriate stores of equipment and material for dealing with incidents should be maintained. With regard to reaction, staff should know how to raise the alarm, who to call in, how to identify material for appropriate treatment, and to protect undamaged material. Recovery will include activities such as arranging insurance assessment, drying or treating materials, offering counselling to staff, providing a temporary service, and returning storage areas and services to normal. The plan, which should be a concise document for ease of use, should be regularly reviewed and updated. Specialist advice, such as that from conservators, external consultants or disaster recovery companies may be sought as appropriate. Digital materials and computing facilities will require

separate attention and within larger institutions may be the responsibility of another department with whom the archive, library or museum should consult. Outside the heritage sector, it is important to liaise with the local fire service and civil emergency planners to familiarise them, for example, with the archive, library or museum and its collections, for advice on security and business continuity.

Risk Assessment and Management

Disaster control plans should be based on risk assessment and management of those risks. Potential hazards, risks and threats inside and outside the library, archive or museum need to be identified, actions relating to them prioritised, and strategies put in place for their removal or response to them to minimise their impact. This must be an ongoing, regular process as external and internal circumstances will change.

Business/Service Continuity

Disaster control plans should include or be developed alongside business or service continuity plans. Whilst the disaster control plan will facilitate response and reaction to an incident, if the incident threatens to stop or disrupt delivery of services (or business), then this must also be addressed as well as dealing with the aftermath of, for example, the flood or fire. Disruption to, or cessation of services to readers or visitors will not only cause them inconvenience, but may also contribute to financial loss for the institution. Contingency arrangements, therefore should be in place to provide temporary services to minimise negative impact on institution's business plans and income generation.

Archives, Libraries and Museums

A list of the types of archives, libraries and museums included in the survey is given in Chapter 3.

Arrangement of Chapters

Chapter 2 considers the context of disaster management in archives, libraries and museums. To help readers put the following chapters in perspective, it offers a broad overview of the cultural heritage and disaster management. It then moves on to focus on archives, libraries and museums and introduces the international context and key international agencies working in that. Next, the UK context is outlined, followed by a brief review of developments in disaster management there.

Chapter 3 provides a summary of the findings of a questionnaire survey of archives, libraries and museums in the UK, and a survey of regional MLAs.

Chapter 4 provides a select overview of activity worldwide and nationally, based on the findings of an e-mail survey of institutions and individuals, the literature, and select websites. It highlights key developments and issues.

Chapter 5 focuses on the disaster control plan and, based on analysis of disaster control plans and responses to the UK questionnaire, considers its significance and what it should cover, with examples. It also looks at why some institutions do not have plans.

Chapter 6 pulls together key themes that have emerged from the research and illustrates them with comments from interviews and survey responses.

Chapter 7 reflects briefly on achievements and whether lessons are learned before moving on to consider aspects of disaster management that need to be addressed in planning for future activity, including working with others beyond the cultural heritage sector.

Chapter 8 lists sources of information on disaster management, under broad headings, for archives, libraries and museums.

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