# The
# Special Collections
# Handbook

SECOND EDITION

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Alison Cullingford

# Contents

# Preface and acknowledgements

In 2000, I became the first ever Special Collections Librarian at the University of Bradford, UK. I took charge of collections that were truly hidden: little known, uncatalogued, unused, neglected and vulnerable to damage. Thanks to a great deal of help from colleagues at Bradford and in the profession, I have been able to make many of these materials available for the first time. I was thrilled to be asked by Facet Publishing to write this book to share my experience and knowledge of developing Special Collections from scratch with few resources. Five years on, this fully revised edition brings the busy student or practitioner up to date on the many new developments across our sector.

Far too many people have helped directly or indirectly in the creation of both editions of this book to begin to thank them all, notably colleagues in the CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group, Research Libraries UK, and The National Archives. I would particularly like to mention here my colleagues at Bradford who gave me the opportunity to manage and transform a wonderful set of Special Collections, and above all the Special Collections Assistants, John Brooker and his successor Martin Levy. On a personal note, many, many thanks to Simon and to my parents for all their support.

<div align="right">**Alison Cullingford**</div>

# Introduction

## Introducing Special Collections

So what are Special Collections, and where are they to be found? Special Collections are everywhere!

1   They are held by all kinds of organizations: research libraries, universities, colleges, schools, national libraries, public libraries, museums, art galleries, archives, historic houses, cathedrals, subscription libraries, learned societies, hospitals, companies, monasteries . . .
2   They include many kinds of material: early printed books, manuscripts, pamphlets, ephemera, maps, photographs, archives, newspapers, digital files and much more.

The term 'Special Collections' can refer to the collections themselves, the staff who care for them, the physical and virtual spaces they occupy, and the administrative department in a larger library that manages all these entities. In this *Handbook*, the context should make it clear which meaning is intended.

The term also implies the existence of other, non-special collections. Many Special Collections services are part of a library which offers many other services, an arrangement typical of university and research libraries. However, you will also encounter libraries which contain mostly 'special' material, in which case the term is less likely to be used.

Until relatively recently, Special Collections were seen as special because they needed special care: the materials were too old, valuable, rare, unique or fragile to be stored on open library shelves. As we will see in Chapter 1, this remains true: Special Collections materials need particular care if they are to survive, and their well-being should be at the heart of all management activities.

However, Special Collections are special also because of their potential relevance to people outside the library service and in the long term.

This idea becomes explicit in what Peach and Mertens (2014) describe as 'the more expansive term' Unique and Distinctive Collections, recently popularized by Research Libraries UK and the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). This term helps us define

and explain the meaning and significance of collections in ways that transcend the traditional discussion of age and financial value (more detail in Cullingford, 2014). In this edition, I continue to use 'Special Collections' in most contexts, but refer to 'unique and distinctive collections' when appropriate.

Note that in larger services, the term 'Special Collections' is often reserved for modern unpublished rare material, with early printed books, archives and/or manuscripts managed separately.

To make this book as useful as possible, I apply the widest definition of 'Special Collections', covering any material that is managed by any Special Collections service, including rare books, manuscripts and archives. In doing so I follow the Association of College & Research Libraries (2003) definition: 'Special collections materials: The entire range of textual, graphic and artifact primary source materials in analog and digital formats, including printed books, manuscripts, photographs, maps, artworks, audiovisual materials, and realia.'

## Using *The Special Collections Handbook*

The *Handbook* is written for professional librarians working with Special Collections, or those aspiring to do so, especially library school students and new professionals. It will also be useful to anyone who needs an introduction to the subject, including managers of Special Collections staff, archivists and museum professionals, paraprofessional library staff or volunteers. For convenience, I generally refer to the individual professional as a 'librarian' and their organization as a 'library'.

The book takes a pragmatic approach to the management of Special Collections, encouraging readers to seek practical ways forward in tricky situations where there are no perfect solutions. The main chapters cover all aspects of Special Collections work, taking the reader from the basics of collections care to reaching out to new audiences to the politics of acquiring funding and support. UK libraries with archival holdings should note that the chapter structure maps onto the new Archive Accreditation Standard (The National Archives, 2014): Collections management (1–7), Access (8–10), Organizational health (11–12). This standard is discussed further in Chapter 12. Digital issues appear throughout; coverage has been much enhanced in this new edition. The appendices list key resources and skills required for Special Collections work.

Look out for the examples and case studies! This book is packed with useful information, but managing Special Collections effectively is not just about information but about judgement and balance. I have therefore included many real examples for readers to consider. I have anonymized the libraries involved where the story may reflect badly on them, but note that all these stories came to me from public sources on the web or in print.

Each chapter includes a list of useful websites, web citations for the examples and case studies, and suggestions for further reading. The bibliography at the end of the book includes all bibliographic citations and other titles that readers may find helpful. The

references are not intended to form a comprehensive review of the academic and professional literature on Special Collections, which is beyond the scope of this work.

Mindful of the time and financial pressures faced by so many Special Collections librarians, I have cited resources that are freely available on the internet or easily found in print wherever possible. As web addresses change and new resources become available, I will maintain indefinitely a list of these citations on the Special Collections Handbook website (see below).

The *Handbook* does not include:

- instructions on how to use particular software
- generic management skills
- records management; aspects of managing archives are covered in a Special Collections context.

Please note that:

1 The occasional mention of commercial companies is there to help readers; it should not be seen as an endorsement of a particular firm by Facet Publishing, CILIP or the University of Bradford.
2 In Chapter 7 and throughout the book, legal issues are discussed from a Special Collections management perspective. Libraries are advised to seek expert advice before taking any action that may have legal consequences.
3 In research libraries and other large organizations, preservation, cataloguing and other functions are often departments in their own right, separate from 'Special Collections'. For simplicity, though, I treat these functions as part of Special Collections in most chapters. The challenges of this arrangement are explored in Chapter 11.

## Special Collections in a cold climate . . .

Like the first edition, this book is written in difficult and uncertain times for higher education and public institutions worldwide: we face political and economic uncertainty, budget cuts and threats to the very existence of libraries. Meanwhile, audiences expect quicker replies and more online material. Special Collections librarians, like their colleagues throughout the information and heritage sectors, face the challenge of having to do much more with less.

However, there is hope:

1 New technologies offer free, fun ways to reach out to audiences, and to communicate and learn from colleagues.

2  Parent organizations are beginning to understand that Special Collections are priceless assets that can help them achieve their missions: such collections are distinctive, full of stories and human incident, unique, rich and real.

Despite the challenges, the five years since the first edition have seen new reports, new collaborations, new publications, new standards; great progress has been made on digital curation, on tackling hidden collections, on doing what we do – better. Managing Special Collections now is about making the most of what is available, thinking strategically, and being proactive and flexible to adapt and shape changing circumstances. I hope this book will help librarians to understand their problems, to set priorities, to manage effectively, and, above all, to try new ideas.

## Some essential organizations and web resources

Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections, www.amarc.org.uk.

Association of Research Libraries, www.arl.org.

CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group, www.cilip.org.uk/about/special-interest-groups/rare-books-special-collections-group.

Consortium of European Research Libraries, www.cerl.org.

Historic Libraries Forum, www.historiclibrariesforum.org.uk.

IFLA Rare Books and Special Collections Section, www.ifla.org/rare-books-and-special-collections.

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College & Research Libraries (part of the American Library Association), www.rbms.info.

Rare Books in Scotland, www.nls.uk/about-us/working-with-others/rare-books-in-scotland.

Research Libraries UK UDC Hub, www.rluk.ac.uk/udc.

## Useful mailing lists

Archives & Archivists, www2.archivists.org/listservs/archives.

Archives-nra, www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=archives-nra.

Ex Libris, https://list.indiana.edu/sympa/arc/exlibris-l.

Lis-rarebooks, www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=lis-rarebooks.

RBMS Electronic Discussion List, http://rbms.info/publications/discussion_list.

For more information, resources and links please visit the author's companion website at http://specialcollectionshandbook.com.

# 2
# Emergency planning for Special Collections

## Introduction

The threats to Special Collections outlined in Chapter 1 harm collections over a period of years. This chapter discusses threats that can destroy collections or items within them very quickly: the timescale for effective action is much shorter, so prevention, planning and rapid response are essential. The chapter will cover:

1 Causes and impact of emergencies in Special Collections, with particular emphasis on fire and water damage.
2 How to prevent and prepare for emergencies via the emergency plan.
3 Issues in responding to and recovering from emergencies.
4 Planning for service continuity.
5 Security issues and how to manage them.
6 Insurance issues.

## A note on terminology

An **emergency** is 'any incident which threatens human safety and/or damages or threatens to damage (or destroy) an institution's buildings, collections, contents, facilities or services' (Matthews and Eden, 1996, cited by Matthews, Smith and Knowles, 2009). **Emergency planning** seeks to prevent such incidents or to minimize their impact when they occur.

The term '**disaster**' has traditionally been used by librarians to describe such events. It is not widely used in other professional areas, and 'avoidance of the word "disaster" is seen as more positive' (Dadson, 2012). The terms **crisis** or **incident** may also be encountered.

Emergency planning also needs to consider how to get the service back to normal as quickly as possible. This is known as **service continuity** or **business continuity** planning. The US government uses the term **continuity of operations** (COOP).

## Understanding Special Collections emergencies

Special Collections are at risk from emergencies that may harm collections, affect services, and put human life and welfare in danger. Incidents are caused by various phenomena, including:

1 **Extreme weather conditions**: heavy rainfall or other precipitation, hurricanes or tornadoes, resulting in floods or destruction/damage of buildings.
2 **Geological phenomena** such as earthquakes, which impact on the building and its infrastructure.
3 **Buildings and facilities problems** such as electrical fires, leaking roofs and pipes.
4 **Accidental damage**, for example, fire started by discarded matches or cigarettes.
5 **Arson** and other criminal damage.

Accidental and deliberate incidents caused by people are also discussed under security, below. Serious mould outbreaks or pest infestations (see Chapter 1) may merit treatment as emergencies.

Many incidents affecting collections, whatever their original cause, feature the destructive forces of fire and/or water. Here we discuss these in more detail.

### Fire

Fire can kill or seriously injure people and destroy buildings. It is probably the greatest threat to Special Collections: as Artim (2007) says: 'Vandalized or environmentally damaged structures can be repaired and stolen objects recovered. Items destroyed by fire, however, are gone forever. An uncontrolled fire can obliterate an entire room's contents within a few minutes and completely burn out a building in a couple of hours.' If not totally destroyed, items in collections may crack and be distorted by heat, and be harmed by smoke and soot (consider the damage done to the subject of the Chapter 1 case study, the Great Parchment Book). Firefighting adds water to the equation.

Witness the Norwich Central Library fire of 1994. Caused by a fault in old secondary wiring, the fire spread so quickly that although the fire brigade arrived within two minutes, they could not even enter the building. The Local Studies books, the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library, and all the lending books were lost; the County Archives, stored in fireproof vaults, were saved although wetted. Hammond (1996) gives a vivid picture of the impact of this major disaster on collections, on staff, and on users.

The **fire triangle** (Figure 2.1) is a helpful model for understanding how fires start and how to extinguish them: a fire needs fuel, oxygen and heat – remove any one and the fire will stop (you may also encounter the **fire tetrahedron**, which includes combustion that fuels the fire).

1 **Oxygen** cannot be eliminated, except in automated stores, which, as we will see in Chapter 4, can maintain a lower level of oxygen than would be safe for people.
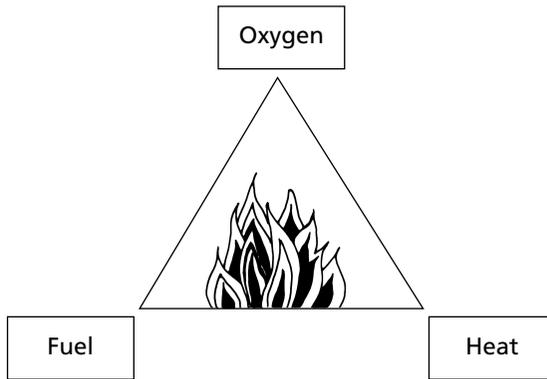
**Figure 2.1** *The fire triangle*

2  **Fuel**. Libraries by their nature contain material that will fuel fires. However, ensuring that shelf layout is safe and maintaining a good standard of housekeeping will reduce the fuel available to a fire.

3  **Heat**. It is the introduction of heat into the situation that makes library fires happen. Library fires typically are started by:

- **Electrical problems**, for example wiring faults. Both the Norwich fire and the Duchess Anna Amalia Library fire of 2004 (in which 50,000 rare books, sheet music, manuscripts and artworks were destroyed) were caused by such faults.
- **Catering facilities**, for example stoves.
- **Gas leaks**.
- **Smoking**: discarded cigarettes or matches. Smoking should never be permitted in buildings housing Special Collections, and smoking outside should be restricted to safe locations well away from the building.
- **Arson methods**, for example Molotov cocktails, lighters. The 1986 Los Angeles Public Library fire, in which half a million books were destroyed, was caused by arson (though a poor building design that allowed tightly packed stack areas to act as a flue resulted in far more damage than would otherwise have been the case). See Various Authors (1986).
- **'Hot work'**, for example welding, soldering. Times of building work are therefore particularly risky. The 2013 fire at the National Library of Wales (NLW) was started when a propane-powered blowtorch in use during works on a roof ignited timber.
- **Fires from outside sources**, for example bush or grass fires.

Other factors such as building design can make it easier for the fire to spread once it has started. This is a particular concern in historic buildings, which have older electrical systems and were not designed, as modern buildings are, to prevent and contain fire. The Glasgow

School of Art (GSA) fire in 2014 illustrates how one minor incident plus other factors can come together to devastating effect. Gases in a foam canister used by a student creating a project display were ignited by a projector: the fire spread quickly through ventilation ducts, resulting in the loss of the iconic Mackintosh Library.

Libraries as public places must follow local fire safety laws, for example, offering fire extinguishers, fire doors, places of assembly and other key points. Fire safety officers and local fire services may be able to offer advice. Fire detection and suppression systems are key for the safety of people and collections. In the past, librarians were wary of installing sprinkler systems because of the risk of water ingress into collections storage areas. However, sprinklers introduce far less water than firefighting hoses, and materials can survive wetting as they cannot survive burning (witness the survival of the archives at Norwich). Modern sprinkler systems have become increasingly sophisticated: water-mist methods use smaller quantities of water at higher pressures than traditional sprinkler systems.

## Water

Water-based incidents in Special Collections occur at different scales, ranging from building problems such as leaks from pipes, toilets, roofs, windows, drainpipes, etc., to major flooding of rivers, lakes and seas caused by extreme weather or earthquakes, which crack dams or cause tsunamis.

Like fire, water is an incredibly destructive and deadly force. Depending on its source, it may be contaminated with sewage or other hazardous materials. Floodwaters contain large pieces of debris and move with shocking speed and power. However, water incidents caused by building problems (unlike fire incidents) may have a natural limit because of the amount of water in the system. A case study of a serious river flood incident appears later in this chapter (see Queensland Floodlines, pp 36–7).

Water harms objects in collections because, as we noted earlier, they absorb it. To complicate matters, this absorption happens at different rates depending on the materials of which the objects are made. Figures quoted by Waters (1993): hand-press-era manuscripts and books may absorb water to 80–200% of their original weight, most modern books 60%.

Some results of water absorption are:

- modern bindings may disintegrate
- pages on coated paper (shiny/glossy), as used in magazines and illustrated books, stick together when wet
- vellum, parchment and paper cockle
- photographic emulsions and water-soluble inks run
- books become larger, heavier and more fragile, which distorts their structures. The increased weight may cause shelves to buckle, sending volumes tumbling to the ground, where more damage from standing water and debris is likely.

Alongside this mechanical damage, high relative humidity will encourage mould growth, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Detecting water incidents with internal causes is about good maintenance and staff awareness. Various kinds of water alarm are available, which may be helpful particularly for rarely accessed spaces.

## Preventing and preparing for emergencies in Special Collections

Prevention begins with identifying and assessing the risks to Special Collections, looking at factors that could cause incidents, as discussed above.

Risks that stem from geological or climate factors are unavoidable and often devastating as they affect whole regions. Prevention should centre around building and refurbishment to appropriate standards and planned action if a warning is received. See Miller and Pellen (2006), Dadson (2012) and the CoOL database for many case studies of libraries coping with such incidents. Our case study, below, is a good example of an unavoidable situation (rising river flood) which was mitigated by effective planning.

Other risks to consider include:

1 **Physical nature of the collections**. Is there hazardous material? How might different collections react to water immersion?
2 **Inside the library building**. Locations of sewage and water pipes? Flat roofs? Heating plant on roof? Smoking areas? Catering facilities?
3 **Outside the building**. Storage of rubbish? Neighbouring buildings?

Existing preventive measures should also be considered – are they adequate?

Action should be taken to remove or mitigate any risks where this is possible and practical. Risks inherent in the location of the library or the basics of the building will be out of the control of library or organization staff, but their impact can be reduced by effective planning.

In addition to regular risk assessment, constant awareness by staff of Special Collections spaces and the areas around them is essential. Many incidents begin small, and, if contained, result in little harm: for example, a fire or burst pipe may do no damage if caught early. Staff should therefore:

• make sure fire exits are kept clear, fire doors shut and fire extinguishers in their proper places
• monitor known water leak locations
• look out for poor storage of materials that could fuel fire
• understand how the building works: what sounds, smells and temperatures are normal?
• look out for anything unusual.

Staff should be extra vigilant during:

- building works (witness the NLW fire, above)
- vacation times. Risk is increased because buildings are closed, which means problems may not be spotted, and key staff are away, so response may be slower and less effective.

Good housekeeping is also vital. For example, putting materials away in boxes or on shelves when not in use gives them more protection from water.

## Creating the emergency plan

Developing an emergency plan for Special Collections is a major task. If Special Collections is part of a larger library, librarians and conservators can also become involved in emergency planning for the rest of the service. Your parent organization may have a standard emergency planning template to be used by individual services to plan at institutional level.

You will find other templates and guidance in 'Further reading' and 'Useful websites'. Note that many companies and co-operatives specializing in collections care make disaster plan templates available as online resources or downloadable templates. These offer a useful starting point or comparison for an existing plan. See for example dPlan™, designed for small and medium-sized organizations; Mallery (2015) includes a chapter on using this template. In the UK, the templates offered by Harwell and Museums East are widely used.

**Pocket response** or **one-page plan** templates are increasingly available (see the PreP and California Preservation Program plans). Unlike the traditional large document which may end up unread in a filing cabinet, these are much more likely to be kept to hand, in wallets or handbags, and therefore available when needed.

However, the template is just a starting point. The 'plan must be more than words on paper; it should be a framework for action' (Matthews, Smith and Knowles, 2009). No real-life incident ever fits exactly into a pre-planned structure, but good planning gives staff tools, ideas and confidence to cope with whatever happens.

Your planning process should consider:

### Communications

Who might find the incident? Remember cleaning staff and security guards as well as library staff. Who should they contact? Out of hours, who can be called in? How will they travel, where might they be based? Telephone trees and mini-versions of the plan containing contact details are useful ways to manage communications. Mobile phones make it much easier to contact colleagues and keep in touch, but bear in mind that during a major incident networks may be overloaded or shut down by the emergency services.

### Decision making

There are many decisions to be made quickly in emergency situations. Staff need to be trained and empowered to make these decisions, and roles defined. Many libraries will be part of a larger public body that will have its own emergency management structure, including a crisis management team. If this is the case, Special Collections staff need to be part of this structure and form links with the other key people. In the event of a large disaster (loss of a whole building, for example) emergency management teams may be in action for several years.

### Set priorities for rescue and salvage

Which Special Collections are central to your mission, irreplaceable or heavily used? Consider creating a 'grab' or 'snatch' list of the most important materials to rescue first, though be wary of how and where this list is publicized, and ensure it does not encourage staff to put themselves in danger. Note materials that need special care (e.g. glass plate negatives should not be frozen) and remember key Special Collections documentation, for example accessions registers, card catalogues. Remember you may have a day or two at most to tackle wet materials before mould grows!

Salvage processes can be expensive and/or space- and labour-intensive. Don't automatically assume that all books in a library should be salvaged. For self-renewing items in Special Collections (see Chapter 4) or general library stock, it may be better to 'replace the knowledge base' and focus efforts on unique and distinctive materials.

### Develop procedures for rescue and salvage

Don't let a real incident be the first time you or colleagues handle wet or damaged materials. Seek practical training and share with colleagues. Small quantities of damaged material can often be salvaged by in-house air-drying (see note below). In general, protecting undamaged stock (by removing it or covering with plastic sheeting) is the first priority.

### Identify equipment

Many Special Collections create wheeled boxes or bins containing items for dealing with small incidents (e.g. hazard tape, newsprint or blotting paper, scissors, gloves, absorbent booms, aprons, plastic sheeting, plastic buckets or bins for catching leaks, plastic crates, etc.). Preservation suppliers often sell ready-made emergency kits. The boxes should be stored somewhere accessible but not tempting for casual use, and a member of staff should be responsible for filling, monitoring and replenishing contents.

In an emergency, it is easy for staff to become confused about which kind of formats need particular care. What can be air-dried? What should be kept wet, or not? What should be frozen, or not? The waterproof salvage wheel, available from preservation suppliers, is a cheap aide-memoire. Items that would need special care can also be marked:

for example, boxes containing glass plate negatives could be marked 'Don't freeze' – in waterproof ink.

However, boxes should not be relied on for a major incident. The planning process should identify other sources of useful materials. The rise of 24/7 supermarkets and garages is a boon for acquiring useful basics in a hurry. For larger items such as pumps, dehumidifiers and emergency lighting other sources such as the estates department (if you have one), local hire firms and co-operative networks should be explored. In large incidents affecting whole areas of cities such equipment will be hard to obtain locally, in which case networks of support may be able to help. Methods of emergency payment for equipment should be agreed in advance with finance staff.

### Develop networks

Establish links with relevant colleagues such as health and safety or estates staff, and try to become involved with the wider organization's emergency planning. Document recovery services such as Harwell Document Recovery Service offer discounts on and help with large-scale transport, freezing and freeze-drying, and access to independent experts with experience of similar events.

Help and support can be found via formal or informal arrangements with other libraries and heritage organizations. These are a few examples:

- The Yorkshire Rapid Response Network is a co-operative of Yorkshire heritage organizations that share emergency kit and training. The Network (Johnstone, 2010) mobilized archivists and conservators during Christmas 2010 to help a small museum whose textile collection was damaged by a burst water pipe (reinforcing the point made about vacations, above).
- COSTEP: Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness is a planning tool which brings libraries and other cultural bodies together with emergency services, at US state level.
- National Heritage Responders (USA), formerly AIC-CERT, conservators who help affected cultural institutions remotely or in person.

## Salvaging wet materials
### Air-drying

Small numbers of wetted books can be air-dried with excellent results. The following techniques are fine for general library books and certain Special Collections items if carried out by trained staff; but valuable, vulnerable or fragile formats should be assessed by a conservator. Air-drying takes up a lot of space, so your planning should consider suitable locations.

1  **Saturated books**. Handle as little as possible. Stand the book on absorbent paper, propped if necessary. Keep changing the paper until the book is wet rather than sodden.

2  **Partially wet books**. These should be interleaved with absorbent paper and laid flat. The interleavings should extend beyond the edges of the volume; make sure interleaving goes right into the gutter. Interleaving takes staff time (which will be at a premium) and will distort the book's structure if overdone. Every 20 pages or so is recommended.

3  Slightly **damp books** may be dried without interleaving by fanning them open in a current of air.

4  Once books are **almost dry**, they can be pressed back into shape: lay flat, place absorbent paper between covers and text block, and lay a light weight on top. This should only be attempted when the book is almost dry, otherwise mould will grow.

Blotting paper or newsprint are suitable absorbent papers; the latter can sometimes be obtained cheaply as ends of reels from local printers. It is best to keep a stock pre-cut to standard interleaving sizes. Newsprint (as we note elsewhere) is acidic and so should not be left in rare books longer than absolutely necessary to dry them.

Coated papers should be separated from each other while still wet; if allowed to dry it will be impossible to separate them. In this case, interleaves must be put between every page.

The storage area should be well ventilated (by fans if necessary) to encourage evaporation, the temperature kept stable and humidity kept low by dehumidifiers if possible. Results will vary depending on the nature of materials: some cockling and distortion may be inevitable but a usable book should be the result.

### Beyond air-drying

Air-drying is not practical when hundreds or thousands of books are wet, or once mould has started to grow. The safest way is to freeze wet materials using the facilities of a document recovery service. This prevents the growth of mould. Material can be stored in this way indefinitely, allowing time for insurance and other decisions to be made. It can later be dried out using the freeze-vacuum drying technique and conserved.

## Planning for technological incidents

Increasingly, services, activities and collections are based on digital technologies. Thus incidents affecting these technologies can have serious implications. Technologies can be affected by floods, fires and other natural and man-made disasters of the kinds which also impact buildings, analogue collections and human safety; Mallery (2015) includes case studies of technological disasters caused by flooding.

Other incidents, though, affect technologies only, not buildings, books or people. They can be caused by a local issue (such as a power failure) or an issue affecting a service

provided remotely: witness the 2015 and 2016 distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks on the UK's academic JANET network, which meant universities, including Special Collections services, lost access to e-mail and other network facilities for several days, a huge disruption to business.

Managing technological incidents involves the planning processes outlined in this chapter: considering the risks, mitigation, service continuity and recovery. However, there are significant differences from analogue practice:

1  Who is involved and who is responsible? IT experts in-house and/or remotely are experienced in coping with problems and the planning process needs to facilitate their work rather than being overly prescriptive.
2  Digital services can be restored within days rather than the months or years it takes to dry out buildings and analogue collections. However, this is only possible if organizational factors make it possible for experts to solve problems.
3  Risks are minimized by good housekeeping, as with physical collections. Remember the LOCKSS concept: lots of copies keeps stuff safe!

Chapter 6 and the section on digital preservation in Chapter 1 cover the safe storage and management of digital collections. Our case study, below, shows effective recovery of IT systems following a flood.

## Planning for service continuity

Service continuity issues may seem less pressing than saving unique collections. However, they should be taken seriously: if services are unavailable, the consequences include:

* **Impact on users,** ranging from minor inconvenience and cost of a cancelled visit to serious threats to their career, for example if dependent on particular collections to write a PhD.
* **Loss of income**, for example from reprographics or retail facilities. A prolonged closure goes beyond this to threaten the entire mission.

Planning for service continuity is similar to emergency planning for collections care and should be considered in parallel. The following are key points:

1  **Identify services**. Alongside the obvious visits and enquiries, virtual services, teaching and anything else offered to the public should be considered (see Chapters 8–10). A similar process should be followed when planning exhibitions, events and other projects.
2  **Identify risks** to those services and activities. In addition to the risks to collections discussed above, consider issues that could affect the elements your services need in order to function, such as the reading room, staff availability, equipment.

3 **Assess risks**. Work out how likely events are to happen and the impact if they do, and focus on addressing those which are most likely and have most impact on the service. This is not a one-off process: managers should watch out and plan for events which might affect their services, such as adverse weather, building works or industrial action on public transport.

4 **Prevent risks** if possible, for example avoid software issues by choosing widely used, well supported, interoperable systems. However, many of these risks are unavoidable, so:

- **Plan to minimize risks**, for example how can services be made available in different ways? It may be as simple as booking a back-up room for a key event or arranging for training for another member of staff. However, legal and preservation issues should be considered: if the reading room function cannot be safely replicated elsewhere, it would be better to close the service until the problem is rectified. Virtual services such as the digital library (see Chapter 6) and live chat (see Chapter 8) increasingly allow libraries to offer support to users during incidents affecting physical services.

- Think **resilience.** It is impossible to imagine and plan minutely for every eventuality. Services should try to train and empower staff so that they make good decisions and cope well whatever happens. This is the approach advocated by IT experts in Mallery (2015).

- **Consider how to communicate with users** in these situations, for example informing those with appointments. Useful ideas include using the out-of-office reply function on e-mail, social media (see Chapter 9), and publicizing via Special Collections listservs and networks relevant to your collections. Services which operate on a drop-in basis should take particular care to broadcast news of service issues: it may not occur to regular users to check before their visit.

Sometimes a problem can be turned into something positive: for example, the flight home of a Magna Carta manuscript belonging to the Bodleian Library on tour in the USA was delayed by the 2010 volcanic ash cloud; it was possible to arrange an exhibition at the Morgan Library in New York during the delay so that more people had a chance to see this treasure. The manuscript and the work of the Bodleian also got extra positive publicity.

## Responding to Special Collections emergencies

1 **People matter most**. Your health, and that of your colleagues and users, is more important than any materials! Make sure that you and your staff understand this and do not put yourselves at risk. While working, whoever is in charge should be mindful of the personal needs of staff (arranging for refreshments and loo breaks), and counselling should be made available to support them.

2 **Appreciate the scale**. The shape of response will be very different for different scales of incident. For example, it may be possible to air-dry 50 wet books in two days using existing staff, space and materials. However, 5000 or 50,000 will be a major

disruption, and require specialist help with packing, transport and, probably, freezing. The Norwich, Los Angeles and Duchess Anna Amalia fires mentioned above show the scale of major incidents: hundreds or thousands of volunteers involved, millions of items affected, conservation and rebuilding efforts lasting years.

3  **Assess and document** the damage.

4  **Protect undamaged stock and materials**, by covering them or removing them from the building.

5  **Categorize damaged stock** and put plan into action.

6  **Think insurance**. See the note on insurance, below. When an incident is large enough to consider making a claim, communicate with insurers as soon as possible. They will send a loss adjuster if the claim will be large. Document what is happening, take photographs and videos, and record actions taken.

7  **Communicate**. Effective communication with users, staff and other stakeholders and management of press demands are vital. Emergencies now unfold in real time on social media, as was seen with the NLW and GSA fires already mentioned. This can bring in vital support, but increases pressure on those involved. The press office (if you have one) or head of service would probably deal with the media, but staff will also need guidance on how to cope with queries. See Chapter 9 for more on communication and the media.

## Recovering from Special Collections emergencies

1  **Lessons learned?** After any incident, however small, it is important to review what has been learned. What worked? What didn't work? Did you have the materials you needed? Keeping an incident log is useful, as it reveals patterns of small incidents that may suggest a more significant problem. The lessons learned could also help other libraries.

2  **Slow process**. The long-term impact of a disaster on the individuals involved can be huge. The response to large incidents can take years. If an emergency affected the whole region, staff and users will have suffered other losses. Communication remains vital: keep staff, users and the public involved in the ongoing story. As our case study illustrates, libraries offer support, 'normality', and assist communities in all kinds of ways.

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## Case study: Queensland Floodlines
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This is one of several instructive case studies in Dadson (2012); see also the websites and blogs listed in 'Examples and case studies'.

In January 2011, rising waters from the Brisbane River flooded the basement of the State Library of Queensland, Australia. The pre-planning and reaction of the staff were exemplary; for instance, they already had good plans, and such facilities as a river level alarm which triggered the use of the Counter Disaster

Plan. Photographic and other precious materials were carried out of the lower levels into safe storage. IT systems were also successfully recovered. The library was running almost normally within a month. The incident demonstrates features relevant to all emergencies, and some that are increasingly relevant as libraries rely more heavily on IT provision:

- Plans were tested in advance, e.g. they had practised and timed the process of lining photographic storage units with felt to minimize condensation.
- Despite this, much still depended on staff goodwill and commitment. This is a reminder that people's health and well-being must be valued: as we mentioned above, breaks, access to sustenance, and feeling supported and valued are essential.
- Response and recovery were complicated by key staff being unable to get to work in person, mitigated by some effective running of services by staff working at home, though note also issues of access to systems and networks. These challenges were made easier by **redundancies** (in computing, this means duplicate hardware and other devices for back-up), and effective use of alternative providers and social media sites for communication.
- In a region-wide disaster, a library can help preserve memories and act as a community focus. See SLQ's Floodlines memory project, and their practical guidance for people whose personal papers have been affected.

## Security and theft in Special Collections
### Understanding the problem

Special Collections are vulnerable to theft. Materials such as early printed books, first editions or atlases are portable, may have high market values and other iconic or aesthetic qualities. The theft of individual plates and maps from volumes, to increase the value of a poorer copy of the same work or to sell as individual items, is particularly difficult to prevent and detect.

The nature of Special Collections work means that simply locking material up is not an answer. Use, marketing and outreach are essential for the survival and development of Special Collections. These activities may increase risk by raising the profile of treasures, yet they may also secure further funding that means that cataloguing, awareness and protection can be increased.

Security and emergency planning overlap: a fire may be started to disguise or distract from a theft. Special Collections are also at risk from terrorism, vandalism and other criminal activity.

## Developing a security policy

The Association of College & Research Libraries/Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (ACRL/RBMS) guidelines (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2009a) suggest appointing a Library Security Officer or a larger group of staff with responsibility for security. In smaller services, this role may be undertaken by the Special Collections librarian. A service lacking in-house expertise might bring in a security consultant, though they should be carefully vetted first. As with the emergency plan, risks should be identified and assessed, preventive measures taken where possible, and plans for response and recovery created and shared. Here are the key concerns:

### Building security

The library building can be protected by measures such as high-quality locks on exterior and interior doors, grilles over windows, security guards, security systems and lighting, and closed-circuit television (CCTV). Entrances/exits should be kept to a minimum. However, such measures work best against out-of-hours intruders, so should not be completely relied upon. Human factors and theft during opening hours pose significant risks.

### Collection management

Effective management of Special Collections can help prevent incidents and make sure the damage is known if they do occur. More guidance is available in the ACRL/RBMS recommendations (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2009a) and see Chapters 3–5 for more information about these activities.

1 **Acquisitions and cataloguing**. Good record-keeping and cataloguing mean libraries will know that a theft or damage has occurred and what has been lost/damaged. Material should be accessioned on arrival in the building and its location noted. Copy-specific cataloguing that covers provenance and condition means that the value of a lost book and the damage done to a mutilated one can be seen.
2 **Marking and labelling**. Unique and indelible marking of materials should be considered where this is compatible with their preservation needs, for example a discreet embossed book stamp for rare volumes.
3 **Stock-taking of material against catalogues and lists**. Ideally all collections would be checked at least once a year, but in practice most Special Collections do not have the staffing to do so. Ways to make the most of whatever stock-checking is possible include irregular patterns of checking (to deter in-house theft) and concentrating on the collections of highest market value, for example atlases or stamps. Records should be kept of missing materials (which may of course be mis-shelved) and checked regularly against their shelf location.

4 **Internal transfer**. Rare material on open shelves is particularly at risk: see Chapter 4 on internal transfer procedures to Special Collections.

5 **De-accessioning**. This process should be properly documented and guidelines followed in marking de-accessioned works (see Antiquarian Booksellers Association and CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group, 2015).

## *Users*

Theft in Special Collections tends to happen during use by readers (unlike, say, art galleries and museums, where break-ins out of hours are more of a concern), probably because it would be very difficult to locate a particular item during a break-in, and researchers using Special Collections are allowed to handle them. A balance between access and security should be sought, matching security concerns with the issues discussed in Chapters 8–10. The library needs to decide who is allowed to use material and how they register and prove identity: for example, asking users to sign a user agreement, bring photo ID, or arrange a letter of recommendation. Access to uncatalogued material requires extra care; advice can be found in Chapter 5. Ways to minimize the risk of theft by users include:

1 **Browsing**. Users should only interact with materials brought to them by staff and should be supervised during the process. They should never be allowed to browse unsupervised in strongrooms. Where collections and users share space (in historic libraries), measures such as alarmed wires across shelves will be needed. Some collections in a reading room, for example modern bibliographies, could be browsable.

2 **Quantities**. Users should not have too much material at once. How much is too much depends on the service and nature of collections. Center and Lancaster (2004) include examples of typical rules on this subject in US and Canadian research libraries.

3 **Check in and out**. Materials should be checked in and out. One technique to consider is weighing at check in and out with sensitive scales to ensure nothing has been removed (see Wilkie, 2006).

4 **Records** of materials accessed should be able to match a person to the exact items they have used. Given that it can take many years for stolen works to emerge on the antiquarian market, these records should be kept for long periods or even indefinitely.

5 **Belongings** can be used to mutilate volumes and conceal thefts, so libraries need restrictions on what can be taken into the reading room, lockers and cloakrooms for personal belongings.

These measures may be impossible for smaller libraries: for example, there may be no space for lockers. Such services must rely on personal observation and interaction with users;

larger services such as national libraries cannot generally supervise individuals as closely, so need tighter restrictions on access and belongings.

Even where these measures are in place, it is dangerous to assume that these will keep collections safe. Thieves are ingenious. East and Myers (1998) tell the story of a thief who cleverly altered documents after removing philatelic rarities so that it would not have been apparent to staff checking the documents back in that anything had been changed. Librarians need to be aware of the monetary value of their collections and understand what is most likely to appeal to thieves. Different procedures may be needed for the most valuable collections, for example access to medieval manuscripts only with evidence of research.

### Staff and insider theft

Staff who are well managed, motivated, care about the collections and are observant can be a great help in avoiding theft. Rules about access and use need to be clear, and staff empowered to challenge unexpected situations.

Sadly, it is not rare for staff, interns or other trusted persons to steal from Special Collections, a distressing phenomenon known as **insider theft**. Theft is easier for such people than for users, as they have access to storage areas, may be unsupervised, and can even alter finding aids to cover their tracks. The risks can be minimized by restricting access to storage areas, controlling keys (especially when staff leave) and developing clear procedures for staff use of collections. Staff should keep their personal belongings away from the reading room and strongrooms. Any removal of Special Collections from the building should be for Special Collections purposes such as exhibitions or teaching, and be properly recorded: it should not be normal for staff to remove items from the premises. 'An atmosphere of trust and concern for the collections is probably the best guarantee against theft by staff' (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2009a). Anderson (2014) discusses issues raised by theft and attempted sale of valuable Wesley letters from Drew University by a student employee, who created duplicate finding aids to attempt to conceal the theft. Libraries need to balance the risks against practical considerations and other concerns: in this example, the service needed student workers, and their involvement was part of outreach to students, therefore revised procedures were developed to safeguard collections.

### High-risk times

Extra vigilance and planning are needed to minimize risks at high-risk times, for example:

1 **Building work**: new people are in and around the building, and new opportunities for theft may arise, for example access via external scaffolding (note how many times building work crops up as a risk factor in these chapters!).

2 **When in transit**, for example for exhibition loan or conservation work. Resource (2003) is full of useful detail on managing couriers. See Chapter 1 for discussion of exhibition risks.

3 **Emergencies**, even if not directly affecting collections, may open opportunities for theft.

## Responding effectively to an incident

**Reporting.** Thefts and mutilations should be reported to the organization's security services and the police. Consider contacting the Art Loss Register, a huge worldwide database of stolen art and other heritage materials. It is also strongly advisable to alert the professional listservs listed in the Introduction. Antiquarian booksellers are key partners in the fight against rare book theft. They suffer thefts from their own premises, and are also likely to be offered for sale material stolen from libraries: the Drew University theft cited above was spotted by a vigilant bookseller. Contact them via their associations (full list in Chapter 4); they can publicize the theft via e-mails to members and online resources such as the ILAB Stolen Book database and the ABAA Security Blog.

**What is worth reporting?** The new Code of Conduct drawn up by the Antiquarian Booksellers Association and CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group (2015) suggests raising the alarm for any materials worth over £100 (any over £300 should be reported to the Art Loss Register).

**Publicity and prosecuting.** Libraries who are victims of theft are in a difficult position, in not wishing to advertise security weaknesses. Insider theft is particularly embarrassing. However, as the Code of Conduct states, publicity makes recovery of stolen material more likely. Even if a theft is only discovered some time after it happened, it is still worth reporting and publicizing it: the nature of the antiquarian book trade is such that material may come to light years later. Note that insurers may require some level of publicity in the hope of recovering the material, such as reporting to the Art Loss Register.

**Try other sites.** In addition to the networks listed above, materials stolen from libraries may be listed on eBay and other internet sites. Libraries who have suffered a loss should monitor these, and other libraries may also find them useful to spot thefts that may not have come to light. Larger services may have recovery teams who target fairs and sites selling relevant material.

**Legal aspects of recovery** are not straightforward. Legally libraries should be able to recover their material. The Code of Conduct summarizes the position in English law: a stolen object remains the property of the owner (i.e. the library) unless they transferred title or **abandoned** the material. Note that 'Neither negligence in storage, nor the length of time since the theft are sufficient to amount to abandonment'. However, return of stolen goods across borders is more complex. Libraries may wish to negotiate to compensate a bookseller or individual who has purchased material in good faith.

**Lessons learned.** After a theft, access and security arrangements need to be reviewed to avoid a repeat. Subjects or genres that have suffered mutilation or an unexplained rise

in interest may be vulnerable to theft. The results can be shared to help other libraries protect their collections, as we see in the following case study.

## Case study: the Durham First Folio

A Shakespeare First Folio was stolen from an exhibition at Durham University, UK, in 1998, and recovered sadly mutilated ten years later. An individual was convicted not of its theft but of handling stolen goods. After its return, the volume was the centrepiece of a new exhibition in a major exhibition space at the University, after which it was conserved.

This story exemplifies some key points about rare book theft:

- The timescale: the Folio was recovered thanks to the awareness of experts at the Folger Library, when it was handed in for valuation, many years later.
- It offers an opportunity to safeguard other vulnerable collections by making a case to improve storage, cataloguing, security, etc. Lessons were learned and security was tightened at Durham.
- The use of publicity by the University, which highlights six other books taken in the same incident that have not so far been recovered, and promotes their other important Special Collections.
- Early printed books are unique artefacts. The book was mutilated to disguise its origins, but the nature of early printed books, discussed in Chapter 3, meant that experts were able to find evidence that confirmed it was Durham's copy.

## A note on insurance and valuation

Insurance is a tool for managing risk and is an important part of recovering from emergencies and security issues. Organizations pay a premium to insurers to take risks to themselves. Many Special Collections are part of larger organizations and are covered by an overall insurance policy. In other organizations, a specialist insurer may be used.

Despite the complex language of insurance, the key issues are those covered in these first two chapters: the nature of collections, the risks they face and the actions taken to minimize the impact of these risks. Keep your insurer informed of changes such as the arrival of new collections, altered risks (e.g. major building work), exhibitions or loans of collections, or new co-operative or third-party arrangements.

Special Collections librarians struggle with the issue of valuation, as frequent pleas to the listservs suggest. Staff may be overwhelmed by the idea of having to come up with market values for millions of items (not to mention that market values fluctuate constantly). Other material has little or no market value, but immense contextual or research value, for example collections of ephemera, pamphlets, objects, newspapers or

local material. Another concern is the growing divergence in practice from general libraries, which, as we noted above, will nowadays in the event of damage to physical collections often seek to replace the 'knowledge base' with electronic resources rather than attempt to salvage and repair. Librarians need to ensure insurers and senior managers understand that Special Collections are an appreciating asset.

If market values are needed, specialist third-party appraisers such as antiquarian booksellers should be used. It is common practice to list individual items above a certain market value and insure a percentage of the market value of the rest.

Some senior managers in libraries used to argue that as Special Collections are irreplaceable, there is no point in insuring them, as it would be impossible to purchase replacements. This idea seems to be in decline, as Martin's (2002) survey of US and Canadian research libraries revealed. Fortunately, as it misses a key point: unless there is total loss through fire or theft, objects tend to survive in some form, even if wet, burned, or deformed. Even stolen books may be recovered – though as in Durham's case mutilated. Such damaged artefacts can be salvaged by freezing, freeze-drying and conservation processes; expensive but quantifiable processes for which an insurance payout is essential.

Communication is key: advance, documented agreement between the library/ organization and the insurer about the value of significant items and how value will be established in the event of a loss. It may be reassuring to know that, compared to the risks faced by artworks, Special Collections are considered low risk by specialist insurers: collections are kept in one place, by people who care about them, and public access is closely supervised.

In addition to standard insurance policies, it is worth investigating schemes that help cultural institutions cope with the cost of commercial insurance: for example, in the UK the government indemnity scheme covers loans of objects for exhibition to many organizations including libraries.

## Conclusion

Emergencies (especially fire and flood) pose great risks to collections and services. However, good planning makes it possible to prevent emergencies or at least minimize their impact, by assessing risks, training staff and preparing equipment and procedures. Theft and vandalism are also major concerns; a balance has to be found between security and access. Again, there are ways to prevent and reduce damage through managing collections, access and buildings. Understanding insurance is an important part of managing all such incidents.

In Chapters 1 and 2 we have discussed the basics of care of Special Collections. Many improvements, such as PD 5454:2012-compliant storage, are expensive; however, well trained staff who care about the collections and their users, and good housekeeping practices, can improve care even in less well resourced libraries.

## Further reading

Useful textbooks on emergency planning: Dadson (2012), Kahn (2012), Miller and Pellen (2006), Matthews, Smith and Knowles (2009), Robertson (2015) and Wilkinson, Lewis and Dennis (2010). See also Mallery (2015) for technological incidents, Halsted, Clifton and Wilson (2014) on service continuity.

Security: Benny (2013) and Wilkie (2011), comprehensive compilations of advice on security; Association of College & Research Libraries (2009a) ACRL/RBMS guidelines on security and theft; Antiquarian Booksellers Association and CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group (2015) code of conduct for librarians and booksellers on theft of books and manuscripts. Resource (2003) offers detailed help on fire and security. Kahn (2008) is a detailed guide to building issues.

## Examples and case studies

Bodleian Libraries: Travel Disruption keeps Magna Carta in New York,
www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/news/2010_apr_21.

Duchess Anna Amalia Library, www.anna-amalia-bibliothek.de/en/brand.html.

Durham University Celebrates Return of Shakespeare First Folio,
www.dur.ac.uk/news/newsitem/?itemno=10344.

Glasgow School of Art fire,
http://icon.org.uk/news/remains-day-glasgow-school-art-fire-two-years.

National Library of Wales fire, www.llgc.org.uk/information-for/press-and-media/press-releases/2013-press-releases/national-library-of-wales-fire-investigation-report.

State Library of Queensland floods,
https://stumblingpast.com/2011/01/28/saving-damaged-archives;
http://blogs.slq.qld.gov.au/floodlines;
www.itnews.com.au/news/librarians-rewrite-the-book-on-disaster-recovery-245107.

## Plan templates online

California Preservation Program templates and plans,
http://calpreservation.org/information_resources/emergency-prep-and-response.

DPlan™, www.dplan.org.

Harwell Document Restoration Services disaster plan templates,
www.hdrs.co.uk/templateplan.html.

Museums East, template widely used by UK museums,
http://sharemuseumseast.org.uk/resources/collections-resources.

NN/LM Disaster Ready Initiative, http://nnlm.gov/ep/disaster-plan-templates.

North East Document Conservation Centre Worksheet for outlining a disaster plan,
www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/3.-emergency-management/3.4-worksheet-for-outlining-a-disaster-plan.

Pocket Response Plan™ PReP ™ Templates, www.statearchivists.org/programs/emergency-preparedness/emergency-preparedness-resources/pocket-response-plantm-prep-tm-english-template.

## Useful websites

Many of the preservation resources listed in Chapter 1 cover security and emergency issues, and see CoOL database for full text articles.

ABAA Security Blog, www.abaa.org/security.
Art Loss Register, www.artloss.com.
Australian Library and Information Association disaster recovery pages, www.alia.org.au/information-and-resources/disaster-planning.
CERL Security Working Group, www.cerl.org/collaboration/security.
COSTEP, www.nedcc.org/free-resources/costep.
Government Indemnity Scheme (UK), www.gov.uk/guidance/government-indemnity-scheme.
ILAB Stolen-book.org, www.stolen-book.org.
International Committee of the Blue Shield, http://icom.museum/programmes/museums-emergency-programme/international-committee-of-the-blue-shield.
National Heritage Responders, www.conservation-us.org/emergencies/national-heritage-responders.
RBMS Security Committee, https://rbms.info/committees/security.