


7. Krummel, Bibliographies, 90.


This work is the proceedings of an International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) conference held in Berlin in 2003 and includes essays on general aspects of disaster preparation and protection and specific examples of responses to disasters. Global in scope, this book contains discussions of libraries and disaster issues on several continents. Many of the authors stress that each institution's situation is unique, but they also emphasize common themes and issues that all such cultural institutions face. Thus this book is valuable both for the specific suggestions offered and the overall mindset it inculcates.

The first section on national policy planning stresses the importance of cooperation among different types and sizes of institutions. No one library or museum will have the resources or know-how to prepare for and survive all types of disasters, natural or man-made. Sharing information and solutions in advance will enable all the participants to provide a more flexible and timely response to floods, earthquakes, or any other calamity. The authors also report on the importance of advance planning and surveys to determine what to save first and who to call for help.

A section on planning specific to institutions includes museums in Turkey vulnerable to earthquakes. Drawing on their own experiences as well as experts from other earthquake prone areas of the world such as California and Japan, these institutions are able to set priorities for remediation of exhibit and storage spaces as well as make informed decisions regarding new construction. An article on disasters in Sweden stresses the importance of preparing for the psychological aftereffects as well as the physical ones.

Patrons and staff can both suffer when a beloved library is lost to a fire.

Case studies of floods in Prague and a hurricane in Jamaica underline the importance of the practices pointed out by other authors. Being prepared by knowing what everyone is expected to do and who to call for help can make an enormous difference in recovery—both in the amount of time required and the financial resources needed to make good the losses.

Risk assessment and comparisons of collection recovery options are also discussed. Many of the essays include extensive lists of resources for libraries and other cultural institutions initiating or revitalizing their disaster preparedness plans and policies. Most valuable are the organizations, some global, some local or regional, that can assist institutions of any type or size in “preparing for the worst.”

This book will not replace a disaster preparedness manual, such as the one from ALA, but it is valuable in developing critical thinking about the specific issues facing cultural institutions. Many collections do not merely have great monetary value but are irreplaceable repositories of a cultural heritage. This is something everybody responsible for preparedness should bear in mind and communicate to their governing bodies and the disaster responders they will be interacting with should the worst happen.

Perhaps the most important point, raised in this work by several of the authors, is that disaster planning is a process. It does not end with the production of a thick binder that rapidly disappears in the back of a filing cabinet or the top shelf of a busy director's office. Public-service librarians as well as conservators should be thinking about the possibilities inherent in new acquisitions and new construction. Thinking critically about what to do in a worst case scenario should not be a constant obsession, but it should be an important factor in any new initiative a cultural institution undertakes. By bearing in mind the examples provided in this volume and taking advantage of the many resources included in it, your institution will not automatically be better able to deal with seemingly overwhelming catastrophes, but if you can ensure your constituents and yourself that you have done all that can be done to prepare and react to disaster, you will have taken the first steps to recovering and rebuilding both your personal and institutional confidence.—Dan Forrest, (dan.forrest@wku.edu), Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.


This slender volume—which, speaking of cost analysis,