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Guidelines for Resource-Sharing Response to Disaster Preparation and Response

Prepared in 2009 by the Codes, Guidelines, and Technical Standards Committee of the Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS) of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of the American Library Association (ALA)

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Introduction
The Reference and User Services Association, acting for the American Library Association in its adoption of this guideline, recognizes the importance of disaster planning and appropriate resource-sharing responses to libraries affected by disasters, whether of natural or human origin.

The nature of a disaster that may affect a library is difficult to predict in terms of type, timing, and level of damage. It is therefore difficult but necessary for libraries to plan for potential disasters. Regardless of the type of disaster, as an affected library begins its recovery effort, resource sharing can be an important avenue to ensure continuity of service to the library's users.

1.0 Definitions
1.1 Resource-sharing activities include services such as interlibrary loan, document delivery, consortial/remote circulation, access services, courier services, and other shared library services.

1.2 A disaster is any circumstance that significantly damages a library facility and/or its collections and that results in disruption to the services of that library for an extended period of time. A disaster, whether of natural or human origin, may involve but not be limited to the following types of damage: flooding/water, fire/smoke, mold, tornado/hurricane/wind, earthquake, vandalism, and/or structural collapse.

1.3 Responding libraries are those not affected by a given disaster that are willing to provide assistance to an affected library or libraries.

2.0 Purpose
The purpose of this guideline is two-fold: 1) to make recommendations regarding preparation in advance of potential disasters and 2) to make recommendations regarding resource-sharing responses to libraries affected by disaster.

3.0 Scope
This guideline, although not a policy, recommends communication channels and processes to assist libraries affected by disasters and outlines library-to-library responses to ensure continuity of service to users of affected libraries.

4.0 Preparation before a Disaster
4.1 Libraries should have an up-to-date disaster plan that at the very least includes current contact information for essential personnel, including the persons responsible for recovery and communications. Resources for writing an

institutional disaster plan are available on the American Library Association "Disaster Preparedness and Recovery" website at http://www.ala.org/advocacy/govinfo/disasterpreparedness.

4.2 In terms of resource-sharing needs, libraries should identify in their disaster planning documents what partnerships and agreements they have with other libraries. Resource-sharing agreements and expectations for consortium relations during a disaster should be explicitly defined. If such agreements do not already exist, libraries should consider forming them. Additionally, libraries should consider developing a formal relationship with a library or related institution in another region to act as a backup for important information and/or as a conduit for communicating to other libraries after a disaster.

4.3 Departments/divisions that participate in resource sharing should develop their own disaster plan or ensure that their institution's disaster plans adequately address resource sharing concerns.

The resource sharing disaster plan should include information about and assign responsibility for such matters as:

4.3.1 Where resource-sharing operations might relocate after a disaster;

4.3.2 How requests are to be received and processed;

4.3.3 How materials are to be delivered to users;

4.3.4 What technology and equipment needs exist;

4.3.5 How staff might be redistributed to ensure efficient services;

4.3.6 How institutions are to be contacted about the disaster and assistance needed;

4.3.7 How to make changes necessary in the OCLC Policies Directory, DOCLINE, etc.;

4.3.8 How to contact delivery services such as the U.S.P.S., FedEx, UPS, and any van or consortial delivery services that ship to or from your library.

5.0 Proposed Channels of External Communication
Informing others of a disaster that has affected a library can be difficult: electricity may not be available; computers, phones and/or their lines may be damaged; and mail/courier routes may be disrupted; especially if a disaster affects multiple libraries within a region. In the latter case, consortial operations may also be disrupted. It is advisable for a library to employ several methods of communication to ensure that information reaches all targeted institutions.

Examples of possible methods of communication include:
5.1 Posting messages to resource sharing listservs, such as ILL-L, CircPlus, STARS-L, and others;

5.2 Using electronic communication such as wikis, blogs, Facebook, or Twitter to provide updates;

5.3 Arranging "telephone trees" with consortia and partner libraries;

5.4 Establishing a toll-free hotline to disseminate and receive information;

5.5 Contacting library associations to provide news releases.

6.0 Resource-Sharing Information to be Communicated by Affected Libraries
When a library is affected by a disaster, resource-sharing operations may have specific information to be shared with the library community, such as:
6.1 New address information;

6.2 Dates for which services will be suspended;

6.3 Service needs, such as due-date extensions, storage space, alternative courier routes, etc;

6.4 Equipment & supply needs, such as computers, printers, scanners, book carts, office supplies, etc.;

6.5 Staffing needs.

7.0 Recommendations for Responding Libraries
After a disaster has occurred at a library, potential responding libraries should wait to be contacted by the affected institution(s) or their designee(s) so as not to add to the stress of the recovery effort.

Once contacted, responding libraries may be asked for assistance with resource-sharing equipment or service needs, such as the following:

7.1 Direct assistance in the rescue of damaged or potentially damaged materials;

7.2 Computer and other office equipment/supplies;

7.3 Interlibrary loan of print and electronic resources without charge or at a reduced rate;

7.4 Extended due dates for materials lent to the affected libraries or their users;

7.5 Fee waivers for items lost or damaged during a disaster;

7.6 More time for billing matters to be resolved;

7.7 Onsite or remote access to collections/resources;

7.8 Bookmobile services.

Conclusion
All libraries are encouraged to have an up-to-date disaster plan. Since resource sharing can be a vital component to ensuring continuity of service during disaster recovery, staff responsible for resource sharing should ensure that their potential needs are adequately addressed in their institution's disaster plan. Libraries are strongly encouraged to form resource-sharing agreements with other institutions and to develop contingency plans before a disaster occurs. After a disaster, affected institutions should employ a variety of methods to communicate their needs to the resource sharing community. Non-affected libraries are encouraged to respond as generously as possible to the resource-sharing needs of disaster-affected institutions.