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Emergency Disaster Preparedness and Response

Shawna Gandy
Oregon Historical Society Research Library

Kris Kern
Portland State University

Judith Norton
Oregon Health Sciences University

Alex Toth
Pacific University

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Emergency and Disaster Preparedness and Response

“*Not if, but when ...*” is an oft repeated phrase heard in many emergency and disaster response workshops and represents a simple acknowledgement that an emergency or disaster can occur in any institution at any time. In this issue of the *Quarterly*, we seek to remind ourselves and our colleagues of this and what can be done to mitigate the effects of such an occurrence.

Thinking about the unpleasant possibilities associated with a library emergency or disaster is never easy and often avoided until avoidance is no longer an option. How we plan to respond in the event of an emergency or disaster determines the success or failure of our efforts to preserve materials, provide continuity of services and recover.

This issue’s focus is a result of our activities and work in the Portland Area Library System (PORTALS) Disaster Response Group and the Oregon Library Association’s Library Preservation Roundtable. It is also a reflection of our mutual interest in and concern about emergency and disaster response preparedness in Oregon libraries. In this issue you will find:

- An article that explains and encourages the development and use of collaborative networks to leverage emergency or disaster resources that are often beyond the means of a single institution.

- The essential elements of a written institutional disaster response plan.
- Descriptions of emergencies and disasters that have occurred in several Oregon libraries written by the individuals who dealt with them.
- An article that presents the digitization of resources as both a preservation strategy for resources potentially affected by an emergency or disaster and a factor that must be accounted for in any emergency or disaster response plan.
- A description of the development and work of The Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service (WESTPAS) that serves as a further reminder that the process of emergency and disaster response planning is continuous.
- A “Further Reading” section that brings together additional sources of current information on emergency and disaster response planning that merit your attention.

We hope this issue will both inspire those who currently have no emergency or disaster response plan to begin the process of developing one, and motivate those that do have a plan to review and update it. Without such planning, it is

possible for small emergencies to easily become large ones, and for large ones to become catastrophes. Sensible asset management practices, preservation of collections, and good stewardship are all excellent reasons to engage in emergency and disaster response planning.

Guest editors

Shawna Gandy
Oregon Historical Society
Research Library

Kris Kern
Portland State University

Judith Norton
Oregon Health and Sciences University

Alex Toth
Pacific University Library

The Oregon Library Association Preservation Roundtable (LPRT) was established in 2007 to provide a framework for the sharing of information among librarians, library workers, and library supporters interested in preservation and emergency and disaster response preparedness activities in all types of libraries. The LPRT welcomes new members. For additional information, please go to the LPRT Web page at the OLA Web site: <http://www.olaweb.org>

