



Australian Library and  
Information Association



BLUE SHIELD  
Australia

# ALIA DISASTER MANAGEMENT FOR LIBRARIES

Part One – Guide  
2nd edition 2019

**ARTLAB**  
AUSTRALIA



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First edition (2010). *ALIA guide to disaster planning response and recovery for libraries and ALIA disaster planning for libraries* [template].

Second edition (2019). *ALIA Disaster Management for Libraries Part one - Guide, Part two - Disaster Plan Template*.



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**Heather Brown and Christine Ianna**

# Glossary of terms

Below are some definitions of commonly used terms in library disaster management.

**Business continuity** 'is the planned activity performed by an organisation to ensure that its critical business functions continue to be available. A typical business continuity plan will include:

- a list of essential business requirements
- identified risks and assessment on their impact on the business; and
- a strategy to respond to, manage and recover from an incident.'

(National Archives of Australia. Business continuity and disaster planning).

The **Command structure** is the hierarchy and chain of command that helps to clarify, organise and co-ordinate responsibilities, disaster response actions and the flow of communication across the organisation. It is commonly used in larger libraries.

A **Crisis Management Team** is the team of staff that is formed to manage a significant disaster event and it may have a **Crisis Management Team Leader** as its coordinator.

**Digital** collections are of two types. The first type comprises those that are 'born digital' and for which there is no analogue equivalent, while the second type comprises digitised or 'turned digital' materials that are copies or surrogates that have been created by converting analogue materials to digital format. (Digital Preservation Coalition).

A **Disaster Team Leader** has the prime responsibility for coordinating all stages of collections disaster management: prevention, preparation, response and recovery. During and after a disaster they lead the specialist operations of response and recovery, guiding a **Disaster Team**. There may be specialist Team Leaders for digital and physical collections. The Disaster Team Leader may report to a coordinator such as a **Crisis Management Team Leader**.

**Disaster management** is the broad term used to cover the overall organisation, planning and application of measures in preparing, preventing, responding to and recovering from disasters. (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience).

**Disaster Plan:** a collections disaster plan provides a set of procedures and protocols 'to be followed by an organisation to prevent or minimise the risk of a disaster occurring, and to describe actions to be taken should a disaster occur.' Usually a collections disaster plan covers all the above sub stages of prevention, preparation, response and recovery. A collections disaster plan can also variously be referred to by other similar terms such as a Disaster Preparedness Plan or a Counter Disaster Plan. (National Library of Australia, Library Preservation Glossary).

**Disaster preparedness** describes the steps taken in advance to prepare for a disaster and involves developing the disaster plan, identifying key personnel and supplies, and training which builds resilience. (Heritage Collections Council. Be Prepared).

**Disaster prevention:** this usually involves assessment of risks and developing strategies to reduce the likelihood or consequence of disasters affecting collections. (Heritage Collections Council. Be Prepared).

**Disaster response:** this stage happens during a disaster event and involves steps to minimise the consequences - such as protecting or moving collections. (Heritage Collections Council. Be Prepared).

**Disaster recovery:** this stage involves steps taken to minimise the disruption and return services to as near as 'normal' as possible. (Heritage Collections Council. Be Prepared).

The **Disaster Team** is a core group of people who can respond to a disaster, each person with one or more defined roles. Organisations with an integrated disaster plan may need two specialist Disaster Teams for digital and physical collections.

An **integrated disaster plan** is a collections disaster plan that covers both digital and physical collections in a framework that explicitly interconnects disaster management across the physical and digital domains. (Brown).

**Master files/copies** (sometimes referred to as preservation master files or archival master files) are 'copies created to high capture standards and... could take the place of the original record if the original was destroyed, damaged, or not retained. ... masters generally do not undergo significant processing or editing.' 'Both physical format and digital preservation masters are managed and maintained in a secure storage environment and are retained over the long term.' (National Archives of Australia).

**Physical** collections include paper-based analogue items such as books, journals and newspapers, manuscripts, diaries, maps, posters and plans, as well as photographs, microforms, audio visual materials and physical carriers of digital materials such as compact disks (CDs). (Adcock).

**Resilience** is 'the ability of individuals, communities or countries to anticipate, withstand and recover from adversity – be it a natural disaster or crisis.' (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience). Resilience is supported by disaster preparedness and especially through training.

**Risk assessment** in the context of disasters is 'a qualitative or quantitative approach to determine the nature and extent of disaster risk by analysing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of exposure and vulnerability that together could harm people, property, services, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend.' (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience).

**Risk management** is 'the systematic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the tasks of identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating and monitoring risk.' (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience).

**Surrogate copies** are reproductions of the information content of an original item in another medium, usually one which is more durable.

**Vital records** are 'those records that are essential for the ongoing business of an agency, and without which the agency could not continue to function effectively.' (New South Wales State Archives and Records. Glossary of Recordkeeping Terms).

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## List of icons



Prevention



Preparation



Respond



Recover



Emergency





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This updated **Guide** and the accompanying **Disaster Plan Template** provide concise information about how to safeguard library collections in the event of a disaster and have been updated from an earlier edition (ALIA, 2010). The **Guide** (Part one) sets the scene, giving an overview and context for the Disaster Plan. The **Disaster Plan Template** (Part two) provides further details and a flexible integrated model with tables and a checklist for you to adapt and develop your library's own Disaster Plan. There are also links to **Additional Resources** which can provide further information. A further resource of disaster training **Scenarios** is provided on the ALIA website.

## 1.2 Background and integrated approach

These resources have been updated by undertaking a review of the Australian and international literature. They have been shaped by the first-hand experiences of library staff during recent disasters and best practice in cultural institutions across the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums and Records Management (GLAMR) sectors. They have also been informed by recent research, funded by an ALIA Research Grant, which highlighted the benefits and feasibility of integrating disaster management across all collection formats – physical and digital (Brown, 2018).

With this background, the resources have been remodelled to provide the option of a 'one stop shop' integrated approach to managing disasters across all collection formats that are held in 21st century libraries. However, they have also been designed flexibly so that you can readily expand, trim or 'deconstruct' them to focus separately on digital or physical formats according to the needs and preferences of your library, as each library is different.

## 1.3 About disasters

Large scale disasters can include floods, fire, or earthquakes, while smaller scale disasters can include leaks, localised mould attack or small pest infestations. Disasters caused by humans can include warfare, vandalism, or cyber-attacks. Disasters of all kinds and scales have the potential to damage or destroy digital and physical library collections, and the 21st century has provided many prominent Australian examples ranging from the 2009 Victorian bushfires, to the 2018 flooding of collections in the Australian National University Library to the 2011, 2013 and 2019 Queensland floods. While each library and disaster situation will be different, the **Guide** and **Disaster Plan Template** have been designed to help decrease the loss of all types of collection materials and increase the effectiveness in terms of rate and completeness of recovery after a disaster.

## 1.4 Realistic expectations

It is important to have realistic expectations about what can be recovered after a disaster. Artlab Australia provides the following advice during its disaster training programs:

'It is common to find that there will be some permanent damage or loss to collections during a disaster. For example, there is a very short window of opportunity to retrieve water-damaged documents printed on clay-coated papers (e.g. glossy magazines) – only about 6 hours. If the disaster is discovered the next day, chances are that much of this material will already be irretrievable. Do not expect to be able to return everything to pristine or even usable condition. You may even have to effectively 'sacrifice' some material in order to save higher priority collection items.

Secondly, it is easy to underestimate how long it will take to salvage a certain amount of material, as well as the staff, space and materials required to carry out the salvage operation. You will need to reassess your disaster response regularly according to needs that become apparent during salvage work.

Thirdly, depending on the scale of the disaster, the ramifications of the event may be felt for some time. For example, during a disaster involving water, you may find it necessary to freeze large quantities of material. The storage and treatment of this material will need to be built into budgets and work programs for many months after the disaster has been contained.' (Artlab Australia, Disaster Preparedness Training, 2019).

## 2. Introducing the four key stages of disaster management

Essentially, the disaster management of library collections involves planning, assessing and reducing risks and establishing strategies to respond and recover.

The four key stages in disaster management are Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery. They are represented sequentially in the diagram below.



Figure 1: Disaster management - key stages

## 3. Linking with and understanding the wider context

Disaster management does not operate in isolation. To effectively safeguard collections it is important for library staff to link disaster management with the wider organisational context at several levels.

### 3.1 The library context

It is important to make sure that the library's disaster management strategies and its Disaster Plan link to the library's broader management plans, procedures and systems such as the following:

- *Emergency Procedures* that focus on the safety of people.
- the *Business Continuity Plan*
- *Risk Management Plan*
- *Information Communications Technology (ICT) Plan*
- *Records Management Plan and Systems.*

If your library is considering developing an integrated Disaster Plan, you will need to review these broader systems and plans to ensure that they include references to disaster management of digital and physical collections. Likewise, you will need to reference the broader systems and plans within your library's Disaster Plan.

### 3.2 The parent organisation

The library may be part of a parent organisation such as a school, business, hospital, local government/ council or shire, government department, university or cultural institution which will also have emergency plans. Again the library should align its disaster management strategies and its Disaster Plan with those of the parent organisation.

### 3.3 Broader links

The library's disaster management strategies and Disaster Plan should also refer to relevant municipal, state and national emergency legislation and plans, infrastructure and services such as the fire service and other local, state and national emergency management organisations and services. It is important that these organisations are aware of what you intend to do in the event of a disaster, and that your library has a collections Disaster Plan in place (as well as emergency procedures for people).

It is helpful to include links to additional professional resources and services which can provide further disaster management information such as the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM), Blue Shield Australia and the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.

Some libraries belong to a support network with other cultural organisations, or form a partnership (such as DISACT) to protect their collections. Check with your state/territory library's preservation staff, or ALIA to find out if there is an existing disaster support network in your state or territory, or you may like to start a local one in your area.

A list of **Additional Australian Resources** is provided at the end of this **Guide**.

The following table of examples can help you develop your own library's list of the wider context.

**Table 1: Examples of links with the wider context**

The library context	Parent organisation e.g.
Business continuity plan	Local Government
Risk management plan	School
ICT plan	University/TAFE
Records management plan & systems	Cultural organisation
Emergency procedures for people	Business
Vital records	Hospital
Other	Government department
	Other
Broader links	
Local/State/National	Professional organisations
Emergency legislation & plans	Australia International Council on Museums and Sites (ICOMOS)
Emergency infrastructure & organisations	Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM)
Other	Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR)
	Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
	Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA)
	Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)
	Blue Shield Australia (BSA)
	International Council of Museums (ICOM) Australia
	Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA)
	Other

## 4. Scale of disaster

The scale or level of disaster depends on a number of factors such as the cause, the size of the area damaged and the level of damage to the collections and infrastructure (Colorado State University, section 5, 2016).

The scale of disaster can vary from a small leak to a major loss of data. The scale of disaster affects the type of response, including immediate action steps that can be taken and the numbers and roles of staff involved. Further information about the scale of disaster is provided in the **Disaster Plan Template section 8**.

## 5. Collection management priorities and issues

Disaster management links directly with library collection management issues including priorities, surrogate copies, backups, 'master' copies and locations.

### 5.1 Collection priorities

Throughout all the stages of disaster management priority should be given to significant collections. These are collections which are unique, and/or which have historical, cultural, evidential, bibliographic, aesthetic or monetary values and which are difficult or impossible to replace (Russell & Winkworth, 2009). For example, while it may be inconvenient and expensive to replace a collection of contemporary fiction, it is possible to do so and hence it would potentially be a low priority. The Disaster Plan should include a salvage priority list that assigns a higher priority to unique or difficult to replace collections of historical materials such as original local photographs, irreplaceable digital files, unpublished manuscripts, diaries and oral history interviews.

Related resources will be the tools that provide access to these collections such as the catalogue and in-house indexes and finding aids.

The following table of examples can help you develop your library's list of **Salvage Priorities**.

**Table 2: Salvage priority examples**

Examples of Salvage Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local history collection</li><li>• Rare books collection</li><li>• Oral history interviews</li><li>• Unique born-digital items</li><li>• Obsolete formats</li><li>• Turned digital items where the original is no longer available</li><li>• In-house indexes, local databases and finding aids</li><li>• Library catalogue</li><li>• Loaned collections</li></ul>

## 5.2 Surrogate copies, backups and locations

An important step in prioritising collections and finding aid tools involves identifying your library's collection management practices for:

- storage location
- surrogates and backup copies
- master/original files.

An integrated Disaster Plan provides the opportunity to centrally document these practices for digital and physical collections.

### 5.2.1 Backups and surrogates

For example, in the case of digital collections, the plan can record backup arrangements and details of where these backups are located (e.g. in the cloud, offsite tapes, offsite external hard drives). This also applies to the tools such as finding aids which can provide access to physical and digital collections.

Likewise these details are important for collections which have surrogate copies (e.g. physical collections which have digital or microform copies and which may be located in different areas – for example an offsite location).

### 5.2.2 Prioritising 'master' copies

It is also useful to be able to quickly and broadly distinguish categories of copies that are higher quality ('master') copies/files on one hand from other lower quality copies/files, and where they are stored or located. Lower quality digital files, for example are those that have been enhanced or changed for public access (e.g. compressed versions), or second generation microfilm copies. Depending on the type and scale of disaster, these details may assist in prioritising collections during disaster response, salvage and recovery.

## 5.3 Prioritising by scale, type of damage and format

Prioritising disaster response and recovery is complex and dynamic.

Other factors that will influence priorities are:

- **Scale** of disaster e.g. damage to a few, or thousands of wet books and photographs. (Further details about the scale of disaster are provided in section 4 and in the **Disaster Plan Template section 8**).
- **Type of damage** e.g. fire, mould
- **Format type** e.g. paper, glass, or digital files.

Different formats have different 'lead in' time frames within which you can successfully salvage collections.

The Disaster Team Leaders must be trained in the theory and practice of how to prioritise and adjust the disaster response strategies according to the scale, type of disaster and the format of materials affected. The **Disaster Plan Template section 6** provides further information.

Examples of decision making and prioritising:

#### Example A: digital

The priority may be getting the website up and running with basic information and hence restoring access to the lower quality 'compressed' versions for public access may be a higher priority before restoring access to the higher quality uncompressed or 'master' versions.

#### Example B: physical original

If the volume is a significant original manuscript without a readily available copy then this item will have a high salvage priority.

#### Example C: physical copy

If the second generation microfilm copies are damaged, but the 'master' copies are located offsite, then the second generation copies will be a low priority to salvage.

## 6. Key stages



### 6.1 Prevention

Prevention involves firstly assessing the risks and likelihood of various types of disasters that may occur, and then putting into place strategies to reduce the risks. You cannot be prepared for everything and each disaster will play out differently, but investment in the prevention and preparation stages can help to lower the likelihood and impact of disasters on collections.

#### 6.1.1 Disaster risk assessment

**Risk assessment** involves identifying risks that could impact on collections, analysing them and finding ways to reduce the risks.

The risk assessment should involve discussions with staff, especially long standing employees and volunteers who are one of the best sources of information on what has happened before. Emergency Services contacts such as the police, fire service and other professional contacts such the insurance broker will also provide useful information for all stages of disaster management.

A simple risk assessment begins with the step of **identifying** the type of risks that could impact on your library's collections.

The process of risk identification will involve you in actions such as:

- discussing potential risks with key staff (as above)
- visually inspecting the building(s)
- checking the infrastructure - physical and ICT
- checking the physical and digital collections storage and their locations onsite and offsite
- incorporating the information you have gathered about past incidents and events.

The next step of risk assessment involves assessing the **likelihood** of the risk happening, or recurring. This step can also involve considering the **consequences** of the risk.

The third step is considering ways in which the risks can be reduced or **mitigated**.

#### Mitigation

For collections and infrastructure, existing mitigation arrangements can include:

- security cameras and alarms
- ICT backup arrangements and locations
- fire detection and suppression systems
- availability of Uninterruptable Power Supplies (UPS) and backup generators.

As many disasters occur during the hours when the library is not open, check that the security, fire detection, suppression systems and response procedures, and the ICT systems are capable of operating and being responded to 24 hours a day, and especially during holiday periods.

#### Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities could include:

- local environmental features – proximity to rivers, forests, fault lines, and seasonal weather patterns such as cyclones, heavy rainfall and bushfire seasons
- storage of collections on the floor in flood prone areas
- items blocking access to exits and fire equipment
- lack of power backups for computer servers in the event of power failures – leading to the risk of the server overheating and destruction of digital collections that are not backed up
- lack of backup of other storage devices including CDs, DVDs and Network Attached Storage (NAS) devices
- other potential hazards and dangers, for example existence of asbestos in the building, or a chemical plant in the vicinity.

## Improvement

Suggestions for **improvement** could incorporate measures such as the following:

- looking at what has happened before
- knowing what physical and digital collections are replaceable and what are not
- ensuring digital collections are backed up offsite, or in the cloud
- regular building maintenance – especially the roof and guttering, and sealing doors and windows
- removing trees from the perimeter of the building
- raising collection storage above floor level
- upgrading security measures around points of entry
- clarifying coverage with your insurance broker.

### 6.1.2 Revision

It is also important to remember that many of the risk factors and circumstances above will change over time, and with different activities occurring in your library, such as renovations and repairs. Your

risk assessments will need to be updated when these changes occur, and when your Disaster Plan is revised.

### 6.1.3 Analysing and recording risks

There are various options for recording and analysing risks and most involve using a matrix.

#### Use existing frameworks

Firstly, check to see if your library or parent organisation is already using a risk management framework and/or risk matrix of criteria which you can adopt. This will help to link the Disaster Plan with the library's broader management plans, procedures and systems.

#### Example of basic framework

If you cannot find an existing risk matrix or framework, you can modify the example below. This basic example does not include consequences, and hence the assessment is rudimentary, however it can be adapted and developed to your library's circumstances.

**Table 3: Basic collection risk framework example** (adapted from ALIA Disaster Planning for Libraries, 2010, p. 20)

Risk description	Physical collections = P Digital collections = D	Likelihood of it happening (again) - high, medium, low	Risk treatment - preventative/damage reduction measures
<b>Facilities, infrastructure (including ICT) &amp; technical issues</b>			
Insufficient security controls resulting in loss of valuable physical collection items	P	medium	Increase security patrols, lock valuable collection items
Insufficient security controls resulting in loss or corruption of valuable digital collection items (network security)	D	medium	Upgrade network security & ensure regular offsite backup of digital data
Inadequate building & facilities maintenance resulting in leaks	P & D	high	Implement regular building maintenance inspection & repair schedule
Lack of appropriate storage space & facilities to store physical & digital collections	P & D	high	Plan appropriate offsite store for less used physical collections Implement additional storage & off site backup for digital collections e.g. cloud storage

Table continued next page

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Risk description	Physical collections = P Digital collections = D	Likelihood of it happening (again) - high, medium, low	Risk treatment - preventative/damage reduction measures
<b>Environmental</b>			
Fire damage to buildings, infrastructure & collections	P & D	medium	Assess fire detection & suppression system, implement regular maintenance inspections  Develop Disaster Plan
Flood damage to buildings, infrastructure & collections	P & D	medium	Raise collection storage for physical collections above flood level  Offsite digital backup  Develop Disaster Plan
Pest infestation damage to buildings, infrastructure & collections	P	low	Implement integrated pest management program & regular pest inspections
Earthquake damage to buildings, infrastructure & collections	P & D	medium	Store valuable items in protective storage  Offsite digital backup  Develop Disaster Plan

If you would like further information on more complex risk assessment, check the publication by Pedersoli, Antomarchi & Michalski, (2016).





## 6.2 Preparation

'By failing to plan, you are planning to fail'. (Attributed to Benjamin Franklin.)

The preparation stage involves developing the Disaster Plan, identifying emergency contacts and supplies, and training, all of which build resilience to withstand and recover from a disaster.

### 6.2.1 Disaster Plan

A flexible template for developing a Disaster Plan for digital and physical collections is provided in Part two, the **Disaster Plan Template**, which includes a **Contents list** in **section 3**.

Handy features of a Disaster Plan include the following:

**Table 4: Disaster Plan - useful features**

Useful Disaster Plan features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Emergency contacts</b></li><li>• <b>Collection access</b> details</li><li>• <b>Emergency Immediate Actions</b> highlighted and located for quick access</li><li>• Clearly <b>dated</b> and <b>version control</b> visible</li><li>• <b>Current</b>: It should be updated regularly (at least annually) to ensure all details – especially contacts are up to date</li><li>• <b>Aligned and integrated</b>: It should be linked to the library's broader management plans such as the <i>Business Continuity Plan</i>, <i>Risk Management Plan</i>, <i>Information Communications Technology (ICT) Plan</i>, <i>Records Management Plan</i> and <i>Systems and existing Emergency Procedures</i></li><li>• <b>Endorsed</b>: It should have support at a high organisational level – ideally it should be reviewed and endorsed by a senior manager</li><li>• Be clear, <b>easy to use</b> and logically structured so it can be navigated quickly</li></ul>

### 6.2.2 Confidentiality

A Disaster Plan contains a great deal of confidential information about the library, its layout, priority collections, and staff. It should be kept in a safe spot. Limit the number of physical copies, note where copies are located, and make sure one copy is kept offsite. Remember confidential details are not generally distributed beyond those that require this information and if a plan is to be distributed beyond this group, confidential details need to be removed.

### 6.2.3 Emergency contacts

Emergency contacts will include the (confidential) contact details of key people who can assist and/or who need to be notified. Further information about emergency contacts is provided in the **Disaster Plan Template section 4.1**, Emergency contacts.

### 6.2.4 Emergency Immediate Actions Checklist

These checklists are designed to systematically guide staff through the initial steps to follow when they encounter a disaster. An example is provided in the **Disaster Plan Template section 4.3, Chart A**. Further details are provided under **6.3.1 First response steps** below.

### 6.2.5 Command structure

**Command structures** are often used in larger libraries. The Command structure is the hierarchy and chain of command that helps to clarify, organise and co-ordinate responsibilities, disaster response actions and the flow of communication across the organisation. An example of a Command structure is in the **Disaster Plan Template section 5.1, Chart B**.

Some larger organisations may have a **Crisis Management Team** (and a **Crisis Management Team Leader**) to which the specialist disaster roles report.

The Command structure will include a communications strategy. There is nothing more counter-productive than when many stories are circulating, and staff and the public are receiving conflicting information.

### 6.2.6 Disaster Team Leader

This role has the prime responsibility for coordinating all stages of disaster management: prevention, preparation, response and recovery. During and after a disaster they lead the response and recovery, guiding a **Disaster Team**. In larger organisations, the Disaster Team Leader may report to a leader (such as a Crisis Management Team Leader) who coordinates and directs the whole response and recovery.

Typical actions of a Disaster Team Leader include:

- contacting the key staff
- ensuring health and safety measures are implemented and followed
- determining priorities based on existing collection priorities as well as type of disaster, scale and format of collection materials
- making on the spot assessments about the best methods to stabilise and recover the collections
- guiding a Disaster Team of specialist staff to carry out the response and recovery operation
- setting up a recovery and salvage centre
- coordinating purchase and hire of equipment
- liaising with outside experts e.g. freeze drying services
- debriefing
- updating the plan following the disaster
- replacing salvage materials and equipment used following an incident.

If your library's Disaster Plan covers both digital and physical collections, you may need Disaster Team Leaders specialising in digital and physical collections. It is likely that these two specialist positions will report to a Coordinator such as a Crisis Management Team Leader.

### 6.2.7 Disaster Team

The **Disaster Team** is a core group of people who can respond to the disaster, each person with defined roles. Again if you have an integrated Disaster Plan, you may need two specialist Disaster Teams for digital and physical collections. Typical examples of the Disaster Team roles are provided in the **Disaster Plan Template, section 5.2.1, Table 9**.

### 6.2.8 Detailed site plans, infrastructure and access details

Your Disaster Plan will need to include a detailed set of floor plans for on and offsite storage areas and infrastructure, including location of keys or key code access details.

See Table 5 on the following page for useful features which you can adapt to your library's needs.

### 6.2.9 Emergency equipment and supplies

It is handy to have emergency supplies of materials and equipment 'ready to go' to help staff respond quickly and effectively. This helps to minimise the effects of a disaster. If you wait until a disaster happens you may well find supplies of useful materials have run out or cannot be readily procured. For this reason many libraries have disaster kits or disaster bins stocked with materials such as blotters, paper towels, mops and sponges and sheets of plastic. Larger libraries may have a disaster store stocked with supplies and equipment such as wet-dry vacuum cleaners, sandbags and fans.

A list of emergency equipment and supplies appears in the **Disaster Plan Template, section 7, Table 12**.

### 6.2.10 Training and induction

Training is an essential part of preparation. It is important that all relevant staff including the **Disaster Team Leaders, Disaster Team** members and **Command Structure** staff are trained in their roles and are also familiar with the roles of others.

An annual refresher with a focus on common disaster scenarios is highly recommended. Libraries with integrated Disaster Plans can include 'what if' disaster scenarios to test response and recovery situations for physical and digital collections. All new staff members across the organisation, from senior managers to other library staff, to security and cleaners, should be made aware of the **Emergency Immediate Actions** as part of their induction.

A resource of disaster training **Scenarios** is provided on the ALIA website.

## 6.2.11 Insurance and documentation

Talk to your insurance provider about your library's Disaster Plan and make sure you understand your level of cover and expectations of your insurance company. For example if you move your valuable items from your collection for safe keeping – will they still be insured? Are loaned objects covered? Does your policy address the costs of conservation treatment, or data recovery for significant materials?

If collections are damaged what documentation is required? Is an assessor required on site, or is it possible to document with photos and videos, and receive permissions to stabilise collections without compromising the insurance coverage?

**Table 5: Site plans, infrastructure and access - useful features**

Plans and infrastructure	Key features
Detailed site and floor plans for onsite and offsite collection storage	Location of entrances, exits & main evacuation points
	Locations of utility cut-off points, including mains water tap, gas & electrical cut-off switches, control points for air conditioning
	Who is authorised to operate them
Details of critical ICT infrastructure including controlled shutdown procedures	Backup arrangements & controlled shutdown procedures
	Who is authorised to operate them
Details & locations of fire equipment & fire suppression systems (e.g. sprinkler systems)	
Locations of keys especially master keys & display case keys, & how to access areas controlled by security systems	
Locations of emergency equipment & supplies such as disaster kits	

Further information about **Authorisations and Access** is provided in the *Disaster Plan Template*, section 4.2.



## 6.3 Response

The response stage happens during a disaster event once all the people safety issues have been addressed. It involves the steps to minimise the consequences – such as protecting or moving collections or controlled shutting down of the computer server.

### 6.3.1 First response steps

The **Emergency Immediate Actions** chart will guide staff through the initial stages of responding to a disaster. Copies of this chart should be distributed around the library's collections areas, including offsite storage areas. The first step focuses on safety and notifying the responsible staff. An example of an Emergency Immediate Actions chart is in the **Disaster Plan Template, section 4.3, Chart A**.

In a large disaster the first responders may well be the fire brigade or police.

The Disaster Team Leaders and other staff will only be allowed on the premises when it is safe to enter.

The Disaster Team Leaders and senior managers may be able to negotiate with Emergency Services to arrange an early entry to the disaster site once it has been assessed as being safe to enter.

### 6.3.2 Further steps

The next steps in responding will depend upon the scale and type of disaster. They include:

- activating the Disaster Plan
- notifying key people
- taking actions to prevent further collection damage.

### 6.3.3 Notifying key people

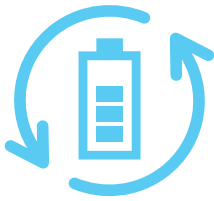
This involves activating the **Command structure** and notifying designated staff. One or more designated staff will advise key staff who need to be informed about the event including the Crisis Management Leader and Disaster Team Leaders for physical and digital collections. The Disaster Team Leaders will assess the situation and decide whether and when to call in other members of their respective Disaster Teams (physical and digital specialists).

### 6.3.4 Taking actions to prevent further damage

If safe to do so, second stage action responses can potentially include:

- arranging for water or gas to be turned off
- diverting water flows
- covering vulnerable collections with plastic
- activating generator(s) or backup power supplies
- stabilising the environment
- moving collection material away from the affected area
- setting up a recovery centre for coordinating salvage
- recording the situation
- calling in outside assistance (e.g. disaster recovery experts).

The next steps will depend upon the scale of the disaster, type of damage and format of the affected materials.



## 6.4 Recovery

Recovery involves the steps taken to minimise the disruption and return services to as near as 'normal' as possible.

Recovery involves the steps taken to minimise the disruption and return services to as near as 'normal' as possible.

The elements of Recovery can include:

- stabilising the environment
- cleaning and drying affected areas
- removing contamination
- assessing collection items for salvage, conservation treatment or potential disposal
- continuing the salvage operation of damaged collection material
- liaising with outside experts e.g. freeze drying services
- discussing options with insurance providers
- resuming 'normal' services in a staged way as the library becomes operational and can provide access to some physical and digital collections. This will involve keeping users informed about what services are available, opening times, and any special support for communities affected by the disaster
- debriefing sessions with the Disaster Team and relevant personnel on the cause of the disaster and reviewing all stages of the Disaster Plan to make improvements as required
- replenishing disaster supplies and adding new equipment and materials
- social recovery - debriefing staff, providing counselling as required to ensure well being
- providing briefings, formal reports and presentations to colleagues, the library's parent organisation, the media, community groups etc.

## 7. Additional roles and issues

While the focus of this **Guide** and **Disaster Plan Template** is on the collections, potentially the library may be involved in a wide range of other roles and activities. Some examples are provided below.

### 7.1 Library as a community safe place

In the case of some disasters such as fires or floods the library has become a safe haven, providing temporary accommodation, food and shelter for the community.

### 7.2 Library as a communication hub

In addition to social media updates, libraries can provide community information and links to other resources. An example is Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service which set up a wiki immediately after the Victorian bushfires to provide this information for the community.

### 7.3 Help in recovering personal treasures

If the community's family treasures are damaged in the disaster, the library may well be asked by users for advice about recovering photographs, books and other items.

The library can provide references to fact sheets such as those in the **Additional Australian Resources** at the end of this **Guide**. The library may also host a consultation session with a conservator who can provide more detailed advice.

### 7.4 Collecting and recording the history of the disaster

The library may take on the role of collecting and recording the history of the disaster for its community of users and beyond. Not only can this provide a valuable learning experience and local history resource, it can also contribute to the healing process and could involve partnerships with other organisations. The resources could include oral history interviews, web archiving, photographs and creative works arising from the disaster (e.g. poems, artworks, music).

#### Example of collecting the history of a disaster:

Following the Brisbane floods, the State Library of Queensland staged a 'Floodlines' exhibition which shared contemporary and historical memories of Queensland's floods (State Library of Queensland, 2019). The exhibition travelled to other libraries providing 'a chance for communities to collect material, record local memories, create digital stories, and promote those stories online – helping to add to Queensland's collective memory.' (Floodlines tells Queensland's Story, 2015).

### 7.5 Managing donations

In the aftermath of a major disaster, the wider community will want to do something to help. Libraries may receive donations of second-hand books. In small quantities these can be made available to the people who have lost books in the disaster. In larger quantities they can create a storage and distribution problem.

Dissuade people from donating books until you have a clear idea of what might be needed. Following the flood at ANU Chiefly Library, the staff produced a comprehensive list of monographs lost in the flood requesting 'donations of any books on the list, or suggestions of replacement items' (Australian National University, 2018).

Cash donations should be carefully managed in the library's budget with a separate line in the accounts to highlight where they sit, ready for the rebuilding process.

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# Additional Australian Resources

## **Australian Institute for the Conservation for Cultural Material (AICCM)**

AICCM provides a range of disaster management resources covering disaster planning, response, fire flood and mould as well as links to help you find a conservator.

<https://aiccm.org.au/disaster>

## **Australian War Memorial**

Useful conservation fact sheets on water and fire damage.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/about/our-work/projects/conservation>

## **Blue Shield Australia (BSA)**

Blue Shield Australia is a national committee of Blue Shield International, one of a network of committees who are committed to the protection of cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict or natural- or human-made disasters. BSA runs an annual May Day program promoting disaster preparedness.

[blueshieldaustralia.org.au](http://blueshieldaustralia.org.au)

## **DISACT**

Example of a partnership between cultural institutions for the protection of public collections in the ACT region – sample Memorandum of Understanding for collaborative working.

[www.anbg.gov.au/disact/](http://www.anbg.gov.au/disact/)

**Heritage Collections Council.** (2000). *Be prepared: Guidelines for small museums for writing a disaster preparedness plan*. Canberra: Heritage Collections Council.

[https://aiccm.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/CAN\\_resources2014/beprepared.pdf](https://aiccm.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/CAN_resources2014/beprepared.pdf)

## **National Archives of Australia**

Resources on business continuity and disaster management including a disaster preparedness manual and guides on recovering fire and flood damaged records.

<http://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/managing-information-and-records/protecting/business-continuity/index.aspx>

## **National Library of Australia**

Example of a collection disaster plan.

<https://www.nla.gov.au/policy-and-planning/collection-disaster-plan>

**Powerhouse Museum Conservation Department.** (2017). *All is not lost: the collection recovery book* (2nd ed.). Sydney: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Media.

**Queensland Government.** (2019). *Recover and salvage your records after a disaster*.

Information on how to salvage water-damaged and soiled records, torn or fragmented records and heat-affected or charred records.

<https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/recover-and-salvage-your-records-after-disaster>

## **Q-Dis Queensland Disaster Information Network**

An online Facebook forum for sharing information on disaster preparedness and planning for Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums, Records, Heritage and Keeping Places in Queensland.

<https://www.facebook.com/QDisForum/>

## **State Library of New South Wales**

Resources in drying a wet book and smoke and odour removal.

<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/research-and-collections-building-our-collections-caring-libraries-collections/collection-care>

## **State Library of Queensland**

Provides a range of resources on salvaging damaged collections.

<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/how-do-i/preserve-my-collection/salvaging-damaged-collections>

### State Library of Victoria

Conservation guides include dealing with mould and pests.

<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/help/conservation-guides>

**University of Melbourne.** (2018), *reCollections; caring for collections across Australia*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne Grimwade Centre for Conservation.

<http://culturalmaterials.net/wp/28-2/managing-collections/counter-disaster-planning/>

## Biographical notes

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[alia.org.au/information-and-resources/disaster-planning](http://alia.org.au/information-and-resources/disaster-planning)  
[blueshieldaustralia.org.au/](http://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/)