

RECOVER VS. REPLACE

Along with prioritizing the collection comes the decision to recover the damaged material and equipment or replace them with new items. For the most part, it is less expensive to recover water damaged items than to replace them. Recovering and drying items costs about a quarter of the price of replacing them.

Recovery has a variety of benefits, including cohesiveness of the collection; cost savings for replacement, labor, and processing; as well as time to find the new items. Although recovery is not inexpensive, it may be the option required by the insurance company or existing funds.

Replacement permits purchase of up to date formats such as CD-ROM and advances and improvements in technology such as computer equipment, speed, and information access and retrieval capabilities. Of course, the library or the institution has to have either the insurance or the funds to replace damaged collections.

Costs for recovering water damaged collections vary. The major and national disaster recovery companies charge \$45-\$65/cubic foot (approximately \$2-\$5 per book), depending upon the amount of water damage, the amount of materials to dry, and the labor to treat afterwards. Additional costs may including cleaning and recasing damaged binding structures. This is still less than the cost to replace the item. For paper records and manuscripts, assume that cubic feet are the same as linear feet. The smaller the geographical area the firm covers, or the less it specializes in drying paper-based materials, the more the company charges. Be careful about using the most local company, it might be the most expensive and the least experienced.

As always, the library or institution should ask for references. Contacting disaster recovery companies during the planning process allows time to check references and establish a relationship.

Conservators and regional conservation centers charge \$65-\$75/hr. or more for work on art and objects. If your institution has these items, discuss approximate costs for conservation while in the planning process so that the funds for "restoration" or conservation are available. This information should be shared with the insurance company so that the costs can be considered within the insurance policy.