Tempest in a Teapot: Water Damage at the MCNY Library

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SLA 2018- EPRAC Panel
The Stage

Library: Metropolitan College of New York
Location: Lower Manhattan, New York City, USA
Where: 12th Floor,
What: Computer lab; ca. 5000 circulating print volumes; 1000 reserve volumes; staff offices and Learning Center
Who: 950 FTE students (BA and Master’s level); 20 full time faculty; approx. 180 adjuncts
Programs: Human Services, Business, Education
The Cast

- Library Staff: 7.5 professional staff (35 hours) 6 student worker (8-18 hours)
  - “Roommates”! (Writing and Math Center Tutors)
- Saturday Administrator on Duty
  - Security Staff
- Information Technology Department
The Co-Directors

- Kate D. Adler and Emma C. Moore
- Originally hired as Emerging Tech and Reference Librarian
- Co-Directors of Library Services in May 2013
- “The Philosopher and the Engineer”
- October 2012- Hurricane Sandy – A Close Shave…
The Week of

• 14th Floor, 431 Canal Street: Gut renovation, Spring 2015
• Saturday Staffing:
  • KDA and Evening/Weekend Reference Librarian
  • Circ Staff: 1 Professional, 2 Student Assistants
• June 25-30, 2015: ALA Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA
The Deluge: June 27, 2015

• 8AM EDT: Library, Computer Lab, Learning Center open
• 10AM EDT: Construction mishap on Floor 14 bursts water pipe; ceiling panels collapse; water pours onto 2 ranges of MCNY print collection
• Flood lasted approximately 10 minutes, shut off by construction crew
• Not immediately adjacent to computer lab, but close to electrical circuits spanning the space of the library
Reaction

• Immediate concern: student and staff well-being
• Admin on Duty ➔ Director of Learning Center (luck + relationships)
• Facilities on site; review of carpet and floor damage necessary
Communication

• Decision: Close library and learning center for remainder of Saturday sessions (not necessarily popular with students…)
• Presence of Admin on Duty allows immediate implementation
• Use alert text/email/phone service (e2Campus) to alert campus community
• KDA and AOD sent immediate incident report
Recovery

- Shelving was not damaged, cleaning process took under 24 hours
- ~500 books in affected area
- Range of book damage: Minor, Partial, Totaled
- Partially damaged items: some withdrawn as preventative measure
- Primarily D, E, F Classifications- not core classes, secondary level of collection policy
Assessment

• Operational
  • Able to use shelving again nearly immediately
  • Retained empty space for 6 months, due to:

• Financial
  • VP of Finance and General Counsel: contacts with insurance companies
  • Insurance company of construction company required detailed information and valuation of damaged books for replacement claim
Implementation

• Physical Damage:
  • Assessed by Co-Directors with assistance of professional staff

• Financial Valuation:
  • Initial review using current market value (Amazon/Alibris/ etc) by student workers
  • Additional review and quality control by ECM

• Collection fully restored within 1 year (followed by a campus move!)
Lessons Learned

- Think through likely scenarios in broad terms
- Maintain good relationships with units outside your library
- Identify immediate lines of decision making and communication
- Know the most valuable parts of your collection and library (tangible and intangible)
- Delegate and utilize all staff expertise for speedy recovery
Questions?

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