

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- Partially damaged items: some withdrawn as preventative measure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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