Chapter 15
Navigating Campus Disasters from Within the Library: Lessons and Implications from Gulf Coast Institutions

Mahauganee Dawn Shaw
Miami University, USA

ABSTRACT
The post-hurricane recovery processes of two universities are presented in this chapter, with an emphasis on the experiences specific to their library facilities and holdings. Interviews were conducted with library staff and campus leaders at both institutions. Case studies are constructed of the experiences of these libraries with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Fall 2005 Semester. One library experienced major destructive damage and the other suffered minor damages to the collection. The tales of recovery presented lead to implications for disaster management within academic libraries. Recommendations are offered for each stage in the crisis management process: planning, prevention, response, recovery, and learning. These recommendations provide guidance on disaster mitigation and contingency planning for librarians, library staff, archivists, curators, and university administrators.

INTRODUCTION
The term campus crisis likely evokes images of either the most large-scale or most recent emergencies to impact higher education institutions. Zdziarski (2006) provides the most useful definition of crisis for institutions of higher education: “A campus crisis is an event, often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of personnel, property, financial resources, and/or reputation of the institution” (p. 5). Campus crises range in impact, from those affecting only an isolated portion of a campus community to those that affect normal operations both on campus and in the surrounding community. This book is focused on the latter, disasters that spread beyond the borders of campus.

This chapter examines the disaster management process of institutions that have weathered...
experiences with destructive hurricanes, focusing on the impact to and recovery of their library facilities and holdings. Each institution’s story is presented separately. The stories detail an institution’s experience with recovering, restoring, and preserving an art collection that is partially displayed in the library facility, and an institution’s experience assessing and recovering from hurricane damage to the library facility. Recommendations derived from these two institutions’ experiences are offered. These recommendations focus on disaster management within academic libraries. Knowledge of others’ experiences with disaster management can assist readers in thinking through the potential impacts of similar disasters on their own institutions, libraries, and job responsibilities.

The background section provides an overview of literature that describes how campus crises are classified, the general considerations in managing a campus crisis, and how libraries have approached these processes in the past. This overview of the literature explains the crisis management terminology used throughout the chapter and establishes a baseline for understanding the challenges that libraries face in the wake of a disaster. Following this review, the chapter moves into presenting the two institutional cases. The combined examination of these cases illustrates how similar events can have different impacts and outcomes. Lessons and implications for other academic libraries are presented, and suggestions offered regarding how to approach the work of disaster mitigation and contingency planning.

BACKGROUND

Crisis management is the process of planning for, organizing and implementing a response to an emergency situation. The crisis management process is often described as occurring in separate stages, and multiple conceptualizations of these stages have been offered by different researchers. The resultant crisis management models have ranged from three to five stages. Five stage models have been offered by Pauchant and Mitroff (1992), Zdziarski (2006), and Zdziarski, Rollo, and Dunkel (2007); these models each add a learning phase to the end of the crisis management cycle. Thus, crisis management, as described in the literature, is a cyclical process with the following stages: planning and mitigation, preparation and prevention, response and business continuity, recovery, and learning (see Figure 1). This chapter will touch on all phases of the crisis management cycle, placing emphasis on the lessons that can be learned from other institutions of higher education, and specifically their libraries.

Offering a means to further define campus crises, some researchers have also developed classification schemes to help identify different levels and types of crisis. Campus crises have typically been written about as having three potential levels. From least to most severity, these levels are critical incidents, campus emergencies, and disasters (see Zdziarski, Rollo, & Dunkel, 2007). While campus emergencies are those that are confined within the campus boundaries, critical incidents are those emergencies that are even further confined to a particular subset of the campus population. Disasters, as explained in the introduction, are crisis events that cross campus boundaries and also impact the surrounding communities. More recently, disaster researchers have begun to suggest catastrophe as a fourth level of crisis, more severe than disasters (Quarantelli, 2006). Catastrophes resemble disasters in many aspects; however, catastrophes cause exponentially more damage to the impacted area. Given the focus of on hurricane recovery, there is opportunity to focus on a disaster that can easily rise to the level of catastrophe.

The two libraries discussed fall on opposite ends of the severity spectrum in terms of damage sustained to a collection and the resulting length of the recovery process. The data presented will come from institutions that weathered Hurricanes