INCITE

DIGITAL ONLY EDITION

NOV/DEC
2021
Vol **42**
Issue **6**

AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE:
IPSWICH CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

TAKING RISKS
IT'S WHAT WE DO

The magazine for the library and information sector

ONE STOP SHOP

Artlab Australia Disaster Management Workshop with History Trust of South Australia.

ALIA's new disaster management resources are one practical outcome of research that shows there is an urgent need for effective and coordinated library disaster management. Artlab Australia's **Heather Brown** discusses the increasing necessity of safeguarding library collections from both digital and physical risks.

From bushfires to cyclones, dust storms to floods, over the years disasters have damaged and destroyed many of Australia's unique physical and digital collections across a wide range of libraries, large and small. Threats have only increased with climate change, with the world entering into a new era of extreme weather and cascading major disasters. Converging with this are new threats to collections posed specifically by the COVID-19 pandemic, including undetected leaks and pest infestations in unmonitored physical collections, and cyber attacks on digital collections resulting from security vulnerabilities being exposed while staff are working from home.

It is crucial we safeguard library collections through disaster management. Indeed, without sound disaster management practices in place, all other library functions have the potential to be completely devastated in an instance of destruction. Effective disaster management plays a critical role in reducing disruption, damage and loss. It also helps to rebuild organisational and community resilience after disaster events.

A major research project on disaster management in Australia's national, state and territory libraries provides useful insights into how library disaster management can be effectively coordinated. Despite the majority of libraries containing digital and physical collections, the research uncovered that the disaster management of these collections is largely divided and uncoordinated. Typically, library collection disaster plans focus on physical collections, while digital disaster plans are separate – frequently undocumented, locked away in the heads of IT staff.

The research highlighted the benefits of integrating disaster management across all collection formats in providing a 'one stop shop' coordinated approach. Risk management and the four stages of disaster management (prevent, prepare, respond and recover) are key areas common to disaster management of physical and digital collections. In both domains the emphasis is on the early stages of prevention and preparation, which can reduce the risk of damage to collections. The research also identified some barriers that need to be addressed in an effective integrated disaster plan – including the risk of the plan becoming too complex, and the need for specialist physical and digital skills to be represented in the disaster teams and resources. Further details of the research are discussed in the article 'Interconnected Disaster Management – bridging the physical and digital divide.' (https://bit.ly/3p5ecLq)

The new ALIA disaster management resources are a practical outcome of the research. They were jointly developed with Christine Ianna from State Library of Queensland with support from Sue Hutley from Blue Shield Australia. The disaster resources incorporate an integrated approach and are designed to be flexible, so they can be tailored to individual library needs. They feature icons to help with quick navigation and include specialist digital and physical staff and resources. The *Guide* (https://bit.ly/2YOwUMJ) sets the scene, giving an overview and context. The *Disaster Plan Template* (https://bit.ly/3vcof2l) provides further details and a template for libraries to develop their own integrated disaster plan. *Scenarios* (https://bit.ly/3BLVFHh) are provided for training purposes. Check them out – and safeguard all your library's collections! ✿

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