



Preparedness and Networking for Successful Disaster Response

Preparing for the unknown can be a little daunting, and an overwhelming experience. As Registrars, Collection Managers, Conservators and Archivists the care of the collections in our institutions is our livelihood every day. We can know "To a T" our work environment security and safety of our storage areas, exhibitions halls and all museum aspects, but Mother Nature can make us check and brush up our plans to include all kinds of emergencies, and disasters that can happen in these moments of pure vulnerability.

This session in ARCS biennial Conference had these wonderful speakers:

Cindy Albertson - Vice President, Alliance for Response NYC

Kara Furman - Associate Registrar for Exhibitions, Philadelphia Museum of Art

Anastasia Matijkiw –

Program Manager, Documentary Heritage & Preservation Services for New York

The central information in this session can be divided into 3 major points:

Number one: Know your information

Having in mind the document, A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Index Report on the State of America's Collections, Anastasia Matijkiw presented the importance of knowing statistics of the actual condition and preservation needs of national collections. This document make us wonder about the real condition and the care of the collections not only in the United States but also around the world. Providing this information makes us – or at least- made me think of all the different types of cultural institutions on my island and the diversity of materials, techniques and challenges to take care of it. Summarizing this thought is the importance of having a very thoughtful and thorough Emergency Disaster Plan.

Number two: Focus on Collections, and the people in charge of their care

Cindy Albertson, Vice president for Alliance for Response present to the audience the example of the actual success, and creation of the AFR New York City, through the experience acquired after Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. The vast art and cultural community in New York City was the main resource for the response and recovery of all the artifacts and works of art damaged by this natural disaster. Establishing a list of contacts, venues and specialists within the city created a network of knowledge and creativity (because you need it to assist and create such a program) to support on site. By a series of trainings to the volunteers, advising all kinds of institutions (museums, galleries, artists spaces/workshops) depending on their needs, the Alliance for Response now is a pivotal organization to train collections mangers and care professionals in the topics of: Documentation and Damage Assessments; Triage and Salvage; Health and Safety; Working with recovery vendors and of course Emergency Management and Community Emergency Response Teams.

Number three: Networking beyond

The Alliance for Response Philly and the Central Pennsylvania Alliance for Response, presented by Kara Furman is a true example of the importance of networking to create beyond its territory



the information and “action” active network to understand and create the best procedures in all kinds of emergencies. Knowing your vulnerabilities (geographical, institutional, political, hands on volunteers) will determine what will be the extent of your needs depending on your EMERGENCY.

At the end of the session, as a Hurricane Maria survivor (in all aspects, personal and professional), I took away the following points:

- The importance of continuing education and training in all kinds of emergencies.
- The creation of an “alliance” for the preservation and care of collections, and to assist collections guardians to cope more easily in a time of stress and need.
- And the creation of a “Network of professionals” not only in your area but beyond, to continue the valuable work of strengthening the Mitigation and Preparedness areas to facilitate response and recovery in all aspects in Collection Management and Care.

WEBSITES:

Alliance for Response NYC - <http://www.afnyc.org/>

Alliance for Response Philly - <https://afrphilly.wordpress.com/>

Alliance for Response AIC - <https://www.culturalheritage.org/>

Central PA Alliance for Response - <https://centralpaafr.wordpress.com/>

Pennsylvania Cultural Resilience Network –
<https://ccaha.org/initiatives/pa-cultural-resilience-network>

A must read**

A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Index Report on the State of America’s Collections

<https://www.ims.gov/publications/heritage-health-index-full-report>

<https://www.culturalheritage.org/docs/default-source/hhi/hhisummary.pdf>

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