



Report on Use of Flood Recovery Funding 2014 – 2017

Submitted by Emily Turgeon-Brunet, Lead Conservator

The execution of the Archives Society of Alberta's Flood Advisory Programme began in September 2014. The ASA Executive Director and the Flood Advisory Committee hired a Lead Conservator and Lead Archivist to conduct site assessments of institutional members in response to the floods of 2013. After conducting site assessments, the Lead Team carried out custom work plans based on results from the site assessments.

The Lead Team

Lead Conservator and Lead Archivist

The Lead Conservator, Emily Turgeon-Brunet, and the Lead Archivist, Amanda Oliver, combined their individual expertise to evaluate ASA institutional members, which included archives across the province. The Lead Conservator is specialized in the conservation treatment of paper objects, and the Lead Archivist is specialized in arranging, describing, and rehousing archival records.

\$222 940.73

Site Assessments

Site Visits and Reports

The Lead Team visited 42 archives across the province to evaluate and assess the damage caused by the June 2013 floods, their level of disaster preparedness, risks posed by the facilities and collections, and to review existing emergency plans. After the completion of each site assessment, a corresponding report was created outlining the Lead Team's findings. The reports included eight main categories: Institutional Member Information; Access to Holdings Assessment: Intellectual Control, Collection Care; Level of Disaster Preparedness; Insurance; Building Profile; Environmental Monitor and Control; and Funding and Assistance. The end of the report included requests for assistance from the institutional member, key recommendations from the Lead Team, and a custom work plan. The reports were submitted for approval to the ASA Executive Director. Once approved the Lead Team would carry out the work plan to completion.

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Each work plan was customized to the needs of every institutional member. The work plans included flood remediation assistance, disaster preparedness assistance, and responses to the risks posed by the facilities and collections to the health and safety of the staff and heritage materials. For those directly affected by the floods, the Lead Team hired contract conservators and contract archivists to recover the flood damaged collection materials. The Lead Team also purchased emergency response supplies to create a kit that was distributed to all institutional members. The kits include: Coveralls, nitrile gloves, dust masks, goggles, hardhats, scissors, Rite-in-the-Rain® waterproof notebook, pencils, permanent markers, clipboards, reflective tape, Absorene® Dirt Erasers, cotton string, plastic clothespins, heavy-duty duct tape, integrated pest management kit, extension cord, surge bar, towels, paper towels, garbage bags, freezer bags, toolkit, Eton® crank radio, flashlight, headlamps, barricade tape, blotting paper, Hollytex®, polyethylene terephthalate sheeting, Lysol® wipes, and absorbent sock barriers. Fireproof cabinets and welding tarps were supplied to members who are at an increased risk of forest fires. Crank radios were supplied to members that experience weak cellular and Internet service. Frost-free freezers were supplied to members with collections that contain cellulose nitrate, a self-igniting material susceptible to warm environments. Archival grade rehousing supplies and furniture was supplied to members whose collections were at risk for increased rate of degradation due to inadequate storage.

Conservation Treatment

The Lead Conservator worked with a contract paper conservator and a contract book conservator to treat flood damaged archival material from the Museum of the Highwood that had been frozen for over two years. In addition to water damage, they also exhibited both mud and frost damage. Much of the collection had been disposed of at the time of recovery by an external agency that worked with the staff at the Museum of the Highwood. Approximately 2350 items were salvaged and put into cold storage for two years prior to the initiation of the Flood Advisory Programme. These items included photographic material, bound material, and flatworks that required conservation treatment in order to be publicly accessible and not a staff safety hazard. Much of the material had begun to grow mould and this posed a health hazard. The Lead Conservator and the contract conservators individually cleaned all items, and rehoused them in proper storage containers. Cellulose nitrate material was cleaned, digitized, and housed in cold storage by the contract archivist. Of the items received by the Flood Advisory Programme, 96% was recovered.

Intellectual Control

The Lead Archivist and five contract archivists assisted institutional members with intellectual control. The Museum of the Highwood, Fort McMurray Historical Society, LSLIRC-TARR Archives, and the Canmore Museum and Geoscience Centre had all

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experienced environmental disasters, which led to the evacuation and relocation of archival material, disrupting the intellectual control of their collections. The Lead Archivist and contract archivists worked on-site to locate records, arrange, describe, label, and rehouse the collection material. The City of Wetaskiwin Archives had a collection of cellulose acetate negatives that were off-gassing acetic acid, which created a hazardous environment for staff. A contract archivist performed digitization, description, and rehousing of this collection into cold storage.

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Resources

Webpage

The ASA website hosts the Flood Advisory Programme's webpage. The Lead Team has produced a number of disaster preparedness and response resources aimed to provide user-friendly instructions and guidance on caring for collections prior to and during emergency procedures. Topics include the following:

- Staff Training Scenarios
- Emergency Response Resources
- Retailers for Archival Supplies
- Extreme Weather Alerts
- Disaster Response Kit
- Digital Preservation Resources
- Preparing for Digitization
- Caring for Smoke Damaged Paper

How-To Videos

The Lead Team chose six topics on salvaging damaged records that required visual explanation. These topics were imagined into six how-to videos, all under five minutes long that guide viewers through the steps of salvaging their archival records. The Lead Team worked with Edmonton based company, Back Road Productions, to produce videos on the following topics:

- Handling Wet Paper
- Packing Wet Records
- Drying Wet Records
- Mould Removal
- Humidifying and Flattening Paper Records
- Encapsulation

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The videos are available on the Flood Advisory Programme webpage, and the ASA YouTube page. Many of ASA's institutional members have commented that the how-to videos have been useful during staff training exercises.

Archives Society of Alberta's Blog

The Archives Society of Alberta maintains a blog that presents information to the Alberta heritage community on exhibits, educational opportunities, and upcoming events. The Flood Advisory Programme took over the blog for the duration of the project to post information on disaster and emergency response, and collection care. Since the Lead Team's adoption of the blog, it has been regularly featured in Documentary Heritage News.

Loan Program

The Flood Advisory Programme launched the Loan Program in response to the results from the site assessments. Many ASA institutional members required access to specialized equipment and supplies. The Lead Team ordered these items to create a unique collection of items that can be borrowed at no cost by an institutional member. The items are housed in two locations, one in southern Alberta at the Milo Library Archives, and one in northern Alberta at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

The handbook has been created outlining how to use each item which is available for download on the Flood Advisory Programme webpage.

Mobile Application Platform

The Lead Team designed a mobile app aimed to connect all levels of ASA membership in the event of a disaster, and provide users with the appropriate resources for responding to an emergency in their archives. The mobile application was developed by the Calgary based company, App Guys, and features a newsfeed, a private messaging board, a vault where files may be uploaded, an SOS function, and a map that includes pins corresponding with the coordinates of emergency response resources across the province.

The pin categories in the map feature include:

- Institutional Members
- Police/RCMP
- Fire Department
- Hospitals
- Air Ambulance
- Archives Society of Alberta
- Alberta Emergency Management Agency

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- Conservation and Facility Restoration
- Mould Inspection Services
- Movers
- Freezer Truck Services
- Storage Facility
- Hardware Stores
- IT Support Services
- 24/7 Restaurants

The Mobile Application Platform was cancelled when it was determined that ongoing hosting costs and maintenance were uneconomical with ASA's administrative budget.

\$67 194.32

Outreach

Disaster Preparedness Workshop

From September 20th to 21st the Lead Conservator worked with the ASA Education Committee to offer all levels of ASA membership the opportunity to attend the Disaster Preparedness Workshop. The workshop was in Calgary, Alberta and welcomed 32 attendees that participated in speakers' topics including Business Continuity Planning by Barry Manuel from Kildoon Emergency Management; Disaster Psychology by Dr. Charmaine Thomas of University of Calgary; a presentation by BELFOR Canada; and Handling Wet Records by the Lead Conservator. The workshop aimed to provide members with disaster preparedness education often left out of traditional disaster preparedness workshops. The Flood Advisory Programme and the Archives Society of Alberta partnered to offer all attendees a travel grant to make their participation possible.

Presentations

The Lead Team performed presentations at a few conferences and speakers' events to share information about the Flood Advisory Programme and what it has developed for its members. They also encouraged others in the heritage field to access the resources on both the webpage and the blog.

- A poster was presented at the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) conference in May 2015, entitled 'Worst Case Scenario: Preparing Alberta's Archives for Future Disasters.'
- The Lead Team presented 'Worst Case Scenario: Preparing Alberta's Archives for Future Disasters,' at the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property conference in May 2015.

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- In November 2015 the Lead Team spoke at MacEwan University's Physical Sciences Speakers' Series, and presented 'Through Hell or High Water,' on where chemistry meets art conservation and archives.
- Finally, they performed a presentation at the joint AIC/CAC conference in May 2016 'Through Hell or High Water: Disaster Recovery Three Years After Alberta's Floods'.

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