

Securing Archival Collections During a Pandemic

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has already caused far-reaching changes to our personal and work lives. In early March of 2020, some of these changes were visible on the horizon. By March 17th, all library staff were working exclusively from home. In the days between, our disaster response team, composed of representatives of departments throughout the library, developed policies governing our extended shutdown procedures. Though the library already had disaster plans in place, no pre-existing document addressed closing a facility and moving to remote work.

Because staff routines were disrupted during the shutdown, risks to the collection that would normally be immediately apparent might now be hidden. While some risk mitigation strategies were already in place, other strategies we developed in the process were surprising. Throughout, we sought to secure collections without compromising staff safety. Both preservation and non-preservation staff had to adapt our solutions as the situation evolved. Ultimately, the team developed a three-part procedure in response to the extended shutdown.

This poster will present the process of rapidly planning, executing, and iterating on preservation-focused policies at an academic library during a global pandemic. As the situation has evolved, so has our response. The poster will also address ongoing procedural adaptations and lessons learned.

About the author:

Kim Hoffman is the Preservation Librarian at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where she is responsible for maintaining both the circulating and special collections as well as the digital preservation program. She received her MS in Library and Information Science and her MA in Museum Studies in 2019 from Syracuse University in New York, where she also earned a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Cultural Heritage Preservation. At Syracuse University, she worked as a preservation assistant from 2016 to 2019. Before turning to library work, Kim was a technical writer for various software products.