

A Series of Forums on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Management

November 2004 Update



**Alliance
for
Response**

Cultural Heritage at Risk

The art, artifacts, and historic records that tell our nation's story reside in communities across the country. Museums and historic homes welcome thousands of visitors every year. Libraries and local archives serve as centers of information and hold in trust the histories of towns and families.

The events of September 11, 2001, reminded us that these cultural and historic resources are vulnerable to damage from terrorism as well as natural disasters. But we also know that basic measures can protect artistic and historic treasures against even the most devastating attacks. Preparedness and training matter, as do good working relationships with first responders.

The Challenge

Bringing emergency managers together with the cultural heritage community has been a long-term goal of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. The need for dialogue is clear, and working relationships must be forged in the communities they will benefit. Regardless of the cause and scope of the emergency, the first response will be local. To be most effective, these alliances must be in place before disaster strikes.

Building Strong Partnerships

A new initiative called Alliance for Response has brought cultural heritage leaders and emergency management professionals together. One-day forums were held in four cities during 2003-2004: Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, and New York City. All the forums shared the goals of:

- providing education on local disaster management issues and protocols;
- raising awareness of the need to protect cultural and historic resources in communities;
- encouraging disaster planning and mitigation; and
- developing strong networks to facilitate effective local response.

Forum participants included leaders of museums, libraries, archives, and historic preservation organizations, as well as state and local emergency management officials and first responders.

The New York Forum

The final forum in the series took place at The Jewish Museum on October 27, 2004. It was co-sponsored by the Museum, Library, and Cultural Properties Facility Group of Greater New York City. The 110 participants included representatives from most of the city's major cultural institutions. Kate Levin, New York City Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, gave the keynote speech. A dynamic panel on "Emergency Management and Community Alliances" featured Deputy Commissioners from the NYC Office of Emergency Management and the Acting Director of FEMA Region II. Afternoon presentations focused on risk assessment, business continuity, and building internal alliances for emergency management. Future initiatives in disaster planning and training are being explored.

Follow-Up Activities

The Alliance for Response project is having a significant impact. Since the one-day forums were convened late last year in Boston, Cincinnati, and Dallas, cultural heritage networks have formed, and museums and libraries find themselves in new relationships with local emergency managers.

Dallas: The forum, held in November 2003 at the Dallas Museum of Art, led to the creation of START, the State of Texas Alliance for Response Task Force. The first START chapter began in the Dallas area at a meeting hosted by the North Central Texas Council of Governments. The group is now working with the Fort Worth Police Department to include cultural institutions in a new emergency alert access system. Houston START is taking shape, and there is keen interest in establishing chapters in El Paso, Austin, San Antonio, and Lubbock.

Boston: The second forum was held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. At a follow-up meeting hosted by the president of the Boston Public Library, the Cultural Emergency Management Team (CEMT) was born. Both the Boston Emergency Management Agency and FEMA Region I are active partners, and for the first time in any major city, cultural institutions now have a regular seat at the city's Emergency Operations Center. The group plans to develop a cultural "SWAT" team to aid institutions in major disasters.

Cincinnati: The focus of the December forum at the Cincinnati Art Museum was statewide, with discussion groups organized by geographic regions. Each region has taken a slightly different approach. The Northern Ohio group is planning a regional meeting with emergency responders in Cleveland in November 2004. The South-eastern and Central Ohio groups are undertaking surveys to assess current and desired disaster planning activities. The Metropolitan Cincinnati group is holding a December 2004 meeting to discuss cooperative disaster planning for the city's institutions.

About the Sponsors

For 30 years, **Heritage Preservation, Inc.** has been the national, nonprofit advocate for the proper care of all cultural heritage—in museums, homes, libraries, and town squares. In addition to the Heritage Emergency National Task Force, its programs include the Heritage Health Index, a nationwide assessment of the condition and needs of collections; Save Outdoor Sculpture!, a grass-roots program; and the Conservation Assessment Program (CAP), a grant program for small and mid-sized museums. Heritage Preservation has also published a series of books providing the best professional advice on preserving homes and heirlooms to the general reader.

Since 1995, the **Heritage Emergency National Task Force** has worked to help libraries and archives, museums, and historic sites safeguard their collections. Sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Heritage Preservation, the Task Force is a partnership of 34 national organizations and federal agencies. The Task Force brings to its programs experience in building partnerships and a nationwide network of expertise.

Partners in Alliance for Response

Alliance for Response is a project of Heritage Preservation, Inc. and the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. It has been made possible by Fidelity Investments through the Fidelity Foundation. Other contributors include Belfor USA, BMS Catastrophe, Chubb Insurance Group, Iron Mountain/National Underground Storage, and Munters Moisture Control Services.

Local forum planning committees, representing a broad range of institutions, have done a remarkable job developing the forums and moving ahead with new initiatives. We wish to acknowledge the talent and resources these institutions contribute to Alliance for Response.

BOSTON: Fire Safety Network, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Naval War College Library, Northeast Document Conservation Center, Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance.

CINCINNATI: Cincinnati Art Museum, Miami University Libraries, OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc., Ohio Historical Society, Ohio State University Libraries, OHIONET, Vernon R. Alden Library of Ohio University.

DALLAS: Amigos Library Services, Inc., Dallas Museum of Art, Texas State Archives and Library Commission, National Archives and Records Administration—Southwest Region, North Central Texas Council of Governments, North Richland Hills Public Library, Texas Historical Commission, The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza.

NEW YORK: American Folk Art Museum, American Museum of Natural History, City Center Theater Foundation, Chubb Insurance, Columbia University Libraries, The Jewish Museum, Museum of Modern Art, New York Municipal Archives, New York Public Library, New York City Office of Emergency Management.

Visit www.heritagepreservation.org for updates on Alliance for Response.