Fire, Fury, and Flashlights:

Lessons Learned from the K-State Library Fire of 2018
K-State Alerts: Fire crews have responded to a call at Hale Library. Smoke was reported and the building has been evacuated. Please stay clear of the area.
Background and Select Photos
University Data Center in Hale Library’s basement

https://youtu.be/HJh91nS1XPg
CHALLENGES: The 3 Cs

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

COMMUNICATIONS

COLLECTIONS
Continuity of Operations and Services

• Relocating 150+ library and IT staff. Library staff are now in 9 different locations around campus and IT staff are in 2. Includes buying furniture and laptop computers for nearly everyone.

• Campus IT down with payroll and start of summer school looming—no e-resources, phones, email, website, etc.

• Establishing a service point with a few days of the fire at the Student Union to provide information/reference services, Interlibrary Loan, and Reserves as well as a small browsing collection based on returns and new acquisitions
Continuity of Operations and Services

Heavy reliance on interlibrary loan as circulating collection is unavailable

Notifying vendors, consortial partners and others to make them aware of the fire and our inability to honor requests, agreements, bills, etc. in a timely fashion and at the end of the fiscal year

Variability of workloads
Communications

- Immediate post-incident and the press: Crisis communication
- Weekly staff meetings
- Weekly briefings with Belfor and university officials
- Weekly briefings with the President’s Cabinet and library leadership
Communications

Access to building: Media, officials, and the curious

Social media and other outlets

Working with the media

Mental tolerance/coping variations among your staff, community—make resources available, share information
Collections

Pre-fire, roughly 1.5 million plus items housed in Hale

Print, media, depository materials
Item count does not include linear archival feet

Total boxes packed out of Hale: 147,707

We are still working with Belfor to clean the collections and are on target to have cleaning completed by December 2019
Collection Logistics

• Our materials are currently housed off-site in two different locations in Manhattan, KS and seven caves in Kansas City, MO

• Conditioned (heated and cooled) warehouse space was very challenging to locate at scale

• Complete reliance on Belfor for transportation of materials
Lessons Learned

- Document, document, document
- Communicate, communicate, communicate—strategic communications plan
- Utilize professional networks, expertise
Lessons Learned

- Insurance: Like for like
- Importance of an inventory
- Facilities management and maintenance risk and prevention
  - Develop good relationships with those outside the libraries either on your campus, in your district, or within your reporting structure
Lessons Learned

Have a disaster plan, train on it, talk about it, and better yet, practice it!

We had already had water issues and other experiences that utilized plan

A disaster plan is more than your tangible collections

What about your unique digital collections and/or any hosted electronic resources?
What is your IT landscape?
Challenges

- Morale, staff turnover
- Raising flag about need for additional funding despite insurance
- Competing campus priorities at a time of decreasing resources, enrollment
- Dispersed, scattered organization—library diaspora, fragmentation, disconnected
Opportunities: Out of disaster...

• Expanding the vision for the library beyond the first floor
• Curating collections
• Rethinking our presence as an electronic one—new website, improving self-service, etc.
• Fundraising: Help4Hale
• Single point of service with IT
• “Homelessness” brought staff away from their desks, embedded, etc.—flexibility, a la car(t)
• Value proposition—passed the scream test at least with students
• Blurring of staff lines, roles and responsibilities—cross training, reassignments
HALE LIBRARY

RENOVATION TIMELINE

FALL 2019
Portions of first floor complete

SPRING 2020
Second and fifth floor complete

FALL 2020
Third and fourth floors complete

LATE 2020/EARLY 2021
Historic Farrell Library, all floors complete
Photo credits

• Thanks to K-State Foundation, Mike Haddock, Library Communications and Marketing, and Kathryn Talbot for the various photos of Hale Library
Follow our progress

Hale Library blog @

http://blogs.k-state.edu/hale/
Further resources

Turvey-Welch, M. & Talbot, K. (2018). Trial by fire, water, and soot: Kansas State University's collection disaster plan dissected and what you can learn from our disaster.

http://hdl.handle.net/2097/39227
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