After the Flood: Disaster as a Collections Management Opportunity

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What Happened:

- Early February 2019: Pipes supplying steam for heating burst in the Himmelfarb Library basement level book stacks
- Books beneath the pipes sustained water damage
- Staff followed disaster management techniques outlined in Himmelfarb’s 911! LibGuide
Disaster Response:

- ~10 library employees moved damaged books onto carts
- Books were placed on tables for drying and damage assessment
- Salvageable books were systematically dried and returned to the shelves
- ~260 books worth ~$30K were deemed unsalvageable and withdrawn
- A detailed list of withdrawn items was created for insurance purposes
Unexpected Outcomes:

- Undertook weeding projects in damaged subject areas
- Identified 3 subject areas (Surgery, Ophthalmology, Obstetrics) where material losses were comprehensive
- Initiated communications with faculty about material replacement
- Worked with faculty to ensure that collections were updated with the most recent publications

Himmelfarb Library Stacks, Feb. 2019
Updating Library Policies:

- Himmelfarb 911! LibGuide revised to reflect what worked and what didn’t
- Photographic evidence of the flood and new shelf order created
- Collection development plan updated with guidelines to prioritize material replacement
The Silver Lining:

- Flood provided an opportunity to revitalize communications with faculty about new materials in their field
- Initiated overdue weeding projects
- Updated disaster preparedness documents
- Updated collections management policies
- Envisioned ways to build smarter and stronger collections

Himmelfarb Library Stacks, Feb. 2019
Thank You!!!