Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) in the Shadow of a Pandemic

Dan Wilson, Assoc. Dir. for Collections & Library Services
University of Virginia Health Sciences Library
‘It’s going to get A LOT worse’

BY SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

A record amount of California is burning, spurred by a nearly 20-year mega-drought. To the north, parts of Oregon that don’t usually catch fire are in flames.

Meanwhile, the Atlantic’s 16th and 17th named tropical storms are swirling, a record number for this time of year. Powerful Typhoon Haishen lashed Japan and the Korean Peninsula this week. Last month it hit 130 degrees in Death Valley, the hottest Earth has been in nearly a century.

Phoenix keeps setting triple-digit heat records, while Colorado went through a weather whiplash of 90-degree heat to snow this week. Siberia, famous for its icy climate, hit 100 degrees earlier this year, accompanied by wildfires. Before that Australia and the Amazon were in flames.

Amid all that, Iowa’s derecho — bizarre straight-line winds that got as powerful as a major hurricane, causing billions of dollars in damages — barely went noticed.

‘Challenge the imagination’

Freak natural disasters — most with what scientists say likely have a climate change connection — seem to be every-where in the crazy year 2020. But experts say we’ll probably look back and say those were the good old days, when disasters weren’t so wild.

“It’s going to get A LOT worse,” Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb said Wednesday. “I say that with emphasis because it does challenge the imagination. And that’s the scary thing to know as a climate scientist in 2020.”

Colorado University environmental sciences chief Waleed Abdalati, NASA’s former chief scientist, said the trajectory of worsening disasters and climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas is clear, and basic physics.

“I strongly believe we’re going to look back in 10 years, certainly 20 and definitely 50 and say, ‘Wow, 2020 was a crazy year, but I miss it,’” Abdalati said.

Hard to fathom

That’s because what’s happening now is just the type of crazy climate scientists anticipated 10 or 20 years ago.

“It seems like this is what we always were talking about a decade ago,” said North Carolina State climatologist Kathie Dello.

Even so, Cobb said the sheer magnitude of what’s happening now was hard to fathom back then. Just as the future of climate disasters is hard to fathom now.

“A year like 2020 could have been the subject of a marvelous science fiction film in 2000,” Cobb said. “Now we have to watch and digest real-time disaster after disaster, on top of a pandemic. The outlook could not be any more grim. It’s just a horrifying prospect.”

“The 2030s are going to be noticeably worse than the 2020s,” she said.

University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist, said that in 30 years because of the climate change already baked into the atmosphere “we’re pretty much guaranteed that we’ll have double what we have now.”

Expect stronger winds, more drought, more heavy downpours and floods, Abdalati said.

“The kind of things we’re seeing are no surprise to the (scientific) community that understands the rules and the laws of physics,” Abdalati said.

“A lot of people want to blame it on 2020, but 2020 didn’t do this,” Dello said. “We know the behavior that caused climate change.”
Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
Having a plan in place takes away the guesswork [and improvisation] when ensuring your library’s continuity of operations during and after an event.

A **Continuity Plan** is the written version of your COOP effort. A Continuity Plan prioritizes and guides decisions when emergencies occur. Any event that makes it impossible for employees to work in their regular facility could result in the activation of the Continuity Plan.
Mission Critical Resources & Services

Reviewing the Mission Statement

To determine your library’s mission essential functions, look at its mission statement, and then determine any resources and services that would need to be maintained following an emergency. Keep in mind that libraries function primarily as second responders following an emergency. Second responders function in the recovery role, which is helping its community return to a sense of normalcy.

Example Mission Statement

“We advance scholarship, research, education and health care by anticipating information needs, providing essential resources, and facilitating learning for the greater health sciences community.”
— University of Washington Health Sciences Library Mission Statement

Based on this mission statement, the provision of essential resources is the only piece of the mission statement that rises to the level of essential functions. Anticipating information needs and facilitating learning are important, but not something to focus on following an emergency. Remember, your COOP effort should only contain actions for ensuring the continuation of your essential functions.
Imagine that it is a weekday afternoon in the middle of April. A strong line of storms is approaching from the west and the National Weather Services has issued a Tornado Watch for your area. In the early evening, while the library is still open, the Tornado Watch turns to a Tornado Warning as a tornado has been spotted two miles from town moving in the direction of the library. Some tough decision are likely ahead, but unfortunately, the library director is vacationing in the Florida Keys and succession planning has not been established for the library.
Communication Outlets

Think about all of the ways your library communicates with staff members, local government, and the public.

In the event of an emergency, what if you need to communicate with one or more of these groups but the communication outlet is unavailable? Is there an alternative way to reach them?

Your Continuity Plan should include alternative routes for communications.

### Communications Types

- Website
- Email
- Voicemail
- City/Town Web site
- Command board
- Signage
- Newsletter
Exercising Your COOP

Exercises

A Continuity Plan, in order to be effective, must be exercised at least once a year, preferably twice. Recommended times to exercise your Continuity Plan are September and April.

- **September**
  National Preparedness Month provides an opportunity to exercise a planned event, such as a hurricane.

- **April**
  Provides an opportunity to exercise an unplanned event, such as a tornado.

You can add variety by using other planned and unplanned events, such as a snowstorm (planned) or an earthquake (unplanned). Ask your local emergency planners to assist you with your Continuity Plan exercises.

Ensuring Muscle Memory for Unplanned Incidents

In order to assure consistent and prompt response, it is critical that staff are able to respond to a sudden incident without needing to look up the response procedure. You can accomplish this by developing easy to remember responses to sudden incidents for which you are most vulnerable.

All procedures should be vetted first by someone trained in emergency response.
Pandemic Management

Once a pandemic takes hold, the appearance of a clear **leadership structure** with a consistent **communication strategy** is essential. The cadence of messaging will also need to be dynamic. Poor leadership and messaging will create unnecessary stress during an anxious time.

Leadership must also understand that everyone experiences a pandemic differently. In a stay-at-home environment, schools are closed and children are home, vulnerable populations are being protected, and people who live alone may feel more alone. As a result, it will be important to check in frequently with library staff. Incorporating some type of video conferencing tool can facilitate communication and promote social interaction.

It’s important to note that moving provision of services to remote locations creates a different service model but doesn’t require the activation of your one page COOP. Activation would only be necessary if situations arise that force you to scale back to just the provision of your core services. Situations such as illnesses or the requirement to reassign staff to roles needed to battle the pandemic would likely initiate a COOP activation. As with COOP activations for other disasters, do your best to keep your core services available as long as possible.
Recommendations

Everyone responds to a disaster in different ways, so look for any behavioral changes in your staff in the days and weeks that follow a disaster. Be especially watchful during anniversaries of the event.

Make available contact information for mental health professionals as well as other resources.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides a 24/7, 365-day Disaster Distress Helpline. Call 1-800-985-5990 (press “2” for Spanish bilingual support) or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

Keep your thoughts and actions focused only on things within your control.
EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATOR

ACTIVATION RESPONSIBILITIES
- Notify Red Team
- Notify Blue Team
- Activate Service Continuity Team (Helms, Moody, Parker, and Davis)
- Update Service Desk voicemail
- Email updates to all team members (HSL Staff), as needed
- Notify closings@virginia.edu with any schedule changes
- Update Website Emergency Information banner on Hours page
- Participate in Health System Incident: Management Team calls
- Monitor Voici, if activated
- Cancel deliveries, if necessary (back page under Resources)
- If Family Assistance Center is activated, coordinate any space needs
- If requested, coordinate with Health System Accommodations Team (Library must be closed into the following day)
- Conduct After-action Reviews

PREPAREDNESS RESPONSIBILITIES
- Library liaison to the Health System Emergency Management Workgroup
- Conduct bi-annual tabletop exercises with HSL managers group

CMHSL CONTACT INFORMATION

RED TEAM
- Gretchen Arnold, Director
- Dan Wilson, Assoc. Director/Emergency Response Coordinator
- Bart Ragan, Assoc. Director

BLUE TEAM
- Andrea Denton, Data Services
- David Moody, IT
- Dan Causton, Historical Collections
- Abbey Heffin, Collections
- Dave Denton, Service Desk Manager
- Kimberly Barker, Communications

CMHSL WEBSITE
EAC (or representative) makes changes to library hours through Springshare Admin > Hours > Today's Hours > Exceptions. Emergency banner box on Hours page can be activated, if needed. Activate message banner on Space Reservations page. Explain that mediated reservations are suspended until library opens. Self-Reservations are still available.

LIBRARY LEADERSHIP TRANSITION
If the Library Director is unable to perform duties, responsibility is assigned to:
- Wilson: general library operations, collections, space
- Ragan: information technology, specialized services (ES, TEC, Hist Collections)

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

SERVICE DESK VOICEMAIL
EAC (or representative) changes the library's voicemail message by dialing 434-524-4000. Mailbox 4: 4-1950. Select 1 to change mailbox options and select 3 to change no answer greeting. Recorded message should provide status information. Forwarding phone to external number during business hours is also an option.

VEOCI
EAC (or representative) communicates any changes to regular hours on the Health System Incident Management communication tool.

UVA HEALTH INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM
Emergency Coordinator (or representative) participates in all HMT calls.

UVA COMMAND BOARD
EAC (or representative) relays closing information to closings@virginia.edu.

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN
(Services are provided Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm)

TROUBLESHOOTING ONLINE ACCESS
- Abbey Heffin
- Backup: jld-journals@virginia.edu

TROUBLESHOOTING NETWORK ACCESS
- David Moody
- Anson Parker

PURCHASE REQUESTS
- Abbey Heffin

DOCUMENT DELIVERY (BORROW)
- Jeri Davis
- Backup: Abbey Heffin
- Michael Campbell (UNC)
- [UNC activation is for Worst Case Scenario]

DOCUMENT DELIVERY (LENDING)
For extended closures, lending requests are de-activated by calling NPL/L at 1-800-338-7687.

MESSAGES FROM PATRONS
All library faculty and specialists will monitor and respond to messages that come through Consultation Request form.

ACCESS TO LIBRARY'S PRINT COLLECTION
In the event that the Internet is compromised, patient care personnel can access the Library's print collection by contacting Health System Security. All core textbooks and reference materials are located in the lobby on the far wall in call number order.
**SELECTIVE LIST OF RESPONSE PROCEDURES**

**TORNADO**
Watch: monitor weather reporting stations online and via the weather radio.
Warning: announce via intercom that a warning has posted. Instruct everyone to move away from windows.

**POWER OUTAGE**
If the power is off at any time for longer than 15 minutes, or if it is dark outside when the power goes off, institute closing procedures. Check elevators to see if anyone is stranded. Check areas of the library for patrons who may need help.

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY**
Call 911. Announce on the intercom that medical assistance is needed in the state location.
AED Location: Link near Penn Hall

**FIRE/SMOKE**
Call 911. Pull fire alarm (near exit) if necessary. Fire extinguisher: halfway near staff mailboxes

**SHELTER IN PLACE**
staff lounge

**EARTHQUAKE**
DROP, COVER, and HOLD ON. Do not evacuate the library until shaking has stopped and there are no dangers (downed power lines, broken gas lines, etc.).

**BOMB THREAT**
Get as much information as possible, such as location of device, when it will go off, what it looks like, why it was placed, etc. Listen for environmental cues as to location of caller. Call 911 and follow instructions.

**SHOOTER**
Take cover.

**HAZMAT INCIDENT**
Follow instructions from emergency officials

**REQUEST FOR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**
Inquiry: Contact supervisor
Subpoena: Contact supervisor
Search Warrant: Provide access and contact supervisor
Request for Access to Library Computers: Contact IT Director

**EVACUATION**
Primary site: JP plaza
Secondary site: NE corner of Lee and JP

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**RESOURCES CONTACTS**

**UVA Preservationist:** Kara McClure-Lewis
- Phone: 800-999-8558 (24/7 consultation assistance)

**Facilities Management**
- Phone: 924-2267

**Environmental Health & Safety**
- Phone: 434-982-4011

**Housekeeping**
- Phone: 434-982-8656

**Systems Control**
- Phone: 434-982-6085

**Print Journals (NMSC):**
- Phone: 800-634-4666

**Books (Huntley House):**
- Phone: 800-945-6263 ext 114

**Newspapers:**
- WSU: (800-800-8003); WP: (303-698-6963)

**USAToday:** (800-872-3000)

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**HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS RESCUE LIST BY PRIORITY**

**3. OTHER HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS MATERIALS, BOOKS, JOURNALS, ARTIFACTS IN THE FOLLOWING PLACES FOCUS ON MANUSCRIPTS AND PAINTINGS:**

- **Dunham Room:** Painting located on the first floor to the left when you enter the Reading Room.
- **Moll Room:**
- **Spears Room:**
- **Dunham Room:** Earle White Collection, located on second floor in journal room. Key available in Historical Collections or Administration.
- **Annen: General Arts and Prints DVDs.**

**Hench Collection (Water Reed): Compact shelving rows 1 & 2**

**Staff Workroom:**

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**HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS RESCUE LIST**

**List by Priority (cont.)**

**University of Virginia Health System Publications:**

- Behind the Historical Collections Librarian's desk.
- The Draw Sheet: Shelves shelf Row 19
- Bulletin of the UVA School of Medicine: Shelves shelf Row 19
- The Link: Books identified as BIR 625, 639

**Other materials in the compact shelving and all materials on the white shelves behind the Historical Collections Librarian's desk:**

**Blue Labels:**
- Highest priority: orange labels secondary

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**RELOCATION STRATEGY**
Temporary service site will be determined based on availability

**Resources**
Store or relocate to temporary service site following these resources:

- **Historical Collections: Store**
- **Detmer Room: Store**
- **Print Journals: Store**
- **General Collection of Books: Store**
- **Core Textbooks: Relocate**
- **Reference Collection: Relocate**
- **Library Computers: Relocate**
- **3/4 others: Relocate**
- **Library Records: Relocate**

**Team Members**
Relocate team members listed below to temporary service site. All other team members will be assigned to work from home or will be on leave.

- **Library Director**
- **Assoc. Dir., Collections & Library Services**
- **Assoc. Dir., Knowledge Integration Research & Tech.**
- **Medical Education Librarian**
- **School of Nursing Librarian**
- **Administrative Services Manager**
- **IT Director**
- **Collections Librarian**
- **Research & Data Services Manager**
- **Service Desk Manager**
- **Service Desk Team**

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**Historical Collections Contacts:**

- **Dan Caranage:** Head of Historical Collections
- **Emily Bowden:** Historical Collections Specialist

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**REVISED 01/2020**
Over 800 people took the course in the final quarter of last year.

Fantastically streamlined. I got all the information we need without an investment in time in listening to someone talk or watching videos when I am capable of reading and internalizing the information. I really appreciate the honoring of our time in the form of presentation and succinctness of the course. – Anonymous course participant
It is a wonderful book and I know that you will find it useful. That is why I am happy to let you know that the three authors worked with ALA to make a PDF version of the book freely available. - Dan Burgard (Director for the South Central Region of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine)

https://www.alastore.ala.org/LibraryAsSafeHavenPDF
Contact Information:  hsl.virginia.edu/dan-wilson

Dan Wilson

Information

- One Page COOP Template
  Most recent one page COOP template. Feel free to download and tailor it to your institution.

Areas of Interest:
Professionally, I have two passions. One is a passion for learning new information gathering skills and teaching information mastery skills to the UVA School of Nursing for use in the classroom, the lab, and at the bedside. My other passion is working with libraries across the nation to improve library disaster readiness and response. I believe that all libraries can play an essential role in their community's/institution's emergency preparedness & response planning, and through tailored workshops, training programs, and templates, I can help make that happen.

Links:
Library Resources for the School of Nursing
In Case of Emergencies: Continuity of Operations Planning (NLM CE course)
Library as Safe Haven: Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery (Book pdf)

Education:
Master of Library Sciences at the State University of New York (SUNY) Geneseo in 1982
B.A. in History at Bloomsburg State College in 1981

Publications and Presentations:
Excerpt from one of my chapters in Library as Safe Haven: Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery, featured in Responding to a Threat: the importance of Immediate Action, American Libraries, July 2020.
