

A. Factors in Setting Collection Priorities

The decisions regarding what to save first in the case of a disaster should be made before the event occurs. The staff members involved in the planning will be better able then to weigh a variety of factors without the added pressure of dealing with the disaster aftermath.

The priorities set during these planning discussions will allow the staff, recovery team, fire department and other authorities to take the appropriate steps in an emergency to protect or salvage those parts of the collection deemed the most valuable.

Planners should consider a number of factors including the following:

1. Does the item/collection have a high monetary value?
2. Can the item(s) be replaced?
3. Do other copies or editions exist?
4. Are the items available in an alternative format such as microform?
5. Are the items fragile and unlikely to survive damage and/or treatment?
6. Is the collection of special value to scholars?
7. Is the collection of value to the city, state, region?
8. Have the records identifying the collections been considered? (online catalog records, card catalogs, shelf lists, etc.)
9. Will the length of exposure to water, smoke or other adverse conditions influence the item's salvage priority?
10. When would an item be unsalvageable?