Evacuation of Collections: Emergency Guidance

1. Prioritising collection for packing and evacuation

Prioritise the collection.

The following are some considerations to keep in mind when prioritizing collections
- Evidence in support of human rights or violation s of human rights.
- Collections on loan from other institutions or individuals.
- Value to the region, state, or nation.
- Replicability/Irreplaceability (Can the object be replaced in the same or other format or is it unique?).
- Monetary value as a finite collection or as individual rare items.
- Value in supporting the mission of the institution, (e.g., undergraduate education or public access).
- Importance as scholarly resource.
- Contributes to the breadth or depth of the collection.
- Fragility of the medium, e.g. film or magnetic tape or vellum.
- Type of disaster or length of exposure time, (e.g. a film-based collection exposed to fire or high heat would be a low priority because most would be unsalvageable anyway)
- Role in continuing or restoring institutional operations, (e.g., payroll, purchase orders, shelf-list, etc.)
- Undamaged over damaged.

2. Packing up collections and archives

Please see the advice here for the best way to pack collections and archives in an emergency

ICCROM: Endangered Heritage: Emergency Evacuation of Heritage Collections
https://www.iccrom.org/publication/endangered-heritage-emergency-evacuation-heritage-collections

Pack paper-based records in firm cardboard boxes or wooden boxes (preferably natural material without chemical substances). Keep infected records apart.

3. To Evacuate or to Remain

Each situation is unique and must be evaluated based on the risks in the situation at the time.

Consider the timeline. It is dangerous to move a collection, but if it cannot be protected where it is, or it will be at risk for a long period of time, consider evacuating the collection to another location.

Risks can include:
- damage by careless occupation and military use of cultural sites;
- deliberate damage by combatants;
- accidental and collateral damage during combat (including
- bombing and artillery);
- damage by military or civilian looting.
- adverse climate conditions (especially to archival material).

Whether the collection is moved, or kept in place, the owners/ managers will need to consider whether to announce the refuge, and apply for its protection under international law, or keep it secret. Cultural collections and their storage facilities are protected under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (as defined in articles 1a, and 1b, respectively).

Protected facilities can be marked with the blue shield[1] to indicate a protected cultural facility. The building may only be taken into use subject to imperative military necessity. If this happens, it can become a legitimate military objective.

If you chose to mark your building with the shield, please report this to Blue Shield International, if possible to do so, along with the coordinates of the building and a description.

However, application of this symbol must be carefully considered.

If the key risk is from looting, then the collection should be kept secret.

If the key risk is from conflict, then managers must consider whether there is any conflict-related gain to be found in the seizure or destruction of the collection. In addition to military goals relating to military use, cultural heritage may also be at risk as a political, symbolic, or propaganda-based asset (amongst others). Its seizure or destruction may be a means of asserting, defending, or denying future claims to power, land, and legitimacy. Consider if anyone is likely to search for your collection? How easy is it to do that? If there is significant concern that opponents are not obeying international humanitarian law, and this is considered a greater risk, the blue shield symbol should not be applied, and the collection should not be visibly identified.

It may be desirable to move the collection outside the country, if suitable support can be found. A number of international initiatives may be able to assist, such as Safe Havens for Archives at Risk Initiative. There is also international guidance available for any such safe havens[2]. However, in addition to the logistical issues in getting collections abroad, these can create complicated diplomatic problems for return.

a. Hide the collection

Consider:
- What are the risks if the collection stays in the existing building, or city? (Shelling? Fire? Looting? Flooding from burst pipes hit by shells?)
- Who is it at risk from?
- What storage conditions can you arrange now (either hiding or moving and hiding the collection)?
- Sharing location information with trusted personnel outside the area at risk - the collection may be lost if all who know the location perish.

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[1] Blue shield emblems of protection https://theblueshield.org/download/the-hague-conventions-emblems-of-protection/
[2] https://aamd.org/document/aamd-protocols-for-safe-havens-for-works-of-cultural-significance-from-countries-in-crisis
And https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-cultural-property/article/abs/guidelines-for-the-establishment-and-conduct-of-safe-havens-as-adopted-by-the-international-law-association-at-its-73rd-conference-held-in-rio-de-janeiro-brazil-1721-august-2008/ADDCFB1F93F7EA479C62CF7F8C7B7BEF

b. Evacuation

Consider:
- Do you have adequate time (or during war breaks) and resources to evacuate safely?
- What are the risks of moving it? (Shelling? Looting?)
- Who is it at risk from?
- Do you have a safe location to take the collection to outside the risk area?
- Do you have a safe route to move it through?
- Do you have the required equipment (e.g. boxes, trucks, fuel) to transport the collection?
- If you move it, how safe is the proposed new site, and for how long?
- Will you need to move it again in the future? What is the likelihood that the combat will reach the new location?
- Will there be staff at the new site who can care for it?

If time is limited, pack the collection quickly, and take it into the basement where can be properly packed for transport to another town.

4. Considerations for Emergency Storage

The following are list of options. Many of these may not be possible in the circumstances, so you must choose the options available to you, and think which risks you can mitigate.

A good practice guide for ideal conditions is available here[3].

a. Ideal
- The ideal is obviously a secure, climate-controlled facility, built to withstand the effects of bombs.
- Controlled natural ventilation is an effective way to maintain a stable indoor climate as air is only drawn from the outside (depending on the time of year). The short-term climate fluctuation should be < 3% RH/hr. A combination natural ventilation coupled with the installation of a dehumidifier is possible. Having separate heating and ventilation systems may be advisable, particularly if the shelter uses controlled natural ventilation.

b. Options: Risks and mitigation:
Review your options and try to find the best solution that minimises as many risks as possible.
- *Space* – make it is large enough to accommodate the number of objects
- *Bombs* - An underground facility will protect from bombs BUT can be hard to control the climate, and may fill with groundwater
  Look for a high level of building inertia (to resist cracks and breaking)

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[3] *Cultural property shelters: construction of new refuges and repurposing of decommissioned protected facilities.* Protection of Cultural Property Section, Swiss Federal Office for Civil Protection: https://www.babs.admin.ch/content/babs-internet/en/aufgabenbabs/kgs/massnahmen/_jcr_content/contentPar/tabs_929651207/items/documents/tabPar/downloadlist_copy/downloadItems/119_1592985572113.download/2020_Bau_von%20KGSR_und%20Umnutzung_von_ZSR_en.pdf

- *Groundwater* – is it possible to install a pump? Do you have an emergency generator and access to fuel for it? Can the civil authorities requisition one for you?
- *Fire* – an underground facility will have less risk of fire, especially if it is a concrete facility. However, it will be much harder to get the collection in and out. Consider access needs to go into storage, and in the event of a new emergency.
    - Try and make sure that fire suppressants are available
- *Climate and humidity* – higher temperature will increase the rate of growth of insects/moulds/microorganisms. Moisture also plays a critical role in encouraging pests. Look for
    - well-insulated external walls
    - Simple heating system that can be maintained
    - Space for a generator if you can access one
    - Do not store cultural artefacts on the floor but at least 20cm above it (equivalent to EUR-pallets stacked two high) in case of flooding and to allow air circulation Pallets are good as they allow air circulation under the stored items. However, if you have no pallets, use tarpaulin (water resistant canvas).
    - Whether on pallets or on racks, keep objects *at least* 5cm from the wall to allow air circulation
- *Maintenance* – make sure you can access the facility. How will you get the collection in and out?
- *Storage racks* – use galvanised, powder-coated metal racks if possible, but wooden pallets are good for storage if not. To avoid risk of vibrations from explosions try and secure storage racks in place. Try and secure all stored objects.
- *Boxes and Stacking* – Fill boxes as much as possible with extra padding material such as crumpled newspaper. Not all cardboard boxes can be stacked safely, especially if there is empty air space at the top. Try not to stack cardboard boxes too high without reinforcement of shelves, or extra boards that bear weight. Boxes on the bottom may collapse if wet, or if crushed by weight from above – this may cause the whole stack to collapse.
- *Theft and vandalism*– consider hiding the objects behind false walls if they cannot be safely moved. However, this will affect the climate conditions of the objects. Put up of concrete barriers around the building and/or board up of the doors and windows to block forceful entry.

5.   Documentation

If you have the time, and access to the stored collection, try to document it in case of theft or loss. Refer to the ICCROM guide (pages 18-22) for creating emergency documentation numbers that work for all types of collections, including individual objects or collections that can be boxed such as archives and books.

- For museum collections, try and use the Object ID standard: https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/objectid/
- For archives and documents, try and use https://www.ica.org/en/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition (guides available in multiple languages).
- If you can, at minimum identify and write down the archives/cultural agency the work came from, any local identifying catalogue numbers, or associated person or author/creator's name associated with the collection(s), the date spans of collection, and number of boxes/items that have been removed/secured.
- Refer/point to existing online or print catalogues where the collection is described.

- For libraries make a list of existing barcodes and/or call numbers.
  However, in an emergency, it may not be possible to carry out any detailed recording of each object. Recording can be as simple as taking photographs on your phone, and noting each object in a list.

If it is an emergency and you have
  a) 1-5 hours for documentation, take cell phone pictures.
  b) 5 to 10 hours for documentation
  AND access to internet: Use this form:
  https://nsteffel.github.io/dublin_core_generator/generator_nq.html,
  NO access to internet: Record the basics
    - creator
    - title
    - rights
    - how many boxes
    - plus pictures, etc.

Try and give each item, or at least each box, a unique number and record the location of each box, perhaps using a code for the location of each box (according to floor, room, shelf, etc). Make sure labels are visible

Free apps like Camscanner or Notes in iOS can be used to photograph and convert documents to pdfs to digitise paper records.

Move advice and guidance on documentation and the physical process of packing and evacuation is available here: https://www.iccrom.org/publication/endangered-heritage-emergency-evacuation-heritage-collections

6. Digital Information

Decide what digital material should be copied and transferred. Try and upload documentation online and share it. Consider backup of electronic records and catalogues onto drives or cloud storage at a Safe Haven partner institution.

If possible, encode[4] or password protect information to protect it.

Consider where should it be transferred – is cloud storage safe?

Copy your inventory databases and other relevant digital material (contracts, employees records etc). on
a) hard drives
b) clouds.

Protect them with BitLocker[3,] etc. Destroy remaining digital records and erase the data to "fully clean the drive".

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[4] Data protected with cypher: BitLocker for Windows (https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/security/information-protection/bitlocker/bitlocker-overview) and FileVault full-disk encryption (https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204837), for Linux (https://www.thegeeksearch.com/beginners-guide-to-luks-disk-encryption-in-linux/)

7. Other:

- If the shelter has more than one floor, the most valuable artefacts, wherever possible, should not be stored on the lowest floor, in case of flooding, but do consider you may have to move them quickly.
- Cultural artefacts should not be stored (even temporarily) on the floor but at least 20cm above it (equivalent to EUR-pallets stacked two high).
- If looting is a known risk, and objects are kept in galleries, consider rotating objects to different galleries or storage areas, so that thieves will not know the new location.
- Make sure to tell someone where your collections are stored. Blue Shield can inform the correct representatives at the international organisations of ICOM (for museums); and IFLA and ICA (for archives and libraries) where your objects are stored.

The Blue Shield is an international advisory body to UNESCO on the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. It has 27 national committees (with more under construction) across the world and an international board composed of elected members and representatives of ICA, IFLA, ICOM, ICOMOS, the major international organisations responsible for cultural heritage. The Blue Shield is "*committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster*". See https://theblueshield.org/

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