

'Lessons from Leningrad'

A workshop on disaster response

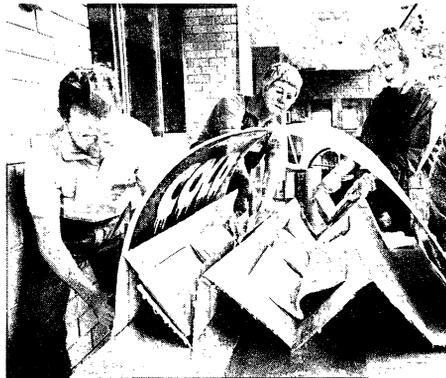
ON 14 February 1988, a fire destroyed a large proportion of the material held in the Academy of Sciences Library in Leningrad. On the same date a year later, 44 librarians and conservators from around the country gathered together to begin a four-day workshop on disaster response, to ensure that in the event of a major disaster in Australia, there would be a good supply of personnel trained to respond.

The workshop, titled 'Lessons from Leningrad' as a grim reminder of the purpose of the exercise, included a day of lectures, two days of hands-on experience, and a day of review.

Participants heard Alan Howell of the State Library of New South Wales deliver several important papers on disaster planning in perspective, and on the scientific aspects of conservation in the context of disaster response. In addition, Max Borchardt from CAVAL Ltd spoke about the development of disaster plans and their integration into the collection management structure of a library's administrative routines. Delegates were also able to view a number of videos that focussed on disaster response.

On the second day ('Disaster Day') participants were given the opportunity to 'recover' material from a flooded library (actually a simulated flood) in the basement of one of the buildings at Deakin University, which was the venue for the workshop. As well as retrieving the material from the 'library', those involved were required to attempt emergency recovery techniques ('first-aid' for books) and learnt how to use equipment such as walkie-talkies, pumps, generators, wet-dry vacuum cleaners, and emergency lighting. The accompanying photographs show various stages of the exercise.

On the third day, after cleaning out the site, the workshop relocated to the Laverton store of the Victoria Public



Making a wind tunnel for drying books and journals

L-R: David Harris, Ruth Dixon, Sue Gatenby



Recovery

L-R: Judy Doig, Pat Howard, Tony Cavanagh, Gwen Baker, Edward Quinn.



Learning to use equipment

L-R: Howard Oorloff, Warwick Peberdy, Steve Atkinson, Kim Morris, Judy Paneros, Ron Collins, Richard Overall



Learning sludge tactics

Workshop participants attend to Max Borchardt.

[All photos courtesy Greg Noakes.]

Records Office. Participants were able to see first-hand a range of different products used in the restoration of damaged materials, and had a chance to see the types of damage that water can cause to materials.

But the highlight of the visit to Laverton was the chance to work on some genuine damaged material that had been sent there from the recently flooded St Kilda Library. A group of ten seized the chance to put

their newly acquired skills to the test. Working under the supervision of Alan Howell, the group managed to process several pallets of badly damaged pamphlets, books and journals.

On the final day, participants had an opportunity to review a disaster that had occurred as a result of a fire in a major Sydney music collection, in the context of aspects of the techniques they had learnt over the previous three days.

All delegates agreed that the exercise had been a valuable one that provided excellent training. CAVAL, the Victorian consortium responsible for organizing the workshop, was especially pleased with the event, which it regarded as a major training activity for the CAVAL libraries.

Max W. Borchardt
CAVAL Ltd

Front Line ... from page 2.

Information For The Nation is ultimately about performance. Think about it. Does your library have an Information Delivery Mission and Policy displayed for all users and staff to see at its front door? Does it

regularly evaluate the accuracy and speed of its information service? The first publishable response faxed to me (08) 436 226 receives a dozen fine (what else?) bottles of South Australian wine. There should be 14,000 responses. I think, alas, my cellar is safe.