

## **Disaster Response**

Preserving Family Archives, BIFHSGO 2011 conference Kyla Ubbink, Conservator

### **Steps to salvage water logged or damp books and paper materials:**

#### **1. Prepare Space** for drying materials in an unaffected room.

- Lay colour-fast towels on the floor or on a table
- Gather extra colour fast towels
- Gather paper towels, white paper and blotting paper if possible
- Set up fans and de-humidifiers

#### **2. Gather Wet Materials From Flooded Area**

- Use plastic boxes, containers or laundry baskets for packing wet books and boxes into
- Fully submerged documents, works of art and books will be very fragile. Slide a board (Cutting board, Plexiglas, Mirror, etc.) underneath the material to provide support during transportation
- Support damp flat materials with a board of some kind, preferably acid free

#### **3. Dry Materials in Prepared Space**

- Lay flat materials out on towels and allow to air dry. To reduce warping cover with towels and place boards over top. Change towels every 6 hours until dry. Warping may still occur but can be corrected by a conservator or through pressing under flat boards for a period of at least one year.
- Books can be simply fanned open and stood up on their edges and allowed to air dry. This will cause warping.
- To avoid drastic warping in books interleave the pages with paper towels, white paper or blotting paper inserted approximately every tenth page. Close the book, place a board over top and apply some weight. Change the interleaved papers frequently, every 1 hour to begin with and every 6 to 12 hours once the book has begun to dry.
- Aim fans to keep the air circulating over the wet material, but not disturbing it. Turn on de-humidifiers and empty as required.
- Glossy papers are extremely vulnerable to adhering to each other. Separate these pages while the items are still wet.
- Wet materials can also be wrapped in linen or cotton sheeting (pillow cases work great) and placed in a frost-free freezer and allowed to slowly desiccate over the next few months. Once dry, allow the materials to acclimatize for 24 hours before un-wrapping and handling.

#### **4. See a Conservator for Stabilization and Restoration**

- Do not iron documents, as localized heat will cause further warping and cockling.
- A conservator can reduce stains, flatten, and repair water and fire damaged documents and bound materials.