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Sector: Academic library (HE/FE)

A disastrous fire and the missing disaster recovery plan

Does a librarian's duty to 'protect and preserve material' include monitoring the disaster recovery plan?

Summary: A unique collection tracing the development of the theory of fibre optics was housed outside the main library in an old building on the edge of campus. During renovations, a fire caused extensive damage. Researchers worldwide were devastated by the loss, but then questioned the apparent lack of a disaster recovery plan. The Library expressed regret, blamed the Estates department and factors beyond its control, and denied responsibility.

NOTE: This Case Study is fictitious. It is informed by experience in the information world, but it does not claim to represent a scenario of actual events or relate to individual people or organisations.

Case Study: Academic libraries operate under increasingly conflicting pressures for staff, storage and resources for materials and users. In this case a unique, mainly historical, archive had been built up from the early period when the theory of fibre optics was developed before wider commercial applications were recognized. The collection was initially housed in the main library but was moved to the fifth floor of a little-used

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